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Churches Group for Social Concern -

Aims:

To encourage the people of the churches in the application of their faith to everyday life in the community.

To draw the attention of member churches to current local needs and work in partnership with other agencies in an attempt to meet them.

To assist in thinking about ethical and moral issues, by initiating appropriate study projects and conferences.

When necessary it will arrange fundraising events.

Compassion

The Sevenoaks Churches Group for Social Concern Newsletter

Issue 1, Jan 2004

Future plans and events

Spring Group Meeting -

7.45pm on Thurs 11th March at St John's Hill URC Church

To pray, share vision and discuss the proposed focus of the groups activities over future months.

To inform about the support available from organisations like Faithworks and Shaftesbury Society.

To receive feedback, invite commitment, and share resolve for greater participation in the Group's aims.

Proposed Open Activity Day -

Monday 31st May (Bank Holiday)

We propose a day with multiple events and activities organised locally to provide opportunities for our faith to be demonstrated in our care for, and about this community.

Just like Soul in the City 2004, groups of people can tidy, paint, clear up, give-away, encourage and bless individuals, groups, and organisations.

Why should the young people have all the fun?

Autumn Open Meeting -

8.00pm on Tuesday 12th October, venue TBA

"Building & Supporting Relationships within Families"



Affiliated to Faithworks

The Faithworks Movement exists:

1. To empower and inspire every local church to rediscover its role at the hub of the community.
2. To challenge and change public perception of the church by engaging with both media and government
3. To promote Christian values within our society

Steve Chalke, founder of both the Oasis Trust and Faithworks, was challenged by a reporter, that Christian Charitable work was more about converting vulnerable people than helping them. He replied, "Our motivation is simply our God-given responsibility to care - our faith must work! If through our work, the people we serve encounter God and something of the love and compassion of Jesus then that will speak for itself. We don't hide our faith, but we will never impose it. We are here to serve all, unconditionally. That is what Christ has asked us to do. It's what our faith compels us to do"

It is our belief that affiliation to Faithworks will help keep us focused on our primary purpose which is to encourage the people of the member churches in the application of their faith in everyday life.

Let's co-operate and network together to increasingly see the Kingdom of God advancing here in our communities.

faithworks

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As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James 2 v 26

Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust - SAYT

Judith Cork is the detached youth worker for SAYT and her colleague Jane Down who had been in post for six weeks, works part time for the Trust and part time for St. Mary's, Kemsing.

Judith reported that she had been in post for eighteen months and in that time had been working with Mick Cahill a KCC detached youth worker, on the Greatness and Hillingdon Rise estates and in Kemsing. It was mandatory for youth workers to work in pairs when going out onto the streets. Young people needed to recognise the workers before they will even speak to them - It took time to form relationships and to win their trust. In future, Judith and Jane will more often work together. On the streets, Judith carried her ID, various games and puzzles, and information on flyers or in leaflets about drug abuse, housing and local activities. Judith also carried a sharps box to collect needles or broken glass and in the darker evenings she carried a torch.

A simple quiz could be helpful: What is an Hallucination? When will Cannabis be legalised? Useful discussions came from questions like these.

Actual contact time on the streets was only 2½ hrs a week but preparation time and participation in community meetings was helpful. Other activities included:

- Working with other agencies
- Going into schools to speak at Assemblies, etc.
- Working with the Adolescent Resource Centre in the summer, which helped teenagers with problems such as truanting and school exclusion.
- The Town Church had hosted a life skills course which improved self esteem and helped people to understand the consequences of

their actions. A drop-in on a Thursday was attended by up to forty teenagers.

- Social action projects organised by Deeper - practical projects such as clearing litter and tidying gardens.
- There were evening meetings with Christian bands. The most recent gig had been attended by 250 people.
- A liaison role with Spring House. This helped parents with their relationships with their children.
- Speaking to church groups, youth clubs, Harvest Festival assemblies and Fairtrade seminars in schools.

Finally, Judith said that she would happy to visit any of our churches.

Questions:

- 1) Had there had been any support from church youth groups? - No, none except from those people already committed to SAYT.
- 2) What was the background to Deeper? - It was a social action project in which several local young people had participated. On their return they felt that what had succeeded in Manchester should be tried locally.
- 3) Was there still a need for volunteers? - Yes there was. No background in youth work was needed. There was secretarial work and fund raising as well as direct contact with young people. There was a particular need for a line manager for Judith and Jane. More details from www.sayt.org.uk

Teenagers in Trouble Teenagers in Need

Extracts from a talk
by Angela Painter

In the 1940s, people were concerned about talking in class . . . In the 1990s, it was drugs and alcohol . . . In 2003, it is violence and the Internet!

Teenage pregnancies, school exclusion, violence and suicide, female smoking, eating disorders, homelessness, drug associated problems, youth carers and boredom are some of the issues affecting teenagers today. To counterbalance this, teenagers can be seen to have a great capacity for compassion, humour, inspiration, talent, fitness, insight, and capacity to love and learn.

Here in Sevenoaks, the primary concerns are:

- High abortion (but low pregnancy)
- High achievers, high stress
- CAMHS - 9 to 12 months wait for appointment.
- High suicide rate with young men
- Alcohol in town centre
- Homelessness
- Boredom reigns

Motivated by compassion, Jesus taught the people, fed the hungry, and healed the sick.

How "nice" is Sevenoaks?

- Sally aged 14 has a baby boy. She's already had 1 abortion & 1 miscarriage
- Kevin is depressed with the burden of looking after a relative.
- Steve, homeless, sent to East Kent
- Jo is 13, a high achiever, but she now weighs just 4½ stone.

Festival Manchester gave us some insight

negative	positive
drink & drugs	volunteering
shoplifting	charity work
abusiveness	youth clubs

into what can be done: Young people getting involved in their community, to care.

Deeper was formed and has done a lot already.

There is actually quite a lot happening to meet young people's needs:

SAYT - Judith & Jane

Connexions - Career's advice

Parenthood - particularly young women getting into trouble and parenting classes

VSU - working with 14 to 24 year olds

Parents of teenagers support - where mental health is a problem

Youth & Community - Greatness Estate

There is an Action Plan:

- Schools work
- Young person's drugs worker
- Young persons action plan - SDC
- Potential "Drop-in" facility

Remember that:

- Every child (and their

family) matters

• All are individuals, worthy in the sight of God

• Ask, what would Jesus have us do?

• Listen without judgement.

• Love them unconditionally.

Our thanks to Angela Painter (an SAYT Trustee) who addressed the open meeting on Thursday 13th November 2003