

**Voice of Hope  
Summer Program Evaluation Report - 2009**



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## Voice of Hope Summer Program Evaluation Report - 2009 Executive Summary

Voice of Hope (VOH) is a West Dallas Christian-based, non-profit and serves Zip code 75212 which is the 11<sup>th</sup> poorest area in the United States. VOH operates an after-school (ASPIRE) and summer camp program. The aim of the program is to develop productive Christian citizens. VOH is God-centered, a distinguishing characteristic from many other after-school and summer programs offered in the West Dallas community. VOH is a place where coaches (program staff) are able to have spiritually encouraging conversations with kids and teach biblical moral principles of conduct and character.

Research suggests that faith-based community programs can strengthen social bonds within families and neighborhoods seeking to prevent delinquency or crime. Thus, the focus of the summer program is bible lessons, life skills development, educational enrichment, an opportunity for children to attend an eight-day Christian Sports-Camp in Missouri, and opportunities to participate in other fun activities.



304 children attended the summer camp for 2009. Children attended an average of 33.1 of the 39 program days. In addition, 18.8% (n=27) of the children were in Pre-K or Kindergarten; 61.6% (n=187) were in grades 1 to 5; 16.1% (n=49) were in grades 6 to 8; and 3.6% (n=11) were in grades 9-12.

50.0% of the children (n=152) were attending the camp for the first time, 26.3% (n=80) had attended the camp one previous year and 23.7% (n=72) had attended camp the two previous years.

91.8% (n=279) of the children were from the West Dallas community; 51.3% (n=156) of the children were males and 48.7% (n=148) were females; 36.8% (n=112) of the children were Hispanic and 63.4% (n=192) were African American.

Information from all data sources indicated that the VOH Summer program serves several critical purposes. Of critical importance the Summer Camp program provides: a) a safe and secure environment for children during parent work hours; b) provides opportunities for improving character and academic development; c) provides opportunities for bible study and other related religious activities; and d) provides opportunities to develop productive friendships.

Program satisfaction was high. For example, 93.3 % of the campers indicated they like the summer day camp program; 78.2% indicated they would tell other kids to sign up for the summer day camp activities; 61.3% think being in the summer day camp program is better than other things I could be doing.

Overall, the participants liked the coaches, thought they were helpful, and made them feel comfortable: 87.5% of the children indicated that they like the summer camp program coaches; and 87.7% of the children indicated that coaches and other adults in the summer camp program gave them help when they asked for it; and

The bible study program was viewed as positively impacting the program participants: 79.5% of the children indicated that they have learned to pray as a result of the bible study program; 76.6% indicate that they like reading the bible more; and 50.0% indicated they have become involved in a church since joining the VOH program.

The program clearly plays a significant role in meeting the needs of West Dallas Community students for safe places to be during the long summer days, opportunities to undertake enrichment activities to enhance academic performance, and opportunities to improve social, physical, and life skills. Having well designed enrichment programs is a key to helping VOH achieve its goals. The VOH program director, site coordinators, and coaches are working to upgrade the intentionality of programming (i.e., planning and delivering activities in a manner that increases the probability of achieving desired objectives). However, like all good programs, additional improvement is still possible.

Efforts are continuing to make improvements in programming and administration. Future efforts should include increased training of site coordinators, and subsequently staff, in principles of intentional programming and then carefully monitoring sites to make sure that program enhancements are taking place. Additional training in child management procedures would also be helpful. In addition, Staff development training should be provided on a regular basis (e.g., classroom management skills training was an identified priority).

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## Introduction

Voice of Hope (VOH) is a West Dallas Christian-based, non-profit and serves Zip code 75212 which is the 11<sup>th</sup> poorest area in the United States. West Dallas is a melting pot of new immigrant families and a core of families who have lived in the area for several generations. Over 45% of the residents living in poverty, 88% earning less than \$29,000 per year, and 75% of the adults lacking a high school diploma. There is a high rate of drug abuse, early sexual activity, teen pregnancy and gang affiliation. Approximately 45% are African American and 52% are of Hispanic descent. There has been a significant increase in Asian residents in the community as well.

The community is on the west side of the Trinity River in sight of downtown Dallas. There is a large high school dropout rate and crime is considerably higher than the National and State averages. The West Dallas community resembles conditions associated with Low SES; deteriorating school conditions, low high school graduation ratio, high unemployment, high crime reporting, and wide spread sense of hopelessness. The mission and philosophy of Voice of Hope (VOH) was initiated to help families overcome generational poverty by making youth a center of change for a better future.



