

First edition of our periodical newsletter

THE ZONE

February 2017

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Summer @ The Zone

By Maaïke Dykstra



This summer has been an adventure for me as the first intern ever at Convos Youth Zone, but it was also the first internship for myself. It has been a blessing to see just what Convos Youth Zone is all about and to meet the youth that participate. My internship has been a great learning experience, from the ins and outs of how the organization works, to working with youth and all that that entails.

This summer I got to participate in different activities with the youth including Make Your Own... and Out of The Zone. I got to plan and prep every week for the different activities and participate in them with the youth. Make Your Own... consisted of getting the youth in the kitchen to "make their own" food. We made everything from pizza to pancakes as well as hamburgers.



What does CONVOS mean? That is a question we often hear when someone is introduced to our organization. A quick visit to urbandictionary.com solves the mystery:

convos

[kon-vohs] Abbr.

Short for conversations, usually used in text or instant messaging.

Convos is an urban term that teens will often use when referring to conversations they have had or will have; usually when chatting over text messaging or on Facebook.

Now that the mystery of the word's meaning has been clarified, you may be asking why we named our organization **Convos Youth Zone**. Quite simply, it is because conversations (or convos) are what we are all about at The Zone. Our organization exists to support our local youth as they explore issues relevant to their whole person (relationally, emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually). In order for our mature, caring volunteers to support these youth, they need to develop relationships of trust and respect. As we all know, relationships are developed through quality conversations. So, it only seemed fitting to

use an urban term that teens use for the word conversations.

Convos Youth Zone is located in the basement of Conversations Café in Beamsville. We offer a drop-in program on Thursday and Saturday nights and at lunch. Teens come to Drop-In because they know it is a safe place with people who care about their well-being. Drop-In is our opportunity to develop relationships with the youth. It is through these relationships that we determine the needs of the youth (many who are "at-risk") and create complementary programs to meet those needs. The complementary programs that are offered at Convos are tutoring, cooking classes, feeding initiatives, professional counseling, girls-only nights, sports nights and workshops that explore the basics of the Christian faith.

We opened our doors just over four years ago, but the vision was realized many years before. Convos Youth Zone is the brainchild of Dave and Deborah Dueck who have been long-standing residents of Lincoln and saw a need that they felt compelled to address. You may know Dr. Dueck as the friendly optometrist in Beamsville. Since the Duecks own a busi-



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A YEAR OF LEARNING



Since this is my first official report to our supporters, let me start by introducing myself. My name is Brad Cook and I have been serving in the role as Director at

Convos since October of 2015. I have a beautiful wife named Melany and we celebrated our 15th wedding anniversary last summer. We have two wonderful daughters who are the center of our world – Mackenzie (9) and Katie (6). We live in Vineland, but I grew up in Beamsville just a couple blocks from the Youth Zone. My degree is in Business Administration and although my career started in the financial industry, I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve the Lord in ministry for over a decade in a variety of administrative roles. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour and I am so thankful that he has called me to serve at Convos and use the skills and experience he has blessed me with to grow Convos into a sustainable, long lasting organization that will serve the youth of Lincoln for years to come. Oh, and I am also an Edmonton Oilers fan. :)

I thought the best way to report on my first year-plus as Director would be to share with you a few of the things I have learned along the journey.

I'VE LEARNED...

1. The most common question people ask about Convos Youth Zone is... "How many kids do you have coming out?"

In the past year, we had over 150 different teens attend our lunch or evening drop-in programs. This year our lunch program is averaging over 8 teens per day and our evening drop-in

averages close to 15 youth each night

Teens come to Convos because they know it is a safe place where people truly care about them

2. The second most common question is "What programs do you run for the teens who come to The Zone?"

I've already mentioned our drop-in programs which run every week. This year we have added a tutoring program every Tuesday afternoon. Once a month we offer cooking classes, a girls-only night, and a sports night in cooperation with Great Lakes Christian High School. We also plan exciting events for every PD Day as well as throughout the summer. All of these new programs were created to address a need we identified as we built relationships with the teens. We have plans to offer more programs, like the Youth Alpha course, once we have the resources (volunteers & donations).

3. Teens don't use Facebook anymore

They just don't! I've even heard it being referred to as "Mom-book". So we have begun to use a texting service, along with Twitter & Instagram, to keep teens informed about what is happening at The Zone.

4. Anyone can be a volunteer

You just need to have a love for God and a heart for seeing young people's lives changed. Our volunteers range from university-age to 68 years old. And we have volunteer roles to fit a variety of skills and experience. Everything from volunteering at drop-in, to event planning, to cleaning the youth zone.

