



LUTHERAN LIFE

Abwaze!
Igniting the World with Christ's Love

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District Youth Gathering Establishes Attendance Record

Almost 600 youth and counselors gathered in Jacksonville, FL, from March 3-5 for the Florida-Georgia District High School Gathering. The theme for the three-day event was "Immortal Combat," based on 2 Corinthians 10:3-4: "For though

we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds."

"Praise be to God, our Ultimate Champion and Victor in Jesus Christ, for an amazing weekend of spiritual challenge and growth, service, worship, Bible study, and fellowship," enthused Heidi Bierlein, Director of Christian Education at Grace-Jacksonville who co-chaired the gathering with Esther Barg, Director of Christian Education at Redeemer-Melbourne, FL.

Grace, Holy Cross, Bethlehem and St. Peter's Lutheran Churches in the Jacksonville Circuit provided hospitality and volunteer staffing for the event. Serving on the gathering steering committee were Pastor Tim Droegemueller, DCE Danielle Heffern, Pastor Marc Kappel, Megan Armstrong-Miessler, DCE Dennis Rach, DCE Jeff Wielert

in Bible study. Pastor Jon Thomas of Holy Cross-Lake Mary served as the emcee for the weekend event.

"Throughout the event youth were instructed and

FUSEBOX and an awesome Servant Event."

The Gathering Servant Event was accomplished in partnership with Lutheran Social Services and Second Harvest Food Bank,

Christian Store and learn more about the opportunities offered by the District's Concordia House of Studies. Many attendees wrote letters to American men and women serving overseas.



Thrivent Financial for Lutherans donated \$10,000 to fund the Mobile Food Pantry event. Shown here at the check presentation are (left to right) Florida-Georgia District Executive of Congregational Services Davis Weidner; Councilwoman Gwen Yates; Executive Director of Lutheran Social Services Wayne Rieley; LSS Director of Operations Paul Bussell; St. Paul-Jacksonville Pastor Rev. Frank Marshall; and Thrivent local chapter Communications Chair Jon Wuggazer.



Fusebox was the Gathering band.



Gathering speaker Rev. Victor Belton of Peace-Decatur, GA.

and District Executive Director of Congregational Services David Weidner.

Florida-Georgia District President Gerhard Michael welcomed participants during the opening session. Keynote speaker Rev. Victor Belton of Peace-Decatur, GA, shouted the battle cry, calling the youth into "awareness of the Immortal Combat we face in our sinful world."

Pastor Paul vonWerder of Hope-Orlando led participants

encouraged to armor up and take the offense for the real spiritual warfare we are amidst," Bierlein said.

"Over-all the event scored another high approval rating from the participants, enjoying great Christian fellowship and excitement about the high energy worship celebrations led by our gathering band

with sponsorship and funding provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. (See related story on this page.)

In addition to service, mass events with speakers, music and Bible study, District youth had the opportunity to visit with Concordia University System representatives, shop at Family

During the closing worship, Gathering participants paid tribute to Sally Serrine, who died earlier this year and was remembered by Weidner as "an icon and pillar of youth ministry in the District and across the LCMS." In her memory, the Sally Serrine Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established to provide scholarships to District youth in need of assistance with the registration fees for district and national youth events.

The Sunday plate offering of \$1035 was dedicated to support outreach ministry in the District.

A post gathering Bible Study is being posted to the District website (www.flga-lcms.org). Planning is under way for next year's Gathering — tentatively scheduled for March 2-4, 2007. □

Cooperative Effort Feeds Thousands of Hungry People

Participants at the 2006 Florida-Georgia District High School Gathering joined members of local Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregations to help Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida distribute 1,500 Family Boxes of food to more than 6,000 hungry people in Jacksonville on Saturday, March 4.

Members of local Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations and USO volunteers from Mayport, Cecil Field and Blount Island naval air stations also helped make the event possible.

Thanks to sponsorship by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Lutheran Social Services' Second Harvest Food Bank was able to host its largest "Food for Families"

Mobile Pantry at Clanzel T. Brown Park. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans contributed \$10,000 based on 21,225 volunteer hours contributed by 750 Lutherans to put on this event.

During the month prior to the event, area LCMS and ELCA congregations ran food drives and collected financial donations in support of the Mobile

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Youth work on unloading some of the food goods at the Mobile Pantry.

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