

Youth pastor offers help to teens in difficult times

By KYLIE SHAFFERKOEETTER
Post Staff

LAKE TWP. - Brad Bounds can't believe he's getting paid to do what he loves, helping kids. The 22-year-old, fresh out of college, was recently hired as the first youth pastor at the Outlet Free Methodist Church.

A native of Rockford, Illinois, Bounds was recommended for the position by a friend in the area who knows Rev. Ron Payne, the church's pastor.

After a series of interviews, Bounds was offered the job and he and his wife, Rachel, packed up everything they owned and moved halfway across the country. "I really felt I should be here," he said.

With enthusiasm in his voice, it's obvious Bounds is ready and willing to jump right in and help shape the church's youth program.

Rachel, who has a degree in music education from Northwestern College, is the church's music ministry leader and is also very involved with the youth group.

Bounds said his foremost goal is to form healthy and strong relationships with the young people. "Unless I can meet the needs of these kids, it doesn't matter what I say," said Bounds, who has met with his group twice. The group is open to youth between the ages of 12 and 19. "I want to give kids hope for the future. I don't want them to let other people tell them what they cannot do," he said.

Bounds is confident the youth

group, which currently has 14 members, will grow. "I have no doubts we will have a large group here," he said. "Not because of me, but because there is such a hunger for strong relationships." Bounds said his ultimate goal is for youth to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Rev. Payne was not available for an interview. But, Esther, his wife, said she and her husband feel they made the right choice by hiring Bounds and Rachel. "They really fit in with both young and old. You just feel like you know them immediately," she said. "We are really excited with them."

"They both have very dynamic personalities," said Mrs. Payne. "They make a good team."

Mrs. Payne said Bounds was considered one of the top students in his class and was very involved in sports.

During his junior year of high school, Bounds knew he should work with kids and try to help them through the particularly tough and awkward times in their lives. Bounds earned a bachelor of arts degree in Youth Ministries from Greenville College in Illinois. "The youth pastor is a new profession," he said. "I came in specifically as a youth pastor. This isn't just a stopping ground for me." Many times people who are on their way to becoming a pastor serve as youth ministers for a short time to gain experience, said Bounds.

Like many people, Bounds believes school helped give him the basics, but experience taught him



Brad Bounds is the first youth pastor at the Outlet Free Methodist Church.

POST PHOTO/KYLIE SHAFFERKOEETTER

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Youth pastor, Outlet Free Methodist Church

the lessons he will use most.

"Experience is so much more valuable than book work (in this profession)," said Bounds. But, he learned one important skill in school. "What I'm taking from school is being able to look at where kids are coming from. Their home life has huge effects on what they do," he said.

Bounds thinks his biggest challenge will be working with a diverse group. Bounds takes every experience and tries to draw les-

sons from it. He has traveled with a mission to Russia and worked with youth from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

"I worked with inner city kids at a camp in Branson, MO. I almost had my heart broken every day with the stories I heard," he said.

Bounds grew up in a city and did his internship in a small rural town. All of these experiences

helped to gain perspective, he said. "It's so important for me to be open-minded."

Bounds does not believe in trying to force kids to do or believe anything. Instead, he wants to make a connection with the kids and help guide them in the right direction. "I can't make anyone become a Christian. I don't want to. Life is made up of choices. Every day is a choice. When we meet every week, I want to see they're making the right choices," he said.

The youth group meets at the Outlet Free Methodist Family Life Center at 6:30 p.m. every Sunday.

Costume contest local for SPCA's 40th anniversary

The S.P.C.A. of Luzerne County celebrated its 40th Anniversary this year for caring for unwanted, stray, neglected and abused animals. Annually, approximately 8,500 are cared for at its shelter on Fox-Hill Rd., Plains Twp. Nearly half of those animals are dogs and puppies. At any given time 30-50 dogs and puppies are in need of new caring, loving homes at the SPCA.

They have so much to give and ask so little in return for a lifetime of companionship. It has been shown that pets do reduce stress in one's life. For sharing the comfort of your home, veterinary checkups and care, regular meals and exercise plus lots of TLC a dog will protect your home, comfort you when you're feeling down, help you get the exercise we all need, be a faithful companion that will never question you. What more can you ask for?

