

Kids all grown up?

This letter's for you!

No kids?

This letter's for you!

Got Kids?

This letter's for you!

June 6, 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

This letter is for **everyone** in the parish, even though it does concern our younger members and their families in a special way.

This past Sunday evening we had our first ever **Youth Program Fair**. For organizing this great event thanks go to: Andrea Laux, our Coordinator of Youth Ministries; to our Youth Steering Committee; and to our awesome Youth Council! The **Fair** was designed as a kind of "buffet" of youth programs and opportunities for our young people in **grades 5-12**. Monument Hall was ringed with tables presenting **more than 20** youth programs in our parish - and that's not even including religious education. Each table on the "buffet line" had materials on particular programs, sweets and baked goods to entice, and at least one adult and one young person to respond to questions and help attendees sign up.

The **Fair** was preceded by a special program (including pizza!) for **5th graders** who will be entering middle school this coming fall and will be eligible for many of these programs for the first time.

Of course, you already know much of this information because you've read about it in the parish bulletin over the last four weeks and you may be one of **300+ households** who have received weekly emails for a month reminding you of the upcoming Fair.

And, as an indication of how much our Youth Steering Committee believes in these programs, six members of the Committee made over **330 individual phone calls** to households with students in these grades.

I wish everyone in the parish could have seen our Youth Council kids speaking, presenting and demonstrating some of their activities on the Monument Hall stage. When you see young folks showing you how to fish marbles out of trays of baked beans with their toes **AND** speaking about how much they appreciate the opportunities Youth Council offers them for understanding, sharing and growing in their faith - your heart fills with hope! (I know my heart rejoiced when two high school boys approached me to ask how they could learn to be Eucharistic Ministers who bring Communion to the sick and the homebound.)

As one parent said of the young presenters: *I hope my kids grow up to be like those kids!*

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There is, unfortunately, something of a downside to the story of this evening. Almost all of the kids present were those who were presenting and sitting at the tables to answer questions. After all the advertising and personal contact, **only 10** families brand new to these programs were in attendance.

Let me assure you that everyone who came enjoyed the presentation and learned a lot about the wonderful breadth of opportunities for youth in our parish. No cloud hung over the evening: it was exciting, fun and wonderful!

The sad part is that so many missed it.

Yes, I know it's a busy time of year and, as always, our parish efforts are in competition for people's time and energy. We will probably repeat this effort early in the fall and, I hope, many more will attend. But I also know that when we wait until the fall, we're likely to hear, "Oh, that sounds great but we're already signed up for _____ (fill in the blank with a hundred other programs for young people).

I believe there are **three ways** to make this situation better.

First: let everyone in the parish know what we're offering for our young people (thus the Fair, thus this letter!). Everyone in the parish should be aware of how our parish works to form the faith of our youngest members – and that's why this letter is for **everyone** in the parish!

Second: encourage participating youth to spread the good word among their friends.

Third: encourage parents to take as seriously as they can what they promised at their children's baptism: to raise their sons and daughters in the practice of our faith. Sunday night's **Youth Program Fair** was a **hall-full** of ways the parish stands ready to help parents fulfill that responsibility.

Again, my thanks to the youth and adults who did such a fine job of pulling together the **Fair** on Sunday night: you're the best!

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming