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The Impact Of A Vision – Disciple Now 2012

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Many residents of Dexter can get a prescription dose of reality when they begin to look back on an annual event called Disciple Now. Once again, the tradition continues this weekend as over 140 area students, leaders and host families sink themselves knee deep into a “lock in” weekend of incredible proportion.

A creative vision of the late Reverend Duke Tolbert , the concept of DNOW was introduced in 1981 when Duke (as he was affectionately known by most) arrived to his new position at First Baptist Church of Dexter. Duke had actually piloted the program in Florida in his previous church.

As a new and exciting idea, this event was challenging in the beginning, as it required the involvement and participation of the entire congregation of the church. Even though the idea was the epiphany of Duke Tolbert, the execution of the plan was left to the youth pastor, Wayne Dismuke. A monumental task, every DNOW weekend since the beginning has proven to be exhausting to everyone involved, yet rewarding on so many different levels.

The event crossed denominational lines, as everyone was invited to enjoy a great weekend of fun and spiritual growth. To date, an estimated 4,000 students alone have been involved and influenced by the Disciple Now weekend. And the numbers involved won’t begin to count the memories made every year by students, group leaders, host families and the many others that assist to make the weekend a success.

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With the passing of time, there have been many changing of people involved in the weekends. Countless numbers of students have become leaders and leaders have become host families.

Traditionally scheduled for Super Bowl weekend each year, Disciple Now is a tough weekend for the host families. The brave volunteers offering up their home are treated to eight and even twelve high-energy students for late nights and early mornings filled with activity.

As many veteran hosts will share, the weekend is a drain on energy but a life changing time for the spirit. Host families are given opportunities to get to know each student of their group on a personal level.

Many great memories are held in the incredible leaders that have graced the weekends at each Disciple Now weekend. Some leaders are here for a year or two, and others have made it an annual commitment. Recognizable names of Randy Curless, Ted Burden, Grant Medford and Jake Gullledge are just a few of those great people that have given their own time away from their homes, families and their own church to simply bring impact to the weekend. From college students to youth pastors, these leaders put in hours of preparation time to make sure the weekend is enjoyable and impactful to their groups.

Now, thirty-one years since the dream of DNOW began, a face in the crowd looks familiar to others. Coach Aaron Pixley made that connection at Friday nights DHS basketball game as he noticed long time veteran Ted Burden. Being quite recognizable, Aaron recalled his time at the Rahm house with Ted.

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"It was so great to see Ted last night," commented Brett Dorton. "I looked up at the concession stand and there he was."

These relationships run deeper and last for years as Brett recounted some of his memories and experience with Disciple Now. Brett is one that has filled all three roles with DNOW

as a student, leader and a host home with his wife, Christy.

"My funniest moment had to be at the home of Steve and Joyce Kinder." remembered Dorton. "Late on Saturday night with Ted as our leader, we were having a hard time going to sleep and being pretty loud (in order to keep him up). It came a huge snow that night and Burden threatened us that we would have to run around the block in the snow if we woke him up one more time. To say the least, he lived up to his promise."

By all estimations, Ted Burden is one of the longest member of the leadership group. Ted is has a great musical talent and often will lead the praise music for the group, as well as deliver the sermon.

"But as far as my favorite memory, it was last year's celebrating the 30th anniversary of Disciple Now with Wayne Dismuke attending and leading The Unit." Brett added. "I was so proud when he received the standing ovation for his part as an originator of Disciple Now in Dexter."

One of the top memories is often the Saturday afternoon Wild Goose Chase. An event filled with hysteria, car loads of kids and adults acting like kids would travel throughout the town to fulfill a preset list of group To-Do's.

The competitive spirit was always running at the highest level among the teams while strategies bordered on the edge of devilish. Stolen keys, rocks behind vehicles and locked doors could often time be discovered during two-hour mad dash through the streets of Dexter. You may even recall times when a group of students would stop at the local Wal-Mart to serenade a shopper with a Christmas song (in February).

Then there was always a chance to prove the strength of your stomach by eating baby food squash at the Wallace and Owens parking lot. It was always a riddle and a great time.

There are far more great memories that many of you have, and we hope your will share these on our Faecbook Page.

As it's important to remember the contribution of Duke Tolbert and Wayne Dismuke, it is equally as important to acknowledgement those leaders that have continued the tradition of DNOW over the years.

A special thanks for their hard work and dedication to Greg McGhee, Travis Miller and

Mark "Bubba" Threadgill. Thank you for making certain this tradition has continued to impact the youth of our community for generations.

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