VOH operates an after-school (ASPIRE) and summer camp program. VOH was founded in 1982. Funding is supplied by a variety of Dallas foundations and charities. In 1991 received a Point of Light Award from President George Bush for outstanding service to the West Dallas community. It has also received numerous local and state awards. Voice of Hope Ministries exists “to provide children living in the neighborhoods of West Dallas with strong character

models, education support, life skills, and family support services needed to become productive Christian citizens and equip inner-city families are equipped with resources and skills needed to overcome and break the poverty cycle. The ministry seeks to meet these needs by addressing the whole person - spiritual, physical, and mental - through training, mentoring, exposure, emergency assistance, affirmation, counseling, networking and partnerships with other community agencies.”

The task of rebuilding inner-city neighborhoods requires the dedication, cooperation and creative energies of America's finest leadership. Our nation's future lies in the hands of this upcoming generation, many of whom are ill-equipped for the challenge. We believe that Christian community development is to meet the needs of our citizens in a holistic manner: spiritual, physical, and mental. For that reason, our objectives include teaching the truth of God's word, meeting the physical needs of our constituency, and developing the capabilities of all our members. (VOH handbook, 2009)

Mr. Ed Franklin has been President of VOH since 2005. During discussions with him, Mr. Franklin described how faith is infused into the design of the program and within the goals of the organization. He articulated the goal as the desire to integrate Christianity into the lifestyle of children, as not just a thing you do on Sunday from 11 am to 1 pm, but as an active way of living daily. He perceives that parents are appreciative that VOH assists them in training their child in Christian experiences and asserts that many parents don't feel qualified to fully teach their children Christian principles, particularly in a community where church attendance is low.



Mr. Franklin describes what the concept of developing productive Christian citizens' means, indicating that it is someone who understands who God is and who God is in their life; accepts Jesus as their personal savior, and are now living a lifestyle acceptable in the bible. He believes that a productive citizen contributes to their local community by being an asset and not a liability; constructive not destructive. Mr. Franklin hopes that youth participating in the program learn to filter life through a biblical worldview that allows them to ascertain if media or other messages are consistent with what scripture says.

Mr. Craig Panza, the organization's Chief Operating Officer, adds that VOH is seeking to develop productive Christian citizens by increasing student productivity and teaching life skills. Mr. Panza also notes that the VOH goals of increasing productivity are closely tied to Dallas

Independent School district's (DISD) model of preparing students to be career and college ready. VOH productivity aims include enhancing college readiness, career readiness, and teaching life skills. VOH life skills aims includes teaching skills typically not taught in classroom curriculums such as financial management, character education, how to dress properly for given situations, etc.

### **Need for a Summer Camp Program**

One way of addressing the needs of youth by VOH is through the provision of a faith-based summer camp. The aim of the program is to develop productive Christian citizens. Research suggests that faith-based community programs can strengthen social bonds within families and neighborhoods seeking to prevent delinquency or crime. Social Bonding Theory posits that constructs such as attachment, commitment, involvement, and a strong belief system can prevent crime and criminal behaviors. Strong moral and character values are often ingrained within Faith-based community programs and organizations. The involvement of Faith-based community programs assisting with family services needs has been a community staple within inner city neighborhoods for years, but only recently has such organizations become able to compete for Federal grants to support effort (Geter, 2009).



Participation in various structured out-of-school time activities has been shown to have the greatest impact and most positive effect on those who are most at risk. Research suggests that out-of-school time programs can benefit youth socially, emotionally and academically, however those who participate more frequently and for longer periods of time are most likely to benefit from out-of-school time opportunities (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006).

There is an urgent need for programs that provide adult supervision during non-school hours and during periods when school is not in session for youth in the Dallas area. A Dallas After School Network (DASN) 2009 report indicates that there are several barriers to providing access including lack of capacity, lack of affordability, and lack of resources. The report also indicated that communities with the highest demand for free and subsidized programs have waiting lists, while excess capacity exists in fee-based programs in areas with less need. Lack of resources was cited as the most common cause of program closures. Therefore, the provision of financial resources for long standing model community partners like Voice of Hope (VOH) are essential for the safety, well being, academic and social development of West Dallas community youth.

### **What are the Elements of Summer Camp Program?**

The focus of the summer program is bible lessons, life skills development, educational enrichment, an opportunity for children to attend an 8-day Christian Sports-Camp in Missouri, and opportunities to participate in other fun activities. During a typical summer camp day campers are picked up at home and dropped off at VOH between 8:00 – 8:30 am. Upon arrival



youth receive a hot breakfast in the cafeteria/gymnasium. Youth are seated in the gymnasium stands after they eat in preparation for a daily General Assembly used to jump start the day for campers and coaches. General Assembly lasts approximately 30 minutes and is followed by Bible Study and then educational games and or gym/outdoor play before lunch. After lunch, a variety of life skills development topics are covered in classrooms or in assembly with guest speakers.

The afternoons also include educational enrichment to help with academic skill retention between the spring and fall school terms. In addition, students are afforded an opportunity to go swimming daily, and go on field trips. At the conclusion of the daily program, children are transported home in VOH vans.

