

CONTACT



in

WINTER 2007

Club Members REACH OUT TO SOLDIERS

Pioneer Clubs members at Murrysville Alliance Church in Murrysville, PA, opened their hearts to members of the military serving in Iraq this Christmas by assembling and sending holiday care packages.

Club members helped with the veterans' outreach ministry by participating in their "Operation Christmas Soldier" project. During the month of November, children brought in items such as microwave popcorn, compact discs, word search books, and toiletries for the care packages. They also decorated Christmas cards, and club groups had their pictures taken to enclose with the cards.

The father of three club members, who has served in Iraq, visited a club meeting in full uniform to talk with the children. "It was a great way for the kids to learn to appreciate all they have as well as those who protect our freedoms," says Andrea Shissler, club coordinator.

Club members at Bethel Baptist Church in Greeley, CO, also reached out to soldiers—making Christmas packages for the brothers of two club members who are serving in Iraq and away from home for the



Club members at Murrysville Alliance Church contributed items for their church's "Operation Christmas Soldier" project.

holiday. Club members brought in beef jerky, puzzle books, fruit snacks, hard candy, and "other things that can fit in a small box," says Jeanette Meis, club coordinator. Club members also created Christmas cards to include in the packages.

The project was part of a family event held before the clubs take a break for Christmas. Families also made luminaries and a candy cane project designed to share the gospel with

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Club Leaders Create Advent Bag Devotionals

At Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Kemblesville, PA, club members received special holiday packages. Club coordinators Wendy Bonnett and Sandy Hershey, helped by Wendy's daughter Jessica and about 15 other adults, put together Advent bags for 160 families of club members, vacation Bible school attendees, and children from the elementary school at the church. The drawstring felt bags contained an individually wrapped gift related to a Bible story or a biblical principle for each day in Advent. Each gift was accompanied by a brief message and a Bible verse.

The project was designed to serve as a family devotional. Many club members come from church families, but even those may not hold family devotions


> Club leaders at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church created Advent bags designed to serve as family devotionals.

during the busy Christmas season. "In addition, there are lots of children from unchurched families," Wendy says. "The Advent bag gets them to open the Bible every day. We've been told of families sitting down and opening a Bible together for the first time."

As helpers wrapped *continued on page 2 ▶*

Club Members to Celebrate Being "Friend of God"

Club members across North America will participate in a continent-wide celebration of Pioneer Clubs Sunday on February 11. This year's theme, "Friend of God," is based on Proverbs 17:17: "A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need."

Pioneer Clubs Sunday is an opportunity for each church to spotlight its club program and share with the congregation how God is working in the lives of club members. Club members frequently participate in a worship service as greeters, ushers, or Scripture readers. Often clubs perform special music or recite Bible verses. Many churches use Pioneer Clubs Sunday to acknowledge the service of club leaders as well as collect a special offering for support of the Pioneer Clubs ministry headquarters. 

How does your church celebrate Pioneer Clubs Sunday? Send photos and a brief description to lferreeb@pioneerclubs.org and we'll share your story on Pioneer Clubs' Web site.

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Club Members REACH OUT TO SOLDIERS


others. About half of the 25 families participating in the event "belong to other churches or have no church that they attend but come to our club program," says Jeanette. 



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Club Leaders Create Advent Bag Devotionals

gifts for the Advent bags, Wendy asked them to pray that the Scripture associated with that particular item would be understood by the family unwrapping it. Wendy also gave completed bags to a few adults who don't have children, encouraging them to open the gifts daily and to pray for the families that would be opening that gift that day.

Wendy's hope is that the Advent bags will help churched and unchurched families get in the habit of reading the Bible together and understanding its truth. "We do what we can on a Wednesday night," she says, "but to get the Bible open at home is a big thing." 


A Giving Window of Opportunity

Thanks to the Pension Protection Act of 2006, people in their seventies can now donate individual retirement account (IRA) assets directly to charitable organizations, and avoid paying federal tax. If you are 70 1/2 or older, you can make a donation from your IRA directly to Pioneer Clubs without recognizing the distribution as income.

This opportunity is especially beneficial to donors who now receive minimum IRA distributions but do not need the extra income. These mandatory minimum distributions drive up your taxable income and reduce many of your deductions. A donation from an IRA directly to Pioneer Clubs counts toward your required minimum distribution for the year and therefore reduces the amount of taxable income you are required to withdraw.

This law provides a window of opportunity for you to make a significant gift this year to help boys and girls make Christ Lord in every aspect of life. An individual may transfer up to \$100,000 from his or her IRA, and married spouses may *each* transfer up to \$100,000.

The law only applies to gifts from IRAs in calendar years 2006 and 2007. Money in a 401(K) would need to be rolled over into an IRA to be eligible for this direct contribution benefit. But you also have until April 1, 2007 of the year following when you turn 70 1/2 to pull out your first distribution—some readers may still be able to save on taxes for 2006 and 2007 distributions. Keep in mind that the donation must come to Pioneer Clubs directly from your IRA administrator to qualify. You will need to contact your broker, bank, or mutual fund company to get an IRA Charitable Distribution Request form to do this. Check with your financial advisor to see how you can benefit.

Using your IRA assets to make a gift now, rather than through a bequest in your will, allows you to experience the joy of reaching and discipling children for Christ through the ministry of Pioneer Clubs. To take advantage of this giving window of opportunity, consult your financial advisor and contact Valencia A. Breckenridge, Pioneer Clubs' director of development, at 630-293-1600 ext. 5729. 

