



YOUTH

## Leadership? You betcha'!

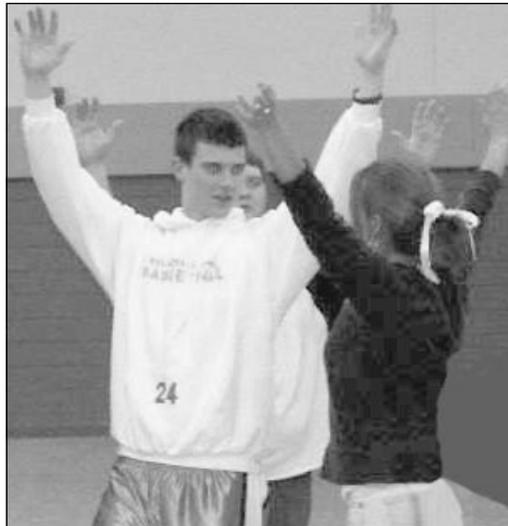
“We can lead our own youth group!” That’s what board members of the Northeastern Iowa Lutheran Youth Organization want to hear from youth in synod congregations.

“Yes, youth CAN do it,” said Anna Johnson, St. John, Charles City, president of the organization. “Youth can lead youth.”

The board believes this so strongly that this year it is focusing on providing youth skills and tools to lead their own youth groups and do it well.

### Opportunity

Many synod congregations are small and not growing (see box, page two). When youth in these congregations gather, it means—at •



**EVENTS, such as the annual youth assembly in March (right), provide opportunities to interact with—and lead—youth from across the synod.**

## Fewer people, fewer youth

In most synod congregations, worship attendance totals fewer than 150 people with, it can be assumed, a handful of youth.

### Synod congregation size (2004)

Worshiper numbers	Synod congregations
1-50 .....	20 percent
51-150 .....	52 percent
151-350 .....	20 percent
351-800 .....	7 percent
more than 800 .....	1 percent

Youth who rally their peers to worship work to reverse a trend, because worship attendance is not increasing.

### Worship attendance (from 1997 to 2003)

	Synod	ELCA
Increased .....	21 percent	24 percent
Stable .....	27 percent	30 percent
Declined .....	52 percent	46 percent

From 1997 to 2003, the number of synod baptized youth who completed confirmation decreased 16 percent (1,242 youth in 1997; 1,046 youth in 2003).

This synod has more multiple-point parishes than most, a situation that can stretch adult leaders and thrust youth into youth group leadership.

Most of the synod's congregations will not see a population increase around them. Only 29 percent of synod congregations (53 congregations) are projected to be in a locale that will see a population increase from 2003 to 2008.

—from the web site <[www.elca.org/research](http://www.elca.org/research)>. Reports are titled “Northeastern Iowa Synod select congregational statistics,” “Changes in average worship attendance by synod 1997-2003,” “Northeastern Iowa Synod trend report,” “Estimated number of ELCA multiple point congregations by synod,” and “Detailed description of projected population change and average attendance change for Northeastern Iowa Synod.”

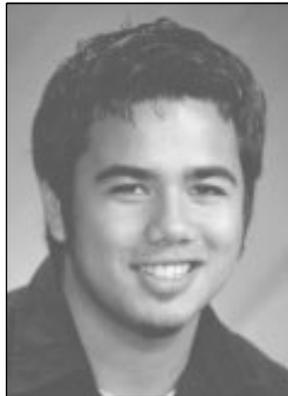
**MAKING A DIFFERENCE** is a stewardship publication of the Northeastern Iowa Synod, 201 20th Street SW, PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677-0804; <[www.neiasynod.org](http://www.neiasynod.org)>; phone 319/352-1414; FAX 319/352-1416. Editor Elaine Main

most— a half-dozen high schoolers. When these six organize themselves, two positives result.

- **Effectiveness** The youth group becomes what these youth want and need; it reaches youth successfully.



**GIBNEY**



**HOUTS**

- **Future church leadership**

Young people who practice leadership through church youth groups, slide naturally into adult leadership positions, which enhances the future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Youth directors agree that the best youth ministry occurs when youth take charge.

“You can’t just plan events and expect youth to show up,” said Maggie Gibney, youth director at Immanuel, Independence. “Ask them, listen, and have them invest in the planning. Understand and see what they’re hungry for, and what they need to help them grow in their faith walk.”