Academic enrichment is provided to help students stay on target with what they already know and to provide them with opportunities to master skills sufficient to take future tests with great confidence that they are familiar with the material. College students and local church congregation volunteers are available to assist coaches with helping students throughout the summer camp experience. In addition to impacting kids academically and spiritually, VOH impacts kids physically by providing opportunities for

daily physical activity. For many participants camp provides an opportunity for them to participate in positive social interactions with friends while avoiding boredom and mischief associated with being home alone during the summer months.

### *The Bible Study program*

The program director chooses a summer theme that guides the summer camp bible study program. Summer camp 2009 theme is “faith,” exhibited daily on coaches t-shirts in a quote from scripture (Hebrews 11:1): “Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of that which is unseen.” Weekly lesson packets are provided by the program director and coaches are given latitude to develop and deliver lessons as long as they are consistent with the summer theme.



Teen bible study mirrors a youth Sunday school lesson. In one case, the youth leader guided the participants through an inspiring practical lesson on how achieving something in life is connected to hard work and belief in oneself. The lesson concluded with an invitation to Christ, to repent, and for prayer for all in attendance. A closing activity allowed participants to put part of the lesson into action by asking campers to extend an opportunity to pray for others in the room by asking others what they are in need of prayer for. An opportunity for anyone to decline was openly made with the caveat that no one would be pressured for not participating in the activity. A large majority participated and those who did not were not admonished or approached for inactivity by coaches or participants.

### *General Assembly*

The General Assembly provides an opportunity to get participants excited and ready for the day's activities. The assembly starts with singing and cheering led by an enthusiastic coach with nine coaches providing support. The assembly is designed to be an interactive morning participation activity between coaches and youth and to provide some opportunities for some friendly competition among youth. In addition, there is a youth-led pledge of allegiance to the United States flag, followed by the Christian flag, and lastly the bible. This activity is followed by a youth-led prayer.

An example of the competitive cheering was, "I love Jesus yes I do, I love Jesus how about you!" Participation in the cheering and singing is enthusiastic. It is gratifying to see both younger youth and older youth willingly participating. Those kids who didn't know the cheers enthusiastically attempt to learn and participate. Over time all participants become efficient at singing the cheers and picking up the dances that went along with certain themes songs. "Ice cream and cake!"; "Peanut butter and jelly time!" are examples of animated songs during which participants are allowed to come forward and perform their version of the dance.

### *Monitoring conduct*

Appropriate classroom conduct from both elementary and secondary school participants is monitored and orderly. Students are disciplined for disorderly conduct. Students were observed being sent to the back of the group and asked to write sentences such as: "I will not talk loud anymore," while classmates watched a movie in the front. Classrooms have rules and positive messages on the walls. In another case, a coach indicated that when a child does something out of order, she sends them to a sign on the wall to read and report back on why their conduct was inappropriate, as a way of having practical application. For this reason, she reports that participants will tell her the truth because the 10 commandments are posted on her wall.



### *Coach-participant interactions*

A range of interactions occur between coaches and participants. There appears to be a balance between strict discipline and loving on kids. Some coaches are strict and emphasize walking in line while departing the gymnasium. In other instances, youth seek to hug their coaches. VOH is currently working to establish what a coach – participant relationship

should look like. Like many youth programs, you readily see more casual and joking language being exchanged between older youth and counselors and hugs and chastising among younger campers and coaches.

### *Guest speakers*

A number of guest speakers participate in the VOH summer program. For example, in June former Dallas Cowboys super bowl champion team member Preston Pearson came to VOH to meet participants and provide an inspirational talk. Pearson encouraged participants age 10 and over to start planning for their career now or be prepared to be left behind. To become successful in life, Pearson said that the students needed to listen to their mother and father; listen to their teachers; and get an education. In describing the Cowboy's championship runs and the accolades that come with being a professional athlete, Pearson suggested that it is not about what you get in the end; nor is it about the ring, but it is about what you do in the process.

Mr. Pearson concluded his presentation after signing many autographs by telling the participants about his cause to fight hunger in the Dallas areas. He told the students: "There is no reason we can't raise \$400,000 to avoid hunger! So dedicate yourselves to getting an education and together everyone achieves more!" The youth appeared to be impressed with Mr. Pearson, and actively sought to get his autograph and shake his hand.

### *Volunteers*

A number of volunteer groups come to VOH to interact with the participants during educational games and outdoor play. Volunteers also assist with game skills, event set up, bible lessons, and general assistance as needed by the assigned coach.

### *Field trips*

A list of field trips included places such as; Fort Worth Zoo, Main Event, Redbird Skate Land, Museum of Nature and Science, Bahama Beach, Nickerlarama, Fitz Park, movie theatre, Speed Zone, Incredible Pizza, and others.

