

art of hospitality to college students

by Wanda Kidd, CBFNC Collegiate Engagement Coordinator

The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God. Leviticus 19:34 (NIV)

Ironically, we often seem reluctant to share with family and friends how important they are to us. We tell others, but often we do not express it to them directly. I have found that to be particularly true with college students and how they feel about their home church. As a campus minister, I have heard more stories than you can imagine about how special their home church is to them and how concerned they are about events going on back home. They appreciate the kindness that is shown to them in ways I am sure they never express to you all.

That is why I wanted to say thank you to their churches on their behalf and to encourage you to continue to be the presence of Christ to these young people in a time of tremendous upheaval and transition.

How to share hospitality with your students:

- Invite the students who are home for the summer to your home for a meal or a Bible study group.
- When you or a group from your church goes near a campus where one of your homegrown students is in college, invite them out to dinner.
- Send them a card that says you are thinking about them.
- If your church has a newsletter, include your students on the mailing list.
- Ask them to Skype with a youth group to talk about things they wish they had known before they went to college. Provide them with a list of questions before the event.
- Invite them to go and provide them with a specific role on a mission trip or weekend retreat (that trip could be for children, youth, or seniors).
- If there is a group that is home for summer or Christmas, include them in worship or other ministries.
- If they take a trip, invite them to share about their trip through spoken word or print.
- Put up a map on a bulletin board with a pin locating all of your students. Pray for them regularly.

How churches near residential campuses connect with students:

An adult Sunday School class chose to **cheer on a college team whose sporting events were not well-attended and showed up for every home game.** Before long, the student-athletes and the coaches began to notice and a friendship resulted in shared meals, and eventually some church attendance occurred. The church attendance was a result of relationships, not the other way around.

One church **opened their sanctuary for students to have a place to practice for juried recitals.** This has grown into a musical event where church and community members are invited to hear amazing concerts and share refreshments. Their hospitality has allowed for a **watch/care relationship** between this congregation and the students.

For years, two women from a local church have **opened their home** to provide lunch for students attending a local college. It is a tradition that provides students with **a place to eat a home-cooked meal and have great conversation.** Not all of the students attend the church, but these women have built a culture of community that they attribute to their faith and their church.

Most of these ministries are laity driven and student appreciated. These are just a sampling of ways we can invest in young adult lives through hospitality. Hospitality is an investment; it is not a bottom-line business approach to ministry. It is a missional Kingdom kindness that provides a place for conversations about faith, where one invitation often leads to other opportunities for cross-generational community. Tell us your story.