5. Getting your charity status takes a lot of work... and by many, MANY people

Ok, maybe this is something I knew before I began the

process, but now I've actually experienced it. It took many hours and many meetings, but we are happy to report that we have filed our paperwork with the government and all things going well, we will be a recognized charity early in 2017 (and be able to provide donation receipts to our donors). Part of the process of filing for a charity status is to become a corporation; and now we are! If you would like to be a part of what we are doing at Convos and have a say in the direction of the charity, I would invite you to become a corporation member. Corporation members get regular updates and are the ones who nominate and vote for board members.

6. How quickly drugs can seriously impact someone's life

Sadly, I have seen a few of the teens we know go from being a kind, polite young person to being a disrespectful teen with attitude. Even though they have not necessarily admitted it to us, it is obvious from their demeanor and the group of friends they hang out with that drugs have taken hold of their life. And it can happen in only a few short months.

7. Teen homeless is a bigger problem than most people are aware

This one hit me hard and I wish it was a lesson I had never learned. I've met some awesome teens over the past year; many of whom have many problems – everything from substance abuse, to being expelled from school, to lack of self-confidence and self-esteem; all things I expected to encounter. So, I was surprised when our first youth became homeless... and then another... and another... and another. They are homeless for a variety of reasons and often find themselves couch surfing from one friend's house to another. However, some

DONATIONS APPRECIATED

Ping Pong

Our teens love playing ping pong and our equipment gets broken regularly. Donations of new paddles and balls (or money that can be used to purchase them) are always appreciated. Some new nets wouldn't be a bad idea either.



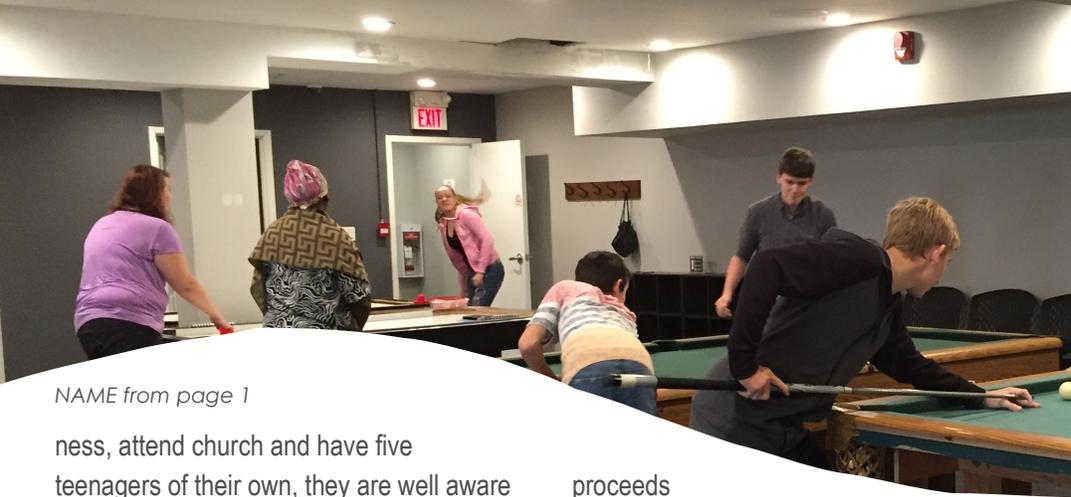
Pool Cues

Probably one of the most popular activities at Drop-In is pool. However, we are running out of useable cues. If you would like to donate towards the purchase of new cues, let us know.



Prizes

We often have events or tournaments with the teens and it is always nice to offer a prize for the winner. Things like chocolate, gift baskets or gift cards to stores or restaurants are always well received. Contact us if you would like to donate a prize.



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ness, attend church and have five teenagers of their own, they are well aware of the problems that some teens in this community experience – substance abuse, difficulty at school, family difficulties, etc. Being the compassionate, caring people they are, they did not just lament the lack of services available to youth in Lincoln, they actually did something about it and created Convos Youth Zone (Note: we will soon be a recognized charitable organization).

Knowing that an organization like Convos would require a consistent income source, the Duecks opened Conversations Café, which is the primary sponsor of The Zone. All

proceeds from the café go directly to programs offered at Convos. So, each time you purchase a coffee or have lunch at Conversations, you are making a difference in your community. The great thing about Conversations is that it also addresses a need in the broader community – a comfortable, feels-like-home space where people come together for delicious food and great conversations.