### *Kids Across America camp*

As part of the summer camp experience, campers are taken to the Kids Across America (KAA) camp in Missouri. KAA is a Christian-based camp with a mission of building Christian leaders by encouraging, equipping and empowering urban youth and their mentors through sports. KAA has been serving inner-city youth since 1978. KAA began as part



of Kanakuk Kamps, Inc, before becoming officially named KAA in September of 2000. The camp also provides leadership training camp as well for inner-city adult leaders.

Camp is divided into nine summer sessions, each lasting eight days in length. VOH campers attended session 4, June 25- July 2, 2009. Session 4 utilizes three camp sites; KAA1, ages 9-12; KAA2, ages 13-15; and KAA 3, ages 16-18. KAA1 campers are challenged spiritually and given practical ways to live out their faith back in their communities. In addition to recreational activities, the camp program includes daily bible studies, church services, and faith building talks. KAA2 campers are able to choose from over 20 different competitive sports, recreational, and self esteem building activities. Energetic collegiate staff work to encourage the campers. KAA3 campers are offered an autonomous selection of scheduled activities and structured spiritual and life skills training classes. All campers are exposed to urban contemporary Christian music, opportunities to meet friends, themed parties, gospel speakers, and fun activities. Taking VOH participants to camp is an annual part of the summer camp program.

### **VOH as a God-Centered Environment**

VOH is God-centered, a distinguishing characteristic from many other after-school and summer programs offered in the West Dallas community. VOH is a place where coaches are able to have spiritually encouraging conversations with kids and teach biblical moral principles of conduct and character. The biblical worldview at VOH suggests that participants will come to know Jesus (evangelism); will impact participants through active biblical learning (equipped); and that hopefully participants will learn to put their patterns of faith in practice (discipleship). Through consistent evangelism efforts and equipping young people, discipleship will follow. Staff noted that the VOH program plays an important role in helping children know God and supplementing biblical teachings the child is getting at home.



## Evaluation

### *Purpose of the evaluation.*

Texas A&M was asked to conduct an evaluation of the impact and functioning of the Summer Camp program. Consequently data were gathered from multiple sources including program participants, parents, program leaders, and community organizations that interact with VOH. TAMU staff were also able to examine demographic, and program attendance data for the program participants. The overall purpose of the evaluation was to gain information and insights that can help demonstrate the impacts of the program and lead to continuous program improvement.

### *Evaluation design*

Data were collected through a number of different means, including:

- Analysis of participant's demographic, and program attendance information supplied by the program;
- Interviews with program participants (n=13). 10-15 minutes each;
- A survey of 90 summer program participants who were at least in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade;
- Program observations by the lead study researcher.

Interviewed youth, were selected to insure that they were: a) comfortable verbalizing their thoughts or ideas.; and b) had been involved in VOH program at least since the beginning of the 2007 school year so that interviewees would have had at least two years of experience with the program. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcripts were manually coded by the researcher. Statistical analyses were run for youth survey data. Appendix A contains the interview guides used for the study and Appendix B contains the student surveys form.

## Study Findings

### *Who attended the 2009 Summer Camp program?*

304 children attended the summer camp for 2009.

- Children attended an average of 33.1 of the 39 program days.
- 91.8% (n=279) of the children were from the West Dallas community, with 8.2% (n=25) living outside the West Dallas community.
- 51.3% (n=156) of the children were males and 48.7% (n=148) were females.
- 36.8% (n=112) of the children were Hispanic and 63.4% (n=192) were African American.
- 18.8% (n=27) of the children were in Pre-K or Kindergarten; 61.6% (n=187) were in grades 1 to 5; 16.1% (n=49) were in grades 6 to 8; and 3.6% (n=11) were in grades 9-12.
- 50.0% of the children (n=152) were attending the camp for the first time, 26.3% (n=80) had attended the camp one previous year and 23.7% (n=72) had attended camp the two previous years.
- Average family size was 4.5 children.

### *Is there a need for the VOH Program?*

VOH meets the need for resources that deal with some of the critical issues in the West Dallas community. Information from all data sources indicated that the VOH Summer program serves several critical purposes. Of critical importance the Summer Camp program provides

- a safe and secure environment for children during parent work hours;
- provides opportunities for improving character and academic development;
- provides opportunities for bible study and other related religious activities; and
- provides opportunities to develop productive friendships.

### *What do campers learn at Summer Camp?*

Campers report learning about Jesus/God and sacrifices made for them. A 3<sup>rd</sup> grade female indicated that she learned: “That we have faith, and Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and that Jesus didn’t have to die on the cross for us, that’s all.”

The campers also report learning the importance of having faith, this summer’s grand theme, active bible studying, and how campers put what they learn into practice. A female camper provided an example of what she learned from her summer camp experience: “I learned how to walk by faith and not by sight. Like if anyone says something about you then you just walk away because you are being a bigger person.”