Ryan Houts, youth director at St. John American, Cedar Falls, said, “The key to a good youth program is building it from youths’ talents and passions. I’ve heard youth initiate talk about their spiritual gifts. They decided how they could use their gifts to serve. They were doing an informal spiritual gift inventory.”

### **Assembly leadership**

Youth leading youth is the philosophy of both Rev. Mark Anderson and his predecessor in working with youth, Rev. Darrel Gerriets, both assistants to the bishop. They agree that, when youth do their own planning and leading, success follows.

Johnson, synod youth organization president, said that the organization’s next assembly will empower youth to create their own youth groups.

“Youth will lead the assembly,” Johnson said, “and participants will see that, indeed, youth CAN lead each other. Youth who lead their peers learn to lead in the church. Congregations that encourage and support youth strengthen the future of the church.”

Tina Vaughan, Redeemer, Waverly, vice president of the Northeastern Iowa Lutheran Youth Organization, said, “The majority of youth groups are rather small. We want to give teenagers the tools and skills to self-start their own group. This year’s assembly will be a demonstration of how to have a good youth group. Then youth can take the initiative in their local groups.”

### **Three keys**

Board members of the Northeastern Iowa Lutheran Youth Organization held a strategy retreat last September at Camp EWALU, Strawberry Point. They identified three keys to a successful youth program—

- Substance, such as Bible study, prayer, and worship
- Service
- Fun.

These three will be the focus of the 2006 synod youth assembly in Waverly March 11-12. Attendees will experience substance, service, and fun, then get tools to lead these three things in their home congregations.

Sessions include—

- Workshops showing youth **how to lead Bible studies**



**JOHNSON**



**VAUGHAN**

### Youth-led prayer

- **Service** experiences
- Suggestions of **how to plan local service**
- An explanation of the national **ONE campaign** to direct 1 percent more of the U.S. federal budget to fight AIDS and poverty, the United Nations' millennium development goals; the ONE coalition includes ELCA partners, such as Bread for the World, Church World Service, The Episcopal Church, and The United Methodist Church
- **Fun**, lots of fun.



### Relationships

Fun builds relationships

“Youth work is all about relationships,” Houts said. “Youth need to know that someone cares about them and wants to know what their life is like. This happens during those important 15 minutes when a youth director or adult writes a youth a note, makes a phone call, leaves an instant message on computer, or buys a youth a coke.”

St. John, Cedar Falls, fosters relationships through LUG groups, small gatherings of youth who meet weekly to share how it's going. Each small group includes an adult, who leads a short devotion, then listens.

In Independence, Immanuel's youth group helps its youth, who already know each other, form relationships in a new environment.

“At our gatherings, youth let down their guard,” Gibney said.

### How do you learn to lead?

- You study leadership tools, observe leaders, discover what other groups do successfully, and get fired up.
- You feel support of pastors and adult mentors.
- You pray for the Spirit's guidance, take a deep breath, and do it.

“We create a secure place where youth feel a sense of belonging. These relationships also occur outside the church building—at McDonald's or the coffee shop. That helps youth see that they are Christians every day, not just at church on Sunday.”



**Those who work with youth find resources on the web at <[www.neiasynod.org/youth](http://www.neiasynod.org/youth)>.**

### Wider environment

The synod helps youth from across the synod meet each other. As they form relationships with other Christian youth, they feel less alone in their faith and broaden their concept of One in Christ.

Adults who accompany youth to synod events use that time to form relationships with their youth.

“The junior high lock-in was a good time for me to get acquainted with the youth I brought,” Gibney said. “I sat and talked with the girls who wanted to be off by themselves. Then I played basketball with the boys and got to know them, too.”

Congregations can request visits from synod youth board members. Visits assist with assessment, vision, and goal setting. Board members visited St. John, Clarksville, in November.

Johnson said, “Youth in a small congregation can create an active and meaningful youth group by being willing to lead it and by focusing on substance, service, and fun.”

—Elaine Main, editor

### Synod youth assembly rotation

- 2006 Waverly, March 11-12**  
24-hour, one-night youth assembly beginning Saturday noon; optional Saturday morning jump-start of *Cruzando*, the churchwide youth gathering in San Antonio, Texas, July 5-9 and 12-16, 2006
- 2007 Dubuque**—40-hour, two-night youth assembly
- 2008 Waterloo**—two-night
- 2009 Waverly**—one-night

## <[www.neiasynod.org/youth](http://www.neiasynod.org/youth)>

The synod's web site is rich.

