

EDITORIAL
Higher Calling: Why We Do
Adventist Education

FEATURE
Social Media Boosts
Community Engagement

NEWS
Keys to Successful Evangelism

Memo

INFORMING MEMBERS SINCE 1988

MAY 2024

**Social Media Boosts
Community Engagement**



Higher Calling: Why We Do Adventist Education

In the heart of every parent and educator lies a deep-seated desire to see the children entrusted to their care grow into individuals of character, purpose, and service—a desire that finds its fulfillment in the mission and vision of Adventist education.



Brian Kittleson

Though at times parents and educators perceive that they are at odds in their goals, the gap in outcomes is rarely as wide as sometimes felt.

Seventh-day Adventist education is rooted in preparing students for service in this world and the world to come. From its inception, Adventist education has been guided by a mission and vision that seeks to nurture the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—in a Christ-centered environment.

However, it is possible that we have lost sight of the foundational reason for



IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL
HIGHER CALLING: WHY WE DO ADVENTIST EDUCATION, 2

FEATURE
SOCIAL MEDIA BOOSTS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, 4

NEWS
HOME AT BAUER: PUBLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY IN ACTION, 6

NATURE NUGGET
SHARP-TAILED GROUSE, 8

Editor: Andy Imaim@misda.org
Copy Editor: Beth Thomasthomaseditorial@gmail.com
Administrative Assistant: Judy Ringstaffjkringstaff@misda.org
Layout/Design:Eric Pletcher
Printing:Seminars Unlimited

Copyright © 2024, All Rights Reserved
May 2024 | Vol. 36, No. 5

The MICHIGAN MEMO, published by the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, is a monthly publication, with the exception of June/July and a combined issue for November/December that totals nine publications per year. Correspondence mail can be sent to P.O. Box 24187, Lansing, Michigan 48909. Printed and shipped from Seminars Unlimited, Keene, Texas.

MICHIGAN
Memo

“Seventh-day Adventist education is rooted in preparing students for service in this world and the world to come.”

Adventist education, which is: *“It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”* (Education, p. 13.1). As parents, we want our children to have a better life than we had. We can feel uncomfortable focusing on the service aspect of education. It’s okay if my child rakes a few lawns and writes some beautiful notes to be delivered to the nursing home. But deep inside my soul, I want them to be the top engineer, doctor, nurse, attorney, or mechanic—not to serve, but to have a good income and live a comfortable life. Yes, I want them to use their income wisely and make regular donations to the local Adventist church, but I really want them to be successful here on earth and live the “American dream.”

As teachers, we have accepted this parental pressure because our schools need a level of enrollment to remain viable. Unlike a church, our schools are an exchange of tuition dollars for an education. The pressure to graduate students that compete with the rest of the world is very high. With this subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle pressure,

“It is possible that we have lost sight of the foundational reason for Adventist education.”

we have collectively lost sight of the original purpose of Adventist education, which is the joy of service in this world and the world to come.

This is the reason that self-supporting schools have started. They begin with a local community desiring to really focus on the original purpose of Adventist Education. They, too, struggle financially

because of limited resources and limited enrollment. The Adventist education system is divided, and we know from Scripture that *“a house divided against itself, that house cannot stand”* (Mark 3:25).

The call to all who read this article is that we stop conforming to the desire for our children to have successful careers with good pay, and fully engage our children in the idea of serving mankind. When we enroll our students in the local Adventist school, we will know that the teacher is fully engaged in that same purpose. The parent and teacher are then united in a common goal. When we are united, then the Holy Spirit is poured out in a latter rain that will provide the power to *“such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world!”*

Call to Action

I invite you to recommit to the original purpose of Adventist education. Let us prioritize the joy of service in this world and the world to come, preparing our children not just for successful careers but for lives dedicated to serving humanity and sharing the message of Christ’s love. Enroll your children in local Adventist schools and support them as they embark on this journey of faith and service. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of our children, the world around us and the world to come. 🙏

Brian Kittleson, Associate Superintendent of Schools

1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 271.



Social Media Boosts Community Engagement

“I think the breaking of bread and fellowship is a powerful way for us to connect, build relationships, and grow as the body of Christ,” says Nicole Braxton.

Nicole Braxton has always been interested in food. From a young age, Braxton found herself baking and watching cooking programs, trying her hand at recreating the dishes. Food—good food—has been an interest of hers for as long as she can remember. “Since I was maybe four or five,” she says, “I’ve always been interested and involved in cooking and baking.” Naturally, when Braxton became Adventist in

said. “The closer I got to God my desire started to change...Once I began to study about Blue Zones my interest was really piqued.”

Blue Zones are areas of the world where the population lives significantly longer than average. One Blue Zone is located in Loma Linda, California, where a large number of Adventists reside. “Seeing how Adventists lived ten years longer than the average American—that really piqued my interest, not only in terms of longevity, but also because their quality of life is better.” Braxton explains that the examples she saw in the Blue Zones were enough to inspire her to want to be healthy, too. “I started to look up [vegetarian] recipes to see how I could make them.”

From there, Braxton was led on a journey to create her own health ministry and founded Be Well Be Whole in 2017.