Visiting and adoption hours at the SPCA of Luzerne County are: Mon. thru Fri., 11-3 and 5-7; Sat. and Sun., 11-3.

Upcoming events to help celebrate the SPCA's 40th Anniversary and Adopt A Dog Month are: Halloween Costume Contest for Pets at Dallas Agway, Sat., Oct. 25, 2 p.m.;

Holiday Train Set raffle, tickets available at SPCA; annual Bake Sale at PNC Bank, Wilkes-Barre, Fri., Nov. 7, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

For more details on these contact the SPCA at 825-4111.

Local performers to star in 'Starmites' Oct. 11 at Wilkes

NE Players will present Broadway's *Starmites* on Sat., Oct. 11, at Wilkes University's Dare Center for the Performing Arts. The cast features 23 or our area's most accomplished performers, all aged 17 to 12 years and members of NE Players non-profit youth theatre company. The production is under the direction of Jamie Kurtz, Musical Direction by Gina Major Ackerman. *Starmites* is a fun "space" musical appropriate for all ages, which ran on Broadway in the late 80's. Nominated for two Tony Awards, *Starmites* is the fantasy tale as seen through the eyes of young Eleanor Fairchild. She is pulled into her beloved comic books by the forces of evil Shakk Graa, to team up with comic book heroes the *Starmites* and save the galaxy. This zingy

pop/rock musical is packed with toe-tapping, hum-along songs from energized "starmites", to beautiful ballads, and company numbers "Reach Right Down", "Attack of The Banchees", and "Hard To Be The Diva". Tickets are \$8 and \$5 for students and available by calling the Box Office at 717-675-4333.

Cast members from the Back Mountain include Alison Taroli, as Eleanor Fairchild; Adam Orseck, as Shakk Graa, plus Courtney Dombroski and Jen Opel as *Starmites*. Also from the Back Mountain, Deirdre McLaughlin, Mallory Carey, Nicole Jayne, Jennifer Mullins, Andrea Steele, Rebecca Stylnski, Cara Symons, all as Banchees. Joshua Halbing of the Back Mountain will play a Droid.



Getting ready for the big night. Stars of 'Starmites' to play Oct. 11 at Wilkes University

Jewish Comm. Center to hold run Oct. 19

The Jewish Community Center of Wyoming Valley will hold their annual Benjamin August Memorial 3-Mile Run and Walk on Sun., Oct. 19, beginning at 10:30 a.m. for walkers and runners.

The annual race is sponsored by Sandy and Arnold Rifkin in memory of Sandy's father Benjamin August.

T-shirts will be presented to all pre-paid walkers and runners. Trophies will be presented for female and male runners and walkers in the following age groups: 13 and under, 14 to 18, 15 to 19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-59 and 60 and over.

At the conclusion of the race, awards will be presented in the JCC's Weiss Auditorium, 60 South River Street, Wilkes-Barre. There will also be a social time with bagels, juice and muffins being served for all participants.

For more information or entry forms, call the JCC at 824-4646.

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Dorcas Society Craft Show Oct. 18

The Dorcas Society of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Shavertown, will hold their fifth Annual Holiday Craft Show on Sat., Oct. 18 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the church social rooms. The event will feature many area and out of town crafters. There will be a bake sale including homemade relishes, candy, etc. Refreshments will be available throughout the day including donuts and coffee plus a luncheon menu. There will be a silent auction and a raffle. Tickets for the raffle may be purchased in advance from any Dorcas member or at the door the day of the Craft Show.

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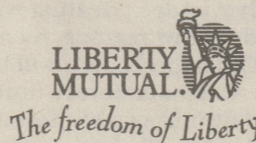
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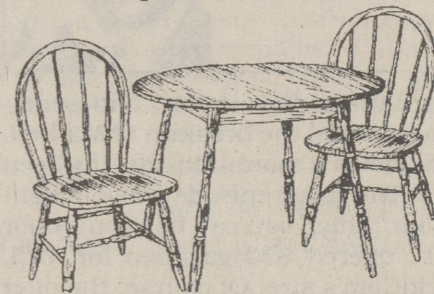


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