

new york city EDITION

COMING IN JULY...

Christian's "Wild Wild West" and "Hoop Heavens" Changes

tri-state VOICE

inside ➔

The Miracle in the Mirror
Ron Hutchcraft
PAGE 2

Tom Campisi: ESPN and Un-church'd Men
PAGE 4

Coaching Seminar for Pastors
PAGE 11

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A Generation X-cels in Lower Manhattan

MINISTRY INVITES LABORERS TO 'SUMMER OF SERVICE'



By Tom Campisi

"But where six shew'd, grace did stick nine abound." (Ibsen 520)

The Lower East Side of Manhattan is home to a myriad of present-day calamities—poverty, drugs, alcoholism, broken homes, abusive relationships, teen pregnancy, and violence. With such great need and despair, it's no wonder that this community is attract-

ing youth ministries from around the country and around the region who want to put their hands to the plow and be a part of the "Summer of Service."

The Summer of Service, sponsored by Generation X-cel, is a series of four community outreach projects that will collectively impact 10,000 neighborhood families and involve 300-500 volunteers.

"The Summer of Service allows young people to be an answer to someone's prayers, including their own," said Jer-



Generation X-cel's Summer of Service is a series of four community outreach projects that will impact many neighborhood families.

my Del Rio, youth pastor of Abounding Grace Ministries and co-founder and executive director of Community Solutions, Inc., where he runs the Generation X-cel™ and YWS (Why Wait?)™ youth outreaches. "Rather than pray for laborers and stay home, Summer of Service mobilizes young people for action, not just entertainment, and empowers them to experience the joy and satisfaction that comes from helping others."

Continues on page 10

Generation X-cel

> continued from page 7

Helping others know Christ was the motivation in 1996 when Jeremy Del Rio co-founded Generation X-cel with his dad, Rev. Rick Del Rio, pastor of Abounding Grace Ministries. Jeremy led a group of young people from Abounding Grace who opened the first X-cel center in the Jacob Riis Houses on Avenue D.

"We wanted to offer our peers viable alternatives to the streets, and for that matter, to the generation X label, which relegated us to a confused present and a frightening future," said Jeremy.

Some of the ministry's current programs include: an after school program, a full-day summer camp, the Nite Spot Cafe, and a camp in the Catskills. YWS (Why Wait?) to Eternity, a faith-based teen program housed in the X-cel Theater in the East Village, promotes the idea that youth can make a positive impact in their communities today, without waiting.

Jeremy Del Rio and his younger brothers, Jamie and Jonathan, didn't wait long to learn about serving. Prior to establishing Abounding Grace in 1992, Pastor Del Rio and family would ride the busiest streets of New York City and preach the Gospel from their truck, which was equipped with a sound system, a painting of the city skyline and the message, #Jesus Loves You, New York.

In 2003, it's more of the same. Some of the programs in the Summer of Service will work in conjunction with Abounding Grace's annual "Jesus Loves You, New York" outreach.

Summer of Service activities offer a wide range of events. The seventh annual

three-on-three X-cel Hoops Tournament (July 16) for ages 8 and up includes live entertainment, food and trophies. Convoy of Hope (July 19) features games, music, inspiration, and food distribution of approximately 9,000 bags of groceries. Chain Reaction (July 27-Aug. 1), a week of community service, includes street cleaning, park beautification, and "random acts of kindness" through public housing projects. Chain Reaction weeks of service will also be held in Akron, Ohio and New England. The "Summer of Service" culminates with the X-cel Carnival on August 22.

"Summer of Service recognizes the importance of Matthew 25/Isaiah 58 models of ministry and acknowledges that it's not enough to tell people in need, 'God bless you,' or 'I'll pray for you,' and send them on their way," said Jeremy Del Rio. "Jesus set the bar higher than that, challenging us to meet felt needs through meaningful compassion so that individuals can experience tangibly His unconditional love for them."

The Celebration of X-celence Banquet will be held on June 18 at the X-cel Theater on East 7th Street. The event will recognize outstanding student and staff achievers; showcase creative arts talent from the past year through an art exhibit and performance; and debut the video project "Family Portrait."

For information on signing up your ministry for the Summer of Service, visit www.generationcel.com or call (212) 673-NGEL. Sponsors are needed for both the Summer of Service and the Celebration of X-celence Dinner. Call (212) 673-3561. For information on the Chain Reaction project, visit www.akronmission2003.com.