



# RTNI Newsletter

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## Easter Sunday (by Emily)

Resurrection Sunday dawned cloudy and windy but not too cold in Columbus, Ohio this year. My dream of having an outdoor Easter service right in our neighborhood was about to happen, but I was plagued with doubts. Would we be rained out? What if no neighbors came? Would our volunteers end up wishing they had gone to their home churches? But as usual, God far exceeded my expectations. The rain held off, and forty-eight of us gathered to celebrate the most important event in history – Jesus defeating death forever!

One young man who joined us had come to our Youth Group a couple of times about ten years ago. We had lost touch, but when we saw him at the corner store on Saturday, we invited him, and he was the first to arrive on Sunday morning. I was so glad to see him! He said he was only going to stop by for a few minutes, but ended up eating breakfast, staying for the service, and prayed with Aaron afterwards, stating that he wanted to begin following Jesus. I still remember the first time he came to Youth group so long ago. It was to an outdoor summer event that we did in the church parking lot. I had put a lot of work into preparing for it, and was a little disappointed at the turn out. But now, all these years later, the work we put into that day was still paying off, because I'm pretty sure the memory of the fun time playing silly outdoor games was what brought Kevin to our house and helped him to be open to God.

The very best part of the morning for me was watching Serenity, age 8, and Toty'Onna, age 12, step into the cold water of the baptismal tank! They both braved their fear of going under the water. They decided it was worth it in order to tell the world they want to follow Jesus Forever! We have had the joy of knowing Serenity for two years and Toty' Onna for six years, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude when I realize that much of what they know about Jesus has been learned from us.

Toty'Onna now serves regularly, helping the younger children with arts and crafts. Please pray for these young ladies that their faith in God will continue to grow as they face every challenge that life may bring.



Kevin came because of a connection made years ago. Lesson learned: "Don't give up too soon!"



Serenity, professing her faith in God



Toty'Onna, taking another step of faith

## Aaron in Jacksonville

An opportunity arose to travel to Jacksonville, Florida to share with a group of people desiring to reach out in the community of Arlington (specifically the Bruce Park area). I was excited to see God stirring in the hearts of some and challenging them to serve the urban poor. I was even more excited that they were reaching out for help. Training included group discussions at church, and hands-on outreach in Bruce Park. One thing we discussed was the definition of poverty. It is easy to fall into the trap that poverty is only measured in a material sense, ignoring spiritual, emotional, and relational poverty – leaving us to believe that if we have a reasonable level of financial security, we have escaped its clutches. Poverty is affecting all of us at some level, but sometimes we are blind to where it is hitting closest to home.



**Tajuana & Aaron in JAX**

I felt right at home in Bruce Park. The people were genuine and open. I had a lot of fun sitting on park benches, having lengthy conversations, sharing life, listening to the issues and concerns that the community had identified as relevant and important, and hearing about whom they identified as existing stakeholders committed to serving the community. I even got picked up on a basketball team, put some points on the board, and got invited back for anytime that I am in Jacksonville. My personal highlight of the trip, however, was when Tajuana, one of our youth now studying at Clark Atlanta University, joined me in Jacksonville on the second weekend to help lead and facilitate some of the training. She did an awesome job! (Yes, I am biased and proud.)

Please pray that the Jacksonville team will have the wisdom to listen to, learn from, and join with the community, and to share the gospel humbly in both word and action. Please pray for RTNI to discern what, if any, our long term involvement in this community should be.

I believe that we have entered into a season where RTNI should be looking to serve other neighborhoods and communities via partnering with individuals, churches, organizations, and community stakeholders. Hopefully, others can learn from our mistakes and onramp to successful urban ministry regardless of whether they are a long term resident, are just moving into the community in which they will be serving, or are an institutional stakeholder such as a church. This is a part of RTNI's vision for multiplication – equipping others for lasting, fruitful Christian ministry in the urban core. If you, or your church or organization would like to learn about training opportunities, please contact us at [estarr@reachtni.org](mailto:estarr@reachtni.org).



One highlight from our banquet this year was Joshae doing such a great job as emcee. This seventeen year old has been our next door neighbor since she was seven, so seeing her grow up into such a lovely, confident, capable young lady is a pretty big deal to us.

Thank you, everyone who attended and gave so generously! Your donations help us continue to disciple young leaders. They will be world changers - just wait and see.