One last thing. Did you notice the link between the names of Conversations Café and Convos Youth Zone? Pretty cool, eh?

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youth were encouraged to practice proper hygiene washing their hands and wearing their hairnets (with smiles) as well as getting their hands dirty and eating the finished product. Out of The Zone encouraged the kids to get out to do some outdoor activities. We got to spend some time outside of the Youth Zone playing soccer, basketball, and even some ball hockey.

Regular drop-in continued during- the summer, which consisted of many card and board games. The youth especially enjoyed the card game President. Overall it was an exciting summer that has been a huge blessing for me in my life and I look forward to seeing all the fun things that Convos Youth Zone does next.

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nights they are not able to find a couch to sleep on so all four of our homeless youth have slept outside at least once. Thankfully we were able to help one get into a shelter and we are happy to report that the other youth are living at home again.

It has truly been an amazing year at Convos

and it has been encouraging to see the ways that God is working to bless this ministry. Please keep Convos in your prayers and consider how you can be involved in making a difference in the lives of these young people (see back page for a list of ways).

GETTING INVOLVED

Have you ever considered getting involved in the work we are doing at Convos Youth Zone? Or perhaps you were involved in the past and would like to partner with us again.

Through Convos Youth Zone, God has provided an amazing vehicle for being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ to the marginalized and often forgotten people of our community. However, we can not accomplish the task he has laid before us without the support and help of people like you. There are so many ways to get involved:

Volunteer

- Drop-in Volunteer
- Event Planning Team
- Cleaning
- Handyman

Monthly Sponsor

- Partner with us by financially supporting the work we are doing with the youth of Lincoln.

Prayer Warrior

- The work we are doing will only be successful if we regularly pray for God's wisdom and direction. So, we need people who will commit to regularly praying for Convos Youth Zone and the teens we work with.

We invite you to consider how you can get involved in our ministry. For more information or to discuss next steps, please contact Brad Cook at info@convos.ca or 289-566-9365.

First Convos Board of Directors Meeting
January 18, 2016



Convos Board of Directors

In January of 2016, Convos took a huge step towards becoming a registered charity – we formed a Board of Directors! This was a very exciting time for our organization because it meant that things were moving forward and that we were taking the leadership and accountability of Convos to a new level. The primary focus of our meetings was the process of attaining our charity status. We are so thankful to the individuals who have stepped up to take on this momentous task and set up Convos with a firm foundation which will help us achieve the vision that God has entrusted us with. It is the board's intent to grow the board over the next couple of years to nine serving board members. Our first board members are:

David Dueck (Chairman)

As one of the founders of Convos, David has been with the organization since its inception and is the longest serving drop-in volunteer. He is an optometrist and a successful businessman who has lived in Lincoln for most of his life. He is married to Deborah and they have five teen-aged children. David brings not only his business acumen to the board, but also his passion for the vision and a keen insight into the lives of the youth we minister to.

Bud Penner (Vice-Chairman)

Bud is now in his "second career" serving with Partners International and helping to further the reach of their international ministry. He faithfully served the Lord for many years as a pastor for a local church and has served on numerous church and charity boards. His wife's name is Beulah and they live in Beamsville and have two adult daughters and 6 grandchildren. Bud brings an experienced wisdom and thorough

knowledge of how charities should run.

Don Rose (Secretary/Treasurer)

Don is a former English teacher at Great Lakes Christian High School and has served as their Chief Administrator for the past 11 years. In his role as Chief Administrator, Don is not only responsible for the administration of the school but is also the primary fundraiser and works very closely with the school's Board of Directors. He has been married to Corrie for 23 years and they live with their three children in Vine-land. Having led a successful charity with a rich history, Don brings invaluable skills of administration, fundraising, governance and public relations to our board.

In the fall, the board was happy to welcome a fourth member to the board:

Mirinda Vanden Ende

Mirinda is currently working at the family business, Timberwood Custom Kitchens, in Port Colborne. Before taking this position, she worked as a barista at Conversations Café. Mirinda's educational background is in Advertising and Marketing Communications. Mirinda also spent a year working part-time as the Youth Program Coordinator at Convos Youth Zone. She has a deep passion for sharing Christ's love with the teens we work with, many of whom she has established a personal relationship with through volunteering. Mirinda comes to the board with not only her education and work experience, but also a direct knowledge of the day-to-day operation of the youth program and an understanding of the needs of the teens and challenges they face.



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