### **Substance**—Bible studies youth can lead

- *Faith Lens*, a Bible study/discussion for youth posted each Wednesday morning on topics such as *McJob*
- *Reel World*, movie discussion guides, such as *The Incredibles* or *Shrek 2* by Erik Ullestad, Des Moines, son of the bishop
- Links to Augsburg Fortress to purchase Bible studies such as *No Experience Necessary* and the *Ignite!* Series, with sessions by Dr. Chip Bouzard, Rev. Ramona Bouzard, and Dr. Kit Kleinhans, all of Waverly

### **Service**—12 links to ways that youth can fight hunger

#### **Fun**—

- Youth group ideas—110 ways youth can minister in their congregation and beyond
- A unified 17-month calendar to aid in scheduling events, which includes religious holidays, statewide arts and sports events, synod youth events

#### **Finances**—

- An ABC guide to budgeting
- A sample congregation youth budget
- Fund-raising links to Augsburg Fortress and fair trade chocolates

#### **Policies**—

- Synod youth ministry event policies
- Transportation, medical, housing, registration, privacy, and fund-raising policies
- Youth and adult covenants

#### **Staffing**—

- Sample job descriptions for a youth and Christian education (or family ministry) specialist
- Salary guide for youth workers
- Help sheet for calling staff and providing for youth ministry
- Sample interview questions
- Electronic newsletters for those who work with youth

#### **Youth ministry links**

- Northeastern Iowa Synod Lutheran Youth Organization
- Churchwide Youth Gathering (Cruzando)
- Photos from events
- Synod youth leadership events—Diakonia, Tiempo, WIYLDE

If you do not have access to the web and want a print copy of what's on the web, call the synod office (phone 319/352-1414).

## Northeastern Iowa Events for 2006



**Assembly**, Northeastern Iowa Lutheran Youth, Grades 9-12, *Red Fox Inn, Waverly*, March 11-12

**Diakonia**, Youth Leadership, *Wartburg College, Waverly*, June 12-18

**Event**, Wholly Iowa Youth Leaders Discipling (WIYLDE), *Luther College, Decorah*, July 24-28

**Extravaganza**, Gathering for Those Who Work with Youth, *Phoenix, Arizona*, February 2-5

**Gatherings**, ELCA Youth, *San Antonio, Texas*, July 5-9 and July 12-16

**Pre-gathering Event**, Churchwide Youth Gathering, *Waverly*, March 11

**Lock-in**, Junior High, Middle School, *University of Northern Iowa Lutheran Student Center, Cedar Falls*, October

**Network**, Youth Ministry Leaders, *Zion, West Union*, December 13, 2005, 10 a.m.; *Trinity, Mason City*, April 16, 2006, 10 a.m.

**Vocations Day**, Grades 7-9, *Wartburg College, Waverly*, October

## 2005-06 board

**Anderson**, Rev. Mark, assistant to the bishop

**Bachman**, Deb, advisor, *One in Christ, Lake Mills*

**Bauer**, Rev. Norman, advisor, *Calmar, Calmar*, and *Springfield, Decorah*

**Bouzard**, Green, co-secretary, *St. Paul's, Waverly*

**Finger**, Caitlyn, *St. Peter, Dubuque*

**Fleener**, Victoria, *Trinity, Belmond*

**Gray**, Breanna, secretary, *Redeemer, Waverly*

**Hamilton**, Dannie, *Faith, Shell Rock*

**Hopp**, Mitch, *Trinity, Belmond*

**Janssen**, Nolan, *Trinity, Belmond*

**Johnson**, Anna, president, *St. John, Charles City*

**Macken**, Elizabeth, *St. Matthew*,

*Readlyn*

**Maley**, Alyssa, *Redeemer, Waverly*

**Mauer**, Alicia, *St. Peter, Denver*

**Nielsen**, Alyssa, *St. John, Charles City*

**Nieman**, Andrew, *First, Manchester*

**Olsen**, Jens, *First, McGregor*

**Schmitz**, Allison, *Zion, Oelwein*

**Steere**, Jennifer, *communications, St. John (Vilmar), Greene*

**Stockseth**, Alex, *Trinity, Belmond*

**Stotser**, Leif, *Our Saviour's, Ackley*

**Tigges**, Jill, *Holy Trinity, Dubuque*

**VanDenHul**, Keisha, *Zion, Oelwein*

**Vaughan**, Tina, vice president and synod council representative, *Redeemer, Waverly*

**Walter**, Adrian, advisor, *First, Decorah*

## To support synod ministries

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