

# *catalyst*

snapshots

ISSUE 24 AUTUMN 2005



I stood in the intense heat, perspiration drenching me, at the door of the domestic airport in Sri Lanka, ready to fly from Colombo to Jaffna in the north, and found myself listening to 'I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas' playing over the loudspeaker. It was a surreal moment, but then everything about the trip to Sri Lanka was a little surreal, it had all happened so fast.

In January I was given the amazing opportunity of traveling, with a team of three psychologists, to train people in trauma counseling in the wake of the tsunami. Under the auspices, and loving hospitality, of the Youth For Christ workers in Sri Lanka we were able to train 530 people from diverse backgrounds to be able to counsel with those who had survived the wave.

Psychologists have realized, through the experience of disaster counseling after 9/11, that it is possible to retraumatise people if inappropriate counseling methods are used. It was great to be able to spread the word on the latest findings and teach the participants how to counsel safely, particularly with children.

We had three days in Colombo and then the team of four split into two, with two going to Batticalao in the East - an area hard hit by the disaster - and two of us traveling north (Christmas carols and all) to Jaffna. Jaffna has experienced 20 years of war with the separatist movement, the Tamil Tigers, so people there have had the trauma of war and then the tsunami. Sri Lanka has been very divided both ethnically and religiously with two national languages and a predominantly Buddhist and Hindu population.

During our time in the north we visited Point Pedro which had been tsunami affected and saw first hand the devastating effect of the wave. There was rubble everywhere, broken boats half a kilometre inland, people's belongings up in the trees, houses torn in half. There are 45,000 displaced in the north and they estimate 5000-6000 dead. With homes, families and livelihoods gone, they have to deal with so much grief.

**BY GOD'S GRACE, THEIR SUFFERING WILL BE TRANSFORMED...**

After our visit, YFC in Jaffna began working on a year long counseling project, targeting the youth in the region, helping them to normalize after this tragedy. The people we trained will receive further training and work in homes, schools and youth clubs to help these very vulnerable young people. Children will also be a focus of the program. Over and above the housing, and economic issues that loom so large, the issue of dealing with grief and post traumatic stress will be huge over the next months and years. Your prayers and your donations will be important.

If you want to give to the Jaffna project then please send your donations marked for Jaffna to Youth For Christ Australia. These particular donations are, unfortunately, not tax deductible, just desperately needed.

With time, and love, and prayer, and proper counseling, these young people will bounce back. By God's grace, their suffering will be transformed into a determination to go forward into the future. The people of Sri Lanka are very aware that Australians are feeling for them at this time. I am so grateful I had a chance to represent that love and concern in some way.

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**Linda Harding**  
Ministry Consultant



Good news is always good to hear. Last week I heard of God's great provision of pledged funding for a new YFC Youth Drop-in Centre for our Gippsland Branch. In YFC's Melbourne Branch God is developing School Ministry teams to work, in partnership with schools, in one on one ministry. In YFC's Geelong-Westcoast Branch, a wonderful mentoring and training programme for teenagers is being rolled out in several schools. I heard with awe how He is at work in our YFC Brisbane Branch with a tremendous opportunity to co-operate in a partnership with indigenous Australians in an intern training programme. In Adelaide there is a vibrant Dance Club ministry that reaches hundreds each week through the art of dance, and helps teach them about the love and grace of Jesus in small groups and personal relationships.

There are so many good things happening. The highlight of my last trip was the testimony of a young lady who, after running away from an abusive home situation, was placed with a couple connected with YFC Melbourne. After four years with them she is now doing her VCE and plans to go to university. She has carefully watched the lives of this young couple and lived with their love and nurture. Over the period she has been drawn to Jesus Christ. Now a disciple and follower of Jesus she walks with hope, purpose and direction. She has found her destiny!

This good news of miracles in provision, direction and personal change is made possible because of the prayers and financial support of God's people. Thank you so much for being with us in this mission.

**David Bonanno**  
National Director

## R.E.S.P.E.C.T

Everyone wants it.  
We want our young people to show it, and they want to receive it from us.

This characteristic of respect is something that YFC believes is fundamental to our interaction with young people. Below are some tips for building the principle of respect into our young people:

- 1. Ask their opinions and really listen to the answers.**  
Don't put them down. If you disagree, you can say you see things a little differently and give good reasons.
- 2. Be respectful in the way you speak to them - even if they are not being respectful to you.**  
Talk to them about tone of voice, swearing and how things sound to others. Unless we model respectful attitudes, manners and tone of voice they won't have a hope!
- 3. Help them understand that the respect principle applies to everything.**  
From the way we keep our room tidy, to the way we take care of our world. From the way we respect the privacy and possessions of others, to the way we respect ourselves and others enough to speak up against injustice.
- 4. As much as possible, bring them in on the decision making process regarding their situation and issues relevant to the whole family.** Sometimes you have to make the executive decision but if they see that mostly you try to consider their opinion they will respond more positively when you cannot.
- 5. Never even hint at putting them down in front of their friends.**  
Speak to them later about behaviour issues (respectfully 😊).
- 6. Use respect as a language to talk about behaviour.**  
'When you did not phone to tell me you would be late, I felt you did not respect me or my need to know you were safe'
- 7. Be prepared to have them talk about not being respected by you and learn to say I'm sorry.**

Our commitment to model respect to our young people will reap a great harvest not just for our relationship or our family but for our society. The more they feel respected the more they will discover this is part of the Good News. If we teach them how to respect, there are far reaching consequences. The more our young people understand and live out the respect principle, the stronger and more robust will be our communities and our society as a whole.



Feel the need to go **DEEPER?**

Take the **PLUNGE**

and become a VