



A Year to Grow!

Recently, I was lured into a local garden store by the sign out front that boldly advertised, "50-70% off plants!". As I made my way through to the clearance section, I had no idea what I was going to find (it should be noted that gardening is not my strong suit). There on the platform were a number of plants that, if taken care of properly, could grow into wonderful bushes. I immediately picked up the one that looked to have the greatest potential for beauty and went to pay for it.

On second look, it was pretty scraggly. It had lots of brown leaves, some of the stems were a bit sketchy and I had to ask the cashier if she thought it could be rescued. After scratching a bit of the stock of the plant, she assured me it would be possible because of the life she found beneath the surface. I'm hoping that with a bit of help from a master gardener along the way, I'll be able to see this plant reach it's full potential.

Some of the youth our staff work with are the ones who have been pushed aside and it can be difficult to see the beauty in them at first glance. But, there is still life in them and we know that with the help of Jesus, the Master Gardener, they will live a full and abundant life. This past year, our staff have loved and cared for hundreds of young people, which has opened the door for many to come to a faith in Jesus and start exploring the life He has for them. We are so grateful to you who have joined with us to see things like this come to pass. What a privilege to be a part of what God is doing here on the Island!

Lindsay Hodges, Executive Director

Year in Review



We're thrilled to share with you some of God's amazing accomplishments over this past year through our 18 staff across the south Island. These numbers are amazing, but even more so are the individual stories that we don't have the space to expound on here. What a privilege it is to share this with you, our partners in this work of God's grace!

- Just under 1300 youth connected with face-to-face
- Over 125 breakfasts served daily in public schools (approx. 22,000 per year!!)
- Over 150 youth took in our camps and retreats in 2023 – most of them were able to come for free!
- 49 young people responded to the invitation to become a follower of Jesus for the first time!



Global Impact - Dave Peacock

Imagine living somewhere where the minimum wage is \$1.20. Not per hour, or day, or even week, but per month! That is what it is like in Burundi, a small country in the middle of Africa. Last June, I was able to visit the YFC ministry there and see and experience the depth of poverty for myself. I was so impressed with the big things YFC is doing to bring hope to young people – 5 schools, 2 orphanages with a total of 96 kids, and a health centre. They are transforming young people's lives through care, education and the power of the Gospel! We are now working on a

container for them that will have items to support these efforts and the Lord has been providing amazingly for this already. Two weeks ago, we got a call from the Victoria School Board asking if we would like over 100 desks that they didn't want anymore. Yes! They didn't even know about our need for the Burundi container and the Lord lined this up in His perfect timing! Please pray for them as they receive this, that God would multiply their efforts and use these items for His glory.

Open Arms - Jessica Nelson

This past Christmas I was able to partner with a group of ladies from Central Baptist Church. Together we were able to fill 14 gift bags full of fun things like nail polish, a coffee card, art, chocolates and more. One youth was so surprised and commented that she wasn't expecting to get anything this Christmas, how she couldn't believe people that didn't know her wanted to make sure she had something to open. I love when the youth see the bigger community that cares for them. I shared how she is prayed for each week and that she matters more than she thinks. When I met her, she was homeless and struggling. She didn't have much of a support system and had trust issues. Through one-on-one mentorship, discipleship and a lot of love and grace, she is far from the place I met her. She is housed, in a committed healthy relationship and has 2 beautiful children. She is bright, happy and doing better. I am so excited to see all that God will do through Open Arms Ministry in 2024.



Campus Life - Claudio Arancibia

One of our goals with the Campus Life ministry has been to connect the youth we meet in our school programs with local churches. We invite youth pastors to come and be part of our volunteer teams in order to build intentional relationships with our youth. Navigating the connection bridge hasn't always been easy and we've experienced varying degrees of response from our youth.

In recent months, we've seen a positive shift to church connection

and engagement for a handful of our teens. Victoria, who is part-time with Campus Life, has been working closely with a group of girls and she invited several of them to attend church. This church connection came about because the youth pastor had been volunteering at the breakfast club Victoria is running at one our partner schools. This group of 4 girls has been attending on a regular basis and this is super exciting for us! We are now seeing these girls have the opportunity to learn, grow and be discipled by a church family in their very own community. Our prayer is that these relationships grow beyond just our youth and that we see entire families find connection to loving church communities.