The ministry started with pop-up restaurants and grew into cooking schools and catering. Be Well Be Whole partnered with Detroit Northwest church to host a Diabetes Undone program with Pastor Steve and Tammy Conway. It was at this event that Braxton saw the full potential of a social media platform called MeetUp.

Daniel Rodriguez, who pastors the Plymouth church where Braxton is a member, explains that MeetUp is “an event only app... a place to find interest groups, where people can find each other and meet up. There are groups for runners, pickleball players, quilters—almost any interest.”

Braxton was familiar with the platform, but the thought had never crossed her mind to use it as a ministry tool. Tammy Conway used MeetUp to invite the community to the Diabetes Undone program. “I remember being really impressed by how many people came to the event,” Braxton says. “Tammy was the one who showed me the impact of using MeetUp for ministry.”



“That is a huge passion I have—reaching outside of the church and connecting, because I didn’t come from the church,” says Nicole Braxton.

2015 and began to draw closer to God, she saw the health message linked arm-in-arm with the gospel. “When I first started attending an Adventist church, I realized that a lot of people were vegetarian,” she

“Rodriguez explains that on days the church knows the Foodie group will be attending potlucks, Sabbath School leaders take extra time to pray.”

In early 2020, Braxton felt impressed to start a MeetUp group of her own, which she named Foodie MeetUp group. “I was impressed by the Lord, so I created it,” she says. “I took a leap of faith and set up an account, and within the first week, 30 people had registered. By the second week, there was about 100 people that registered.”

The Foodie MeetUp group’s first meeting was at a Middle Eastern restaurant. “There were two people that came in person,” Braxton says. Shortly after, in March, the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

In 2021, the Foodie MeetUp group began to hold health events at the Plymouth church, where Braxton is Health Ministries director. “We had a series of cooking classes,” she says. Some of the classes were led by Braxton and others were led by guest presenters, such as former Camp Au Sable chef Miguel Larcher.

Following these events, Braxton shares that she was “impressed by the Lord again—that still small voice—that it was time to create something that is easy for the church to replicate with low-impact to its normal system and flow.” Her idea was to change the focus of the Foodie MeetUp to lunch programs. In other words, based less on “created events” with more of a focus on “church potlucks, centered around vegetarian meals. All Foodies would be invited.”

For those interested in food, it would be a free meal for them to enjoy and a time to “break bread with fellow Foodie friends,” and for those that were more interested in spiritual things “it opened the door to begin attending spiritual events.”

Rodriguez explains that on days the church knows the Foodie group will be attending potlucks, Sabbath School leaders take extra time to pray for those who are going to come. There is a new seriousness when “we will have people walking through our doors,” Rodriguez explains.

The MeetUp Foodie group has 1069 members. The number of attendees to church potlucks varies from week to week, depending on individuals’ sched-



ules and availability. Eight of those Foodies, however, have been regularly attending Plymouth church potlucks, Rodriguez reports. Of those eight, one has started Bible studies; one, who Rodriguez describes as a “seeker,” attends as many church functions as they are able; and another woman has begun attending church and is studying with the elders.

“Our MeetUp group is meant for the community,” Braxton says. “When I joined the church, I saw a huge area of outreach to be nurtured. That is a huge passion I have—reaching outside of the church and connecting, because I didn’t come from the church. Building relationships and community is a true passion that God has given me. The MeetUp group is a tool that God has given me to do that,” she says.

Braxton says that it “enabled and empowered the church to break barriers and build relationships over a common interest—ultimately, for the kingdom. It helped the church get out of its ‘business as usual’ mindset.”

Church potluck was a natural way for Be Well Be Whole and the Plymouth church to partner together and minister to the Foodie group. “I think the breaking of bread and fellowship is a powerful way for us to connect, build relationships, and grow as the body of Christ,” Braxton says. “Fellowship opens the doors to help edify each other...it’s beautiful to have a community to support one another as we are journeying through life as believers and with people from all walks of life.” 🙏

By Judy Ringstaff, Communication

Home at Bauer:

Public Campus Ministry in Action

At the Bauer church in Hudsonville, Michigan, Sabbath potlucks have become an extra special part of the week. Every week after the worship service at Bauer, church members and students from nearby Grand Valley State University (GVSU) enjoy homemade food and friendly conversation. These meals are a wonderful fellowship opportunity for all involved and have built a welcoming community for students far from home.

Don and Bonita Hamstra are leaders for youth activities at Bauer church and have long had an interest in helping GVSU students. In September 2022, they met Obed Boateng, an Adventist international student who studies at GVSU. The Hamstras offered to provide him with a ride to church each Sabbath. He gladly accepted and soon discovered that another student on campus was also interested in joining them.

The Hamstras opened their home and shared lunch with the two young men each week after the service. Within a few weeks, other members of Bauer church became interested and were eager to get involved. Don recalls the solution saying, "We decided that probably the best way to go was just to have our fellowship dinners at the church." This is exactly what they did. Weekly Sabbath dinners were offered to the students as a place to fellowship in a family-like atmosphere.

