



## February News

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

According to the 2010 Missouri Assessment Program, 25% of third graders in St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) are reading below basic levels. Mission: St. Louis partners with local elementary schools to change this alarming statistic. Consider joining the many volunteers who are working towards a solution. Whether it's reading to children before school or spending time in an assigned classroom, let's discuss how you can start serving with Mission: St. Louis and having an impact on a child's education. Contact [Emily Whitworth](#) for specific details on the available opportunities.



### The Kids of Forest Park Southeast

Building long-term, life-changing relationships is at the heart of everything we do at Mission: St. Louis. So when the Annual Summer Sports Camp in the Forest Park Southeast (FPSE) neighborhood ended for the 2011 season, volunteers couldn't just walk away until next summer. Friendships with children of all ages had been established over those few summer months as they came out each week to play basketball, kickball, or jump rope.

The kids heard a consistent message at Sports Camp--they learned about God, how he loves them, and how he chose to enter this world in poverty, something with which these children are all too familiar. As Sports Camp drew to a close, a Saturday morning Bible Study began. It was an opportunity for the same kids to hear more about God and to ask important questions about life and faith. The turnout to date has been impressive. Consistently between 10-20 kids show up each Saturday morning at Christian Care Fellowship Church in the FPSE community, a church that allows use of the building in support of what Mission: St. Louis is doing in the neighborhood.

As the children sit in a circle and talk about the highlights of their week, trust is built with each other and with the adults. A short lesson is then taught, oftentimes from the [Jesus Storybook Bible](#). After kids take turns reading the story aloud, leaders ask questions and children's hands shoot up to answer first, "I know, I know, pick me!" As the story unfolds and is discussed, these kids glean a deeper insight into the big questions of life: Who is God and who am I?, What is God like?, and What does He want for my life? The answers to these questions can dramatically change the direction of any person's life, but these kids in particular are struggling to make good decisions in a neighborhood where crime, poverty, and drugs are rampant.

The handful of volunteers that arrive each week hope to continue this dialogue not only at Bible Study on Saturday

### NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

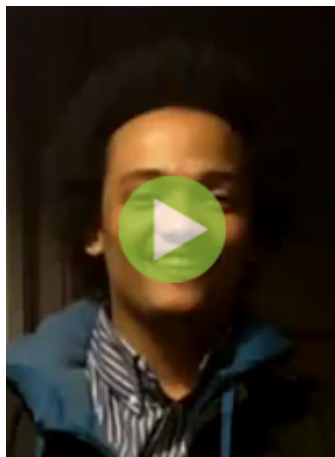


Forest Park Southeast, located along Manchester with the boundaries of Highways 64 and 44, Kingshighway, and Vandeventer, is the hub for many of our programs. Jobs for Life, Summer Sports Camp, and Saturday morning Bible Study all happen in this neighborhood. Adams Elementary is where our Morning Reading and Adopt-A-Classrooms started, and we have recently extended our educational reach to tutoring at Roosevelt High School. Last fall, we spent 2,374 total hours volunteering in the neighborhood, walking alongside and helping to empower 1,042 FPSE residents. Many of these 1,042 participants were children in the local schools. Because of our volunteer manpower, we are helping to make their futures brighter.

### CALLING ALL INTERNS...

Are you looking for a worthwhile internship during either the school year or summer months? Want to pour your time and resources into an organization that can teach you important job skills and where you can really make a difference? We have opportunities available and

### A MESSAGE from Jobs for Life Director, Darren Jackson



### WHAT YOUR MONEY DOES

Did you know that reading aloud to children is directly related to academic excellence, good communication skills, and enhanced concentration and discipline? Because of these

facts, volunteers spend hours throughout the year reading with kids before school begins as they participate in our Morning Reading Program. Your generous donations to Mission: St. Louis purchase the age-appropriate books that are used each week for this important program. We could not do this work without you.

## YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS

At the close of 2011, we mailed an Annual Appeal letter and asked our donors and supporters to consider making a year-end gift. A large percentage of you responded and we were able to raise \$38,775 through this campaign! Thank you so much for your continued generosity as our organization grows. We owe our success to you!

morning but also as they live life alongside these kids as they grow older. Many of the boys that attend are growing up fatherless, and volunteers like Peter Rodick provide a much-needed positive male influence in their lives. For teacher and mentor Pat Thayer, God gave her a vision years ago for the importance of teaching leaders for the next generation. She considers it a privilege to participate in what God is doing in these kids' lives. "They are eager to learn about God and are hungry for His Word. They need to see God's Word lived out in the people who teach them."

After sitting patiently through the short Bible Study and prayer, the kids are rewarded with a fun game or craft to round out the morning. During the Christmas season, Advent calendars were made and decorated along with a lesson explaining the meaning of Advent. The kids were shocked when their calendars were stuffed for each day of the week with a scripture verse and a treat. The joy expressed on their faces reminded every one of us why we make this, and these kids, a priority.

Consider investing in the lives of the youth in the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood as volunteers are needed to assist with Saturday morning Bible Study. Whether your passion is teaching children or you just want to plug into something that is making a difference, we need you. And what's more, these kids need you. Contact [Peter Rodick](#) to get involved.

By: Tiffany Kilper

would love to speak with you about where you can best plug into Mission: St. Louis. Contact [Joy Clarke](#) to find out more.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

We will be hosting an Education Training on February 11th at the Mission: St. Louis office (4366 Manchester Ave). If you are considering volunteering for our Morning Reading Program or Adopt-A-Classroom, this training will be extremely beneficial for you. You will gain an important understanding of why Mission: St. Louis values education and what to expect when stepping into serve at one of our area schools. Contact [Emily Whitworth](#) to register and find out more details.