PIONEER CLUBS' MISSION

To serve God by providing the most effective and educationally sound programs to help children follow Christ in every aspect of life.

Helping Kids Really Understand the Bible

by Jody Maas

As a Pioneer Clubs leader and a mother with two girls in the program, I especially value how Pioneer Clubs gives children an opportunity to fully interact with what they are learning about God. Children are passive participants at so many church events. They sit. They listen. But how much do they really remember or understand?

At Pioneer Clubs, kids get time to wrestle with Scripture. They ask questions and work to discover the answers with Christian adults. Pioneer Clubs does something that many programs don't—it pushes kids to think about God's Word in age-appropriate ways.

For example, the kids in my club recently explored what it means to "think before you speak." I read part of a story, and then they broke into small groups to act out how it ended. Each group put a negative spin on the story of two children seen taking a flower from school. Yet, it turned out the teacher had asked them to get the flower for a sick person.

It was amusing to watch the "oh, my" expressions. We talked about how Scripture warns us against judging and condemning others. The kids then



talked about how they struggle with judging others, naturally applying what they learned to their lives.

The world's influence can be overwhelming. It's easy to see why a child's value system is too often shaped by the loudest voice: The Christian worldview gets drummed out. In Pioneer Clubs, a child is encouraged to hear God's voice. Even better, the biblical worldview is presented as being desirable at Pioneer Clubs. The club environment makes faith fun by combining Scripture study and memory with skill-building activities.

My daughters look forward to going to Pioneer Clubs each week. Recently, my younger daughter had complained all day about not feeling well, so I said, "You don't have to go to club if you're feeling miserable." Her response was, "No, I *want* to go. I *have* to be with my friends."

Jody Maas has been active in Pioneer Clubs as a club leader, coordinator, Camp Cherith counselor, workshop leader, and former staff member, and now she serves on the Board of Directors. Her daughters, Frannie and Carla, are Pioneer Clubs members. 🏡

Pioneer Clubs Offers College and CILT Scholarships

Do you know a college-bound high school senior who has participated in Pioneer Clubs and/or Camp Cherith®? He or she may be interested in applying for a scholarship through the Virginia C. Patterson Continuing Education Fund.

Scholarships are awarded based on the applicant's participation in Pioneer Clubs and Camp Cherith programs; involvement in church, school, and community activities; future plans;

letters of recommendation; and financial need.

Scholarships to young people interested in applying for a Campers in Leadership Training (CILT) program at Camp Cherith are also available.

To request an application for a college or CILT scholarship, contact Valencia A. Breckenridge at 800-694-2582 ext. 5729 or e-mail her at vbreckenridge@pioneerclubs.org. The deadline for completed applications is April 30. 🏡

In Honor Of...

Judy Bryson
Olga Tsekh
Lyubov Shuliga

Nancy Walker
Olga Tsekh

Peggy Jones
Olga Tsekh

Sandi Vander Kooi
Olga Tsekh
Lyubov Shuliga
Joyce Hunt

Robert Warburton
Ronald & Dee Netzel

Mary Hackman
Sara Anne Robertson

In Loving Memory of...

Jenna Staup
Bernard & Isabelle Malda

Dorothy Henderson
Ruth & Emanuel Johnson

Norman Waltman
Valencia Breckenridge

Allen Smith
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Dallas & Leona Wonnell
Don & Joyce Tuter

Nancy Eckland
Richard & Maxine Fralick

Emily Elizabeth Snead
Russ & Diane Haag

IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER...

When you work with children you sometimes wonder if anything is getting through to them. It's not uncommon for parents, teachers and even Pioneer Clubs leaders to feel like what they are saying to kids is going in one ear and out the other. My dad used to claim that's what happened with me!

Many children have multiple opportunities to hear the good news of the gospel, yet it may not fully click for them right away. This happened to Bella, a child in my church. Bella's mom told me that following a Pioneer Clubs meeting where they had talked about salvation, forgiveness and God's grace, Bella came home and said, "I didn't know that when you said you were sorry you really had to mean it." She went on to explain the plan of salvation that she had heard during her club Bible Exploration lesson. For the first time, Bella grasped the concept of her sin and God's willingness to forgive her. Somewhere in that lesson she also understood that when we ask for God's forgiveness and say we are sorry for things we have done, we REALLY have to mean it. What a wonderful lesson to learn at such a young age!

The message of God's grace, love, and redemption is paramount in Pioneer Clubs' curriculum and program. Leaders have the privilege of sharing the gospel with children in multiple ways throughout the club year. For some

children, club may be the first place they hear this life-changing message. Others, like my young friend Bella, come from church homes and may have heard the gospel but haven't yet grasped its full impact. Pioneer Clubs is a unique ministry because it is able to bridge the "gospel gap"



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for both sets of children and help them learn about God's love.

I know young Bella had been told about sin, salvation, forgiveness and God's grace before her Pioneer Clubs experience. But once isn't always enough. The Bible gives Christian adults clear direction regarding our responsibility to talk to our children about God's love and our obedience. God's directive to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 11:19 (NIV) is a good reminder of the need to

keep talking about these things with our children: "Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Pioneer Clubs has faithfully shared the good news with children and youth for more than six decades. It is a privilege to partner with church and unchurched parents in the spiritual development of their children. It is refreshing to be reminded that, as we present the gospel, God prepares the hearts and ears of those he has called to be his children.

Thank you for your part in this process. Your faithfulness has helped Pioneer Clubs spread the word to this generation.

Blessings,

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