Summer Camp also teaches campers about self improvement, how to interact better with others, and the importance of active bible study and memorization. These practices allow campers to discover for themselves and allow them to put their faith into action. A female camper noted that: “I learned how to know God because at first I wasn’t going to church... VOH made me want to know about God more.”



### *Does the program create a safe and meaningful environment?*

There is general consensus among after-school professionals that programs such as VOH provide a safe environment for kids during their non-school hours and during periods when school is not in session. Perceptions at VOH are no different among staff, kids and parents.

VOH serves many children who live in troubled neighborhoods. In response to a survey conducted at the end of the program, responses indicated that 86.6% of the students indicated

they did not feel afraid when hanging out in their neighborhood. On the other hand about one-third of the students indicated that there were difficult circumstances in their communities:

- 38.6% indicated that if they were at home they would be getting into trouble;
- 38.2% indicated that there was nothing else to do in their neighborhood; while
- 38.6% indicated that their friends in their neighborhood get into a lot of trouble after school.

The program also offers a chance for children to be with friends in a safe environment.

- 86.4% indicated that their friends were in the summer camp program; while
- 91% of the children indicated that they had made new friends at the program.

Focus groups conducted with parents provided significant insights concerning the importance of VOH to the West Dallas Community. One parent noted the value of VOH by discussing how the program helps create strong youth and prepares them for the challenges they face outside the center.

I've been in West Dallas all my life and did not know anything about Voice of Hope until my kids got to school age. And I wish my mom knew about them when I was younger because then I was probably could have been stronger for my kids, other than them coming to Voice of Hope and making me stronger through Voice of Hope. I think Voice of Hope could have made a big change in my life when I was younger.

Summer camp provides activities, field trips, and biblical learning opportunities in the presence of friends. Campers repeatedly report that they would rather be at VOH, rather than at home during summer months, because of the variety of things to do. Moreover, if at home, most campers report they would be involved in either non-active or non-prosocial behavior activities. For example, one camper indicated that he would: "Probably be at my house watching TV, eating, or probably at home sleep... at home we can't really go outside... and we don't really have anything to do." Another indicated she would: "Probably be hanging out with my friends or getting into trouble."

### *Importance of education to success.*

Embedded in VOH mission is the development of productive Christian citizens as part of their efforts to eradicate poverty in the West Dallas community. Observations disclosed guest speakers are targeted for providing messages that help kids make the connection between education and success in life. Coaches advocate the importance of finishing school. One alumni student was observed sharing the following messages during an inspirational talk with older program youth:

Education is important because most college kids make more money than their parents.

In the military, if you go to college, then you are automatically made an officer and can make \$50,000 a year as a base salary.

I know there is a thing call affirmative-action, but I don't want a job because of an affirmative-action reason. I want to earn it myself and I want all of you to be qualified. I

know that I joke with you all sometimes, but this is true stuff!” (College entering freshmen, 2009)

A coach said,

Many kids have come through VOH and gone on to college. It is not for everybody. There are alternatives. But it can better your lives. It’s cool to go to college. It’s cool to get an education. But I’ve told you that you have to put in work. It’s hard work to get ahead in life.

As noted, the survey results indicated that 95.5% of the participants felt that it was true or somewhat true that if you work hard and get a good education you’ll get ahead in America. Making this connection between coach’s emphasis and participants’ perceptions provides evidence of how VOH is positively impacting kids.

### **Importance of giving back to West Dallas community.**

Also, embedded in VOH mission is the development of productive Christian citizens that will return to the community to help eradicate poverty in the West Dallas community. To promote this model, alumni students are encouraged to return during summers to present themselves as evidence of hope for current participants. The following responses were given by youth about their future plans in West Dallas after they have succeeded in life:

- 77.7% indicated they plan to give back to the West Dallas Community;
- 57.4% indicated that they plan to come back to live in West Dallas; and
- 64.8 indicated that they will volunteer in their community.



### **Opportunities for Bible study**

The after-school program offers a Bible Club program which uses resources listed on the Gospel Light House and Education Edge websites. General lesson plans are provided by the after-school program director and coaches are allowed to tailor lessons to reach their classroom grade level.

Some creative methods used to reach young kids include use of puppets, flannel board visuals, videos, music, and other things. Coloring sheets are provided that correlate with the bible lessons. Older kids (3<sup>rd</sup> and up) also have take home assignments that may require having a discussion with a parent about the meaning of obedience, and then writing down what they learned to bring back to the program.

Gospel music can be heard in assembly and in classrooms surrounding bible study lessons. Some coaches provide stickers and treats for campers that give correct answers or for timely scripture locating.

A coach said, "I sometimes will say, Oh I forgot what chapter we were on and they will tell me. This lets me know they are on top of it and engaged."

