

## LEAD Team Tips and Tricks

LEAD Team has been developed over the course of six years. And even now, there are new things we are learning. Here are some of the pearls we have collected:

### **LEAD Ministry Team**

Kristi and I have found that it is much more rewarding to serve on a team, than by ourselves. We started with a ministry team of four. Then after a year we were pretty much on our own. For a while, this was OK because we were having so much fun serving. However, we began to grind down and feel alone after a couple years. It is not good to serve in isolation, even if the love between you and the people you serve is great.

At first, Kristi and I tried to recruit peers to serve with us. We looked for other student leader alumni. It was amazingly difficult to find anyone with the time and interest to serve the way we do. We finally concluded that if we wanted to serve with someone that we would have to raise those people up. So, we were blessed to serve along side of Matt & Sarah Morgan and eventually with Justin and Kristin Bender.

However, things really came together when we discovered that there were leaders who needed and wanted a second year on LEAD Team. We started to develop the idea of a LEAD Ministry Team. We made these leaders a priority with mentoring, and asked in return that they lead some of the LEAD Team teaching on retreats, and even do some of the mentoring, provided that they had been out of school for at least a year. Finally, we met as a team about once a month.

The irony of this arrangement is that the LEAD Grads did amazingly well at teaching at the retreats – at least as well as I could do in most cases. The reality that they are using and teaching the material is very powerful in their

lives, and that influences the LEAD students. Furthermore, this takes much of the burden of the retreats off of Kristi and me. We even had a shopper (or runner) for the last two years, to purchase supplies for the retreats. This has been an immense help. They helped us with recruiting, planning agendas too.

But again, the biggest benefit was feeling that we were not alone. I recommend building a ministry team if you can. If God brings people of like heart into your life, great, but don't be surprised if you have to create them yourself.

### **The Philosophy of LEAD Team food**

Is food philosophic? I guess I don't know. But I do know that it is an amazing way to bless and influence student leaders! We always over-buy. We want to have plenty. With their tight budgets, some of these kids are pretty starved for real food. I remember well that I was like that. And at the end of every event, we hand out the left-overs. It's sort of a double blessing.

### **Pointers to finding a Retreat Center**

Our retreats are REALLY retreats! It is very typical of the students on LEAD Team to be serving at their conferences and events. So, for them to attend a retreat where they don't serve is a huge blessing. Thus, we attempt to create an environment that is consistent with that. We strive for these elements:

We go out of town – only about an hour. That way we feel separated from the demands of normal life, but still are close enough so that if someone has to come a little late, they still can.

We stay in a building by ourselves. The one we stay at sleeps 22. That way we can have our space, since several of the teaching subjects are pretty deep.

The facility offers enough space for fun, both inside and outside. Inside there is space for physical games like ping-pong AND also card games. Outside is nature – lake, woods, paths, etc.

We have a double kitchen for preparing our meals together. We've purchased meals a few times, but it is more fun and cozy to make meals together.

## **Mentoring Strategy**

The one on one mentoring, as I've mentioned before, is the biggest draw for student leaders. Of course there are entire books written on this subject, and with good reason. But I can briefly describe our philosophy.

Discipleship tends to be teacher driven. Counseling tends to be student driven. Mentoring for us is kind of in the middle. Sometimes we have definite agenda items to pursue. Other times we are dealing with whatever life issues are in their face. In general, we tend to be life-on-life focused.

So, what has God been teaching you lately? – This open ended question usually has a response that you can spring board off of. The goal is to understand where they are at.

What have you been wrestling with? What is bugging you right now? – This is an invitation to go to a deeper level. It is amazing how often people will respond when given a simple invitation.

Do not be afraid to offer a "me too" Story. Most of the students do not have much life experience. When they trip on something, it is for the first time. There is tremendous power in feeling a little pain with them. Don't stop there, however. I try to follow it up with something like this, "I'm sure it doesn't feel comfortable to be where you are. But, you're probably better off than it feels. If you keep doing these few things we discussed, and stop a few of the other things, probably you'll be through this soon. You'll make it, I'm sure."

Don't ever think that you have to have all the answers. I get stumped too. But I'll tell you this. If I come back two weeks later having researched the area they're wrestling with, it really ministers.

Be sure to back off of the authority thing. Even if you feel that you are an authority on a specific subject, present information gently. It is better to say something like this, "Well, this is how I've looked at this issue, but I'm sure there are other ways of looking at it." If you understate your opinion, but it is well thought out and rings a bell with them, they will lift it up for you.

## **Mirror Sharing**

Way back at the first teaching time – on personalities – we introduce the concept of mirror sharing. We ask each team member to share their thoughts on their personality assessment. Then we invite other team members to respond. We teach them how to do this. The response should sound something like this, “I heard you say fill-in-the-blank, and I agree because I have seen you in fill-in-the-blank circumstances. However, I have also seen behavior that looks like another way...”

For example: Josh shares that his personality assessment turned out somewhat popular with some peaceful. Josh’s friend Tom, wants to offer the mirror to the conversation and shares, “Josh, I agree with you on the peaceful. I see that often. However, I am puzzled regarding the popular. You usually are pretty tired out after the people interactivity of the small group. And you seem way to neat and orderly for popular. I wonder if you might be masking, and you are really more perfect.”

Another example: Tom shares that his assessment came up mostly powerful. But Tom appears to be somewhat discouraged with this. Josh chimes in, “Tom, I agree with your assessment of popular. That doesn’t surprise me at all. Lots of times you get the group moving, and I really appreciate that. I have not seen you be domineering or overly head-strong, so let me encourage you to keep being who you are.”

Mirror Sharing offers an opportunity for gentle encouragement, but requires a high level of safety. Since you are dealing with leaders, they might be a bit shy when it comes to being that vulnerable. However, if you invite them to it, and model that safety for them, you’d be amazed at how quickly they will jump for it. Plus, it is really powerful to speak truth into people’s lives when we start dealing with some of the more heavy subjects, like self beliefs and family of origin issues.