

Nationwide ministry makes heartwarming and full-circle impact

(DENTON Texas – April 14, 2023) The Village Church Denton is the hangout spot for many college students on Wednesday nights. More than 100 students gather to attend the Bible study known as MDWK (mid-week), staying hours after the sermon is given, reluctant to wander home, and eager to do it again the following week.

The community found at MDWK is in no small part due to the pay-it-forward mentality adopted from the Bible and practiced by Campus Outreach. This ministry has found its way to college campuses nationwide, having a generational impact on the lives of students by reaching people through their staff members.

Staff members like Jayci Hawthorne work for Campus Outreach full-time. Instead of a nine-to-five, she meets with students to form connections and share the gospel. She came to know Christ in college, with her journey starting much like how she engages with students now.

She reminisces about how she initially got involved with Campus Outreach as a newly transferred college student 10 years ago.

“I got involved through a woman who was on staff. Got connected with the Village Church Denton, and they were like, ‘Hey we have a college ministry,’ so I started going to their

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weekly meeting and then began being disciplined. I grew in my knowledge of the Lord, got involved in my community, and realized I wanted to share Christ with others.”

Hawthorne utilizes the same method to reach young women and share the gospel. She makes a point to set up weekly lunches with students to follow up with them and continue building connections. And for students that aren't already involved, Hawthorne boldly puts herself out there by going to campus dining halls and introducing herself to students, fully aware of how far a run-in with someone can change the trajectory of one's life.

That's how the story goes for students that now find themselves attending MDWK, regularly. Kyleigh Flowe, a sophomore at UNT, can't help but smile while naming Hawthorne as one staff member whom she feels a deep connection with.

Flowe gave in and attended her first MDWK after being asked several times by a friend. Now, she discusses sermon questions with Hawthorne and excitedly attends MDWK consistently. Flowe and Hawthorne hang out outside of the church as they both grow in their bond with one another and simultaneously get closer to the Lord.

“You know how people are like, ‘Oh I'll pray for you,’ and that's the prayer,” Flowe jokes.

“The Campus Outreach staff actually prays for you, and they check in with you,”

Flowe's gospel-rooted friendships surpass the depth and affection she feels with friends that she grew up with back home.

“These are my favorite friends,” she says excitedly, a smile never dropping from her face.

Speaking about how different Flowe's life is since her involvement with Campus Outreach infectiously leaves others content. It's not hard to tell the positive impact Hawthorne and the ministry have had. Despite her initial reluctance, Flowe passionately surrounds herself

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with a community that welcomes her with open arms, and even intends to share the gospel and disciple others just as she's been disciplined.

Joshua Ajadi, a sophomore at UNT, describes being disciplined as following someone while they are also following Christ. He is well into his discipleship journey with staff members of the Campus Outreach.

“Discipleship gave me a space to be vulnerable with other men and brothers of Christ,” Ajadi says. “It just takes a weight off my shoulders and unburdens me of the guilt and shame that I felt was holding me back from being who I really was.”

Ajadi attended his first MDWK after hearing about it through a friend who won \$100 after playing a game before the Bible study. He went the following week, also winning \$100, and hasn't looked back since.

The staff and ministry continue to make their mark as they prepare for a nine-week retreat to Orlando, Florida. They will meet with other Campus Outreach ministries and students from around the country to learn and grow in their faith together.

Hawthorne wasn't raised in the church; nevertheless, she still found her way into a relationship with Christ through the Campus Outreach and continues to help others do the same.

“There's such a sweetness to it,” Hawthorne says.

“There's a team of people who want to see the world changed. It's such a beautiful picture of a full-circle moment.”

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