### *Does VOH provide a quality program?*

Program satisfaction was assessed in a number of areas, including quality of the coaches and after-school activities;

- 93.3 % indicated they like the summer day camp program.
- 78.2% indicated they would tell other kids to sign up for the summer day camp activities
- 61.3% think being in the summer day camp program is better than other things I could be doing

### *Quality of the coaches*

Participants were asked to rate the quality of the coaches. Overall, the participants liked the coaches, thought they were helpful, and made them feel comfortable.

- 87.5% of the children indicated that they like the summer camp program coaches;
- 87.7% of the children indicated that coaches and other adults in the summer camp program gave them help when they asked for it; and
- 77.5% think coaches and other adults at the summer camp program are energetic

Participants were also asked if they had input into the content of the program. Overall results were as follows:

- 61.8% indicated that summer camp program coaches ask them what they would like to do during the program; and
- 33.3% of the children indicated that they get to choose which summer camp programs they get to do.

Overall, campers were more positive about the amount of voice in program content than during the after-school program (43 %). Not surprising given the higher emphasis placed on participative activities afforded by the longer length of time participant spend in the summer program. The program remains highly structured for lower grades which may explain the low perceived degree of choice. However, interviews suggest that campers perceived activities provided to be fun and have favorable opinions attributed to coaches.

Campers perceive that coaches are encouragers and instrumental with helping them work through academic or personal problems. Campers describe receiving academic, relational, and biblical support from coaches. One female camper indicated that he could go to the coaches

“about anything.” Another indicated that camp helped her “succeed in life,” while female camper indicated that:

“They help us do bible study, they help us do our work at summer camp, they let us watch movies and play outside... If we like miss a word, then they help us sound off the word, or they tell us the word.”

There was some mention of energetic versus non-energetic coaches. Campers preferred energetic coaches and felt it was important for coaches to model enthusiasm and allow coaches to keep up with youth. A male camper describes why having energetic coaches is important: “When you get energetic coaches, you get energetic for Jesus.”

### *Quality of the activities*

Survey results indicated that participants liked the summer camp activities.

- 92.2% indicated they liked the summer camp program activities;
- 73.3% indicated that there are enough different summer camp program activities;
- 98.8% indicated they liked the field trips;
- 82.2% indicated they liked the guest speakers; and
- 88.5% indicated they learned life skills at summer day camp.

Campers really like going on field trips. Field trips help attract campers and increase their willingness to attend summer camp. Campers also report bible learning and playing games with friends as favorites.

One of the field trips is a stay at the KAA which serves as an extension of the VOH Summer Camp program at a heightened level of activities with opportunities for positive social interactions that lead to connections with national friends. One camper indicated that: “It’s fun to meet new people because they have a different personality that you might not have ever seen.”



### *Outcomes associated with Student Bible Club participation*

Campers felt good about bible study and perceived camp as fun and helpful learning that provides useful tools they can apply to their lives.

The coaches do a good job teaching the bible study classes.

- 89.0% of the participants think their coach is doing a good job teaching the bible club; and
- 85.1% indicated that their coach makes bible club enjoyable.

VOH increases participants' comfort with an interest in reading the bible through the use of biblical and practical stories. One camper indicated:

“I feel great, I learn about things I never heard about before, you know stuff that can help me throughout my life...how to become a better person, how to help other people, how to be a good person yourself.”

### *Program outcomes related to the Bible Study program*

The bible study program positively impacts program participants.

- 79.5% of the children indicated that they have learned to pray as a result of the bible study program;
- 76.6% indicate that they like reading the bible more;
- 50.0% indicated they have become involved in a church since joining the VOH program;
- 70.0% indicated they have become nicer to other people since joining the VOH program; and
- 87.5% indicated they now think about Jesus before making tough choices since joining the VOH program.

### *Bible Club Program satisfaction*

The vast majority of participants indicate satisfaction with the Bible Club program.

- 82.0% indicated they liked participating in bible club activities;
- 79.8% indicated they like it when people read bible stories to them;
- 70.5% indicated they like to tell people about Jesus; and
- 87.6% indicated they want to learn how to share their faith with others.

## **Other Study Findings**

### *Impacts on behavior*

Most campers report positive changes as a result of participating in the program. Changes mainly included behavior improvement and becoming kinder toward others. Campers become less likely to get into trouble and adjust their attitudes either within themselves or towards others. For example, one camper indicated: “You would want for others to do to you what you do to them,” while another indicated: “I stopped getting into trouble in my neighborhood.”

### *Why do campers come to camp?*

Campers report coming to VOH Summer Camp primarily because of family influence. Campers indicated coming to camp because their parents required or had some previous positive family connection with VOH. Also, campers perceived their parents placed them at summer camp to keep them away from trouble in the neighborhood. Campers also attend to learn about Jesus and perceive VOH as a fun place to be.

Campers like VOH Summer Camp because of the program offerings of field trips, variety of activities, and bible lessons. Field trips afford opportunities to visit local attractions that some would not otherwise get to attend. Campers prefer participating in the VOH program rather than the alternative of being bored or involved in non-productive activities at home. Moreover, campers perceived that coaches made the bible lessons interesting.