Not only did Bauer church and the Hamstras provide the students with a home away from home and delicious Sabbath lunches during the winter session, but they also provided them with clothing and blankets to keep them warm. Besides collecting coats, hats, and other winter necessities for the students who were not used to Michigan's cold climate, Bonita and Celeste, another member of the church, decided to gift them each with a handmade quilt.

The two had been quilting together every week for a while and had plenty to share.

Don reflects on the day the students received the quilts saying, "They each came out with a quilt



In this photo, GVSU students, Obed (left) and Don (fifth from left), join Bauer's new pastor, Fredy Reinoso (second from left), for a group picture.

and when they came out of the room, they weren't just holding [the quilts], they were hugging them." This was yet another example of how the Bauer church offered the kind of warmth and care that can only be found in a home.

The following summer, meals were not offered, however, the two students enjoyed participating in activities with the church youth group and were often invited to different members' homes. Don says, "We would go out on Sabbath afternoons and visit the parks and take walks." These activities were a great experience for all involved. Especially considering Obed's explanation of Sabbaths at home. Obed says, "Back home, church on Saturdays is something that we take great interest in. Almost every Sabbath there is something going on in the church."

When the church began holding the fellowship

meals again in the fall, they were excited to learn that more Adventist international students from Africa had begun attending GVSU and were interested in attending the Bauer church. Soon, the group had grown to seven students who regularly attended Bauer church. Obed comments that while many Adventists on campus live nearby and are able to go home for the weekend and worship with their families, those from far away are not.

Obed further explains that with the growth of this group came the idea for an on-campus Adventist student group which is now a reality. As the student leader/advisor of the group, Obed says that the goal in creating the group was, "to be able to build ourselves a community and to be able to encourage ourselves spiritually and physically." This group provides a way for students to worship together during the week, stay connected, and reach out to others. Obed explains that the group is continually growing, and each new member is not only encouraged and welcomed to the on-campus vespers but is extended a warm invitation to Bauer church.

God has used the Bauer church to connect individuals and create a community in which all those who are interested can find a home and a place to

worship. He continues to work through this loving community which has provided good meals, worship opportunities, and warmth, but most importantly, a family. Bonita says, "These kids are our kids," and the students definitely agree.

Paul writes about the church in Acts 2:44, 46-47, "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common...So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people." This description fits the Bauer church well. Whether it is through making extra food for the students to take home in the evening or offering a ride, the actions of the Bauer members show that they are a church filled with unity, thanksgiving, and love.

Obed reflects on the kindness of Bauer church and the Hamstras' love saying, "It has been a blessing to have a church family close to campus where we can go almost every Sabbath to worship...It makes us feel like we have a church family like we have back at home." 🙏

By Georgia Schulze, Cadillac church

"God has used the Bauer church to connect individuals and create a community in which all those who are interested can find a home and a place to worship."

GVSU students, Bauer youth, and members during one of their many Sabbath afternoon walks in the park.





Seventh-day Adventist® Church

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

P.O. Box 24187
Lansing, MI 48909
517-316-1500 | Fax: 517-316-1501
communication@misda.org
www.misda.org
www.facebook.com/miconf

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

NATURE NUGGET

Sharp-tailed Grouse

In the grasslands of the Upper Peninsula, there's a chicken-like bird that's always on the move: the Sharp-tailed Grouse. I got to watch a flock of about 30 this winter near the town of Pickford, Michigan. With their pointed tails and feathered feet, these cool birds roam the landscape and treetops in search of food and shelter.

They really like crabapples, which are planted in some of the yards in this tiny town. They feed in small flocks and

seem to always be on the move, even when there is abundant food around. In the early spring, before dawn, male grouse gather on a 'lek', a special breeding territory for several males. With quick steps and funny calls, they strut their stuff, showing off their cool moves

to anyone who's watching, especially the lady grouse.

But beyond the dance lies a deeper story. For the Sharp-tailed Grouse, it isn't just about fancy footwork—it's about the journey.

These birds are always on the go, exploring new places and discovering hidden treasures in the grass. Even though they seem to be in a hurry, there's a calmness about them—it's almost like a sense of peace that comes from knowing they're exactly where they need to be.

It's a lesson for us, too. Happiness isn't found in rushing around all the time. It's about enjoying the journey and being thankful for each step along the way. 🌿



By Dr. Gordon Atkins, Head Naturalist, Camp Au Sable
Photo by Dr. Gordon Atkins

MONTHLY CALENDAR

May

- 3-5** Marriage Commitment Retreat (CAS)
- 5** Sabbath School Workshop (CO)
- 6-9** Camp Au Sable Work Week
- 10-12** Pathfinder Fair (Northwoods)
- 19** Adventurer Fun Day
- 24-26** GLAA Graduation Weekend
- 24-26** Hispanic Camp Meeting (CAS)
- 27** Office Closed – Memorial Day

June

- 9-15** Adventure Camp (CAS)
- 14-22** Camp Meeting
- 16-22** Junior Camp (CAS)
- 23-29** Tween Camp (CAS)
- 24-25** Office Closed
- 30-July 6** Teen Camp (CAS)

*CO = Conference Office
*CAS = Camp Au Sable