All campers report making friends at VOH Summer Camp and describe friends as being supportive and fun to be around. One camper noted: “They’re cool, nice...like when I first got here I didn’t know what to do and they were the ones that help me out. They told me where I should be and where our class should back up to.” Another said: “They’re generous, they give stuff, and they’re just kind.”

Friendships often carry over into school. Friends at VOH were preferred to youth around the home. One youth said: “They’re really good friends...they’re not violent and stuff.”



### *The value of Kids Across America*

Youth seem to enjoy attending Kids Across America (KAA) camp in Missouri. The camp brings in youth from across America and affords opportunities for VOH participants to witness the passion of returning campers for their faith. Camp removes the barriers of embarrassment for youth outwardly willing to express their faith through praise, worship and activities. KAA activities include challenge course group facilitating and discussions about issues relevant to youth, youth challenges, and importance of having a

personal relationship with Jesus. The challenge activities allow youth to interact, and practice putting biblical concepts into practice. Reflection opportunities allow youth to share what they have learned.

One 11 year old discussed what they had learned at KAA. He shared that he had learned how to tell other people about faith. He explained, that it was important to encourage others to have faith in themselves “...like when we were at KAA on tree tops a little girl didn’t have faith, but I encouraged her to do it.” It appears that campers learn at camp how to put biblical learning into practice.

KAA holds competition between campers and gives out prizes for things such as who can clean their locker the best or who can win two contests. Groups are intermixed with youth from other parts of the country One 9 year old camper said: “it is fun to meet new people because they have a different personality that you might not ever saw.”

## Summary of Findings

Overall, VOH is a quality program that makes a difference in the lives of children from the West Dallas community. The following points provide a summary of the major study findings.

### *Organizational goals and outcomes*

- Campers perceive that VOH is providing a safe and supportive environment, opportunities for positive self development, access to positive friendships, and assistance to children in meeting their academic goals.
- 

### *Program satisfaction*

- The program participants feel that the coaches are supportive and are comfortable talking to them.

### *Quality of staff*

- Coaches are perceived as supportive encouragers and appear willing to provide campers with instrumental assistance as needed.
- Coaches are committed to meeting the needs of the children and recognized the importance of providing stability in the lives of VOH participants. Coaches understand the circumstances that many of the children come from in their community, having themselves grown up in the West Dallas area.
- Children think highly of the coaches, indicating that coaches provide academic, spiritual, and relational support.
- VOH has strong organizational leadership that is dedicated to carrying out the VOH goals and searching for ways to extend the impact of VOH programs and services.

### *Bible studies and impact of a Christian environment*

- VOH teaches children how to develop strong faith-based convictions and the power of God in their lives.
- The children report that their coaches do a good job teaching the bible club and making the bible club enjoyable.



### *Impact of the summer camp program*

- VOH is providing a safe haven for campers to be engaged in productive learning and fun activities. While only a minority of youth perceived they live in an unsafe environments, interviews suggest program participants were likely to be bored at home or involved in mischief. The summer camp program provides a variety of activities and character development opportunities in an environment participants preferred as an alternative to being exposed to bored and unproductive activities at home.
- The program teaches youth to be more respectful towards others and focused on self-development.
- Although campers are attracted to the program to participate in the fun activities and field trips, it is clear that biblical learning is impacting campers' attitudes in a positive way.
- Campers find bible study to be fun and are discovering ways to apply the lessons to issues they experience in their daily lives. As a result, campers report behavioral changes related to positive character adjustments.
- As a result of attending the KAA camp, campers experience biblical learning, games, and opportunities to meet new friends. As such, KAA serves as an extension of the VOH Summer Camp program at a heightened level of activities with opportunities for positive social interactions that lead to friendly connections with national friends.



### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Survey data, interviews and program observations support the value and impact of VOH.

- Coaches are perceived as supportive and willing to provide campers with instrumental assistance as needed.
- As a result of the school year after-school program evaluation (reported separately) and the summer camp evaluation, VOH has begun to make some refinements in

programming, program management and supervision, data management, and evaluation processes.

- The program clearly plays a significant role in meeting the needs of West Dallas Community students for safe places to be during the long summer days, opportunities to undertake enrichment activities to enhance academic performance, and opportunities to improve social, physical, and life skills.
- Having well designed enrichment programs is a key to helping VOH achieve its goals. The VOH program director, site coordinators, and coaches are working to upgrade the intentionality of programming (i.e., planning and delivering activities in a manner that increases the probability of achieving desired objectives). However, like all good programs, additional improvement is still possible.
- Efforts should continue within VOH to continue making improvements in programming and administration.
- Measurable learning and developmental outcomes need to be built into the programming accountability processes and measured.
- Future efforts should include increased training of site coordinators, and subsequently staff, in principles of intentional programming and then carefully monitoring sites to make sure that program enhancements are taking place. Additional training in child management procedures would also be helpful.
- Staff development training should be provided on a regular basis (e.g., classroom management skills training was an identified priority).
- Increasing the interactive involvement of all coaches in morning assembly and less reliance on one coach throughout the summer camp is recommended.
- There should be additional efforts to include interactive activities in the classroom. This may help reduce some reporting of boredom while increasing opportunities for youth voice and choice (i.e., providing a menu of activities from which participants can self select).
- Conduct additional surveys of participants to develop an activities-of-interest list either by soliciting information or providing a list of “keep it or leave it” choices. Youth are more likely to participate in activities with choice, particularly teens.
- The Family Reading Night program might be well-suited for the Summer Camp Program.
- The food offered to campers could be improved by offering some additional selections and perhaps more food.
- There were some comments about General Assembly associated with campers being tired early or not in the mood some days. Recommend affording opportunities for campers to opt out of activities or provide an energizer opportunity prior to jointly participating in General Assembly (e.g. allowing free play activity choice alternatives when campers arrive that provide self-energizing opportunities before General Assembly).
- There was some concern expressed about a need to reduce redundancy in General Assembly program. Consideration might be given to incorporating other activities (e.g., a gym decoration project to spruce up the gym design). More variety may serve to increase enthusiasm and engagement among coaches as well.
- Marketing packets should emphasize benefits of field trips, activities, biblical learning and opportunities to develop productive friendships.

## Appendix A: Interview Guides

### *Questions for Participants*

- I came to VOH because...?
- Do you like being at VOH?
- Have you made friends during this program? If yes, tell me about them
- What do you learn by being at the summer camp program?
- How do coaches help you at VOH?
- How do you feel about the bible study offered in the program?
- Has VOH helped you become comfortable reading the bible (stories)?
- What would you be doing if you were not attending VOH?
- Have you noticed any changes in you since you came to VOH?
- My favorite part of VOH is
- My least favorite part of VOH is
- If I could change one thing about the after-school program, it would be

## Appendix B: Participant and Staff Surveys

### Voice of Hope Summer Day Camp Program Participant Survey - Summer 2009

VOH Site \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>MARK JUST <u>ONE</u> ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1	I like the summer day camp				
2	Coaches and other adults in the summer day camp give me help when I ask for it				
3	I like the field trips				
4	Coaches and other adults are energetic				
5	My parents make me come to the summer day camp				
6	Summer day camp coaches ask us what we would like to do during the program				
7	My friends in my neighborhood get in a lot of trouble after school				
8	I like the summer day camp activities				
9	I like the guest speakers				
10	My coach makes bible club enjoyable				
11	I would tell other kids to sign up for the summer day camp activities				
12	When I succeed I plan to give back to the West Dallas Community				
13	I have learned life skills at summer day camp				
14	I feel afraid hanging out in my neighborhood				
15	The summer day camp keeps me from getting into trouble				
16	My friends are in the summer day camp				
17	When I succeed I plan to come back to live in West Dallas				
18	I like the summer day camp coaches				
19	I feel bored during the summer day camp				
20	I get to choose which summer day camp activities I do				
21	There is nothing to do in my neighborhood after school				

22	I have made new friends in the summer day camp				
23	When I succeed I want to volunteer in my community				
24	Being in the summer day camp is better than other things I could be doing				
25	If I had a chance, I would rather not participate in the summer day camp				
26	If I were at home, I would be getting into trouble				
27	There are enough different summer day camp activities				
	<b>MARK JUST ONE ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
28	My coach does a good job teaching bible club				

**29. I usually go to church (Check one)**

- A. More than once a week       Once a week       A few times a month   
 Once a month       A few times a year       Never

- B. If yes, I go because of VOH   
 VOH has not influenced whether I go to church

**30. If you work hard and get a good education you'll get ahead in America. (Check One)**

3. True       2. Somewhat true       1. Not true at all

31. I am a Male  Female

32. I am in grade: \_\_\_\_\_

33. I go to school at: \_\_\_\_\_

34. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

35. Are you African American  Asian American  Hispanic   
 Pacific Islander  White  Other

When answering the following questions, answer each as if you were saying, "Because I go to VOH Summer Day Camp program,..."

	<b>MARK JUST ONE ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
36	I like reading the bible more				
37	I like participating in bible club				

	activities				
38	I have learned how to pray	☺	☺	☹	☹
39	I have become involved in a church since joining VOH program	☺	☺	☹	☹
40	I am nicer to other people	☺	☺	☹	☹
41	I think about Jesus before making tough choices	☺	☺	☹	☹
42	I like to tell people about Jesus	☺	☺	☹	☹
43	I want to learn how to share my faith with others	☺	☺	☹	☹

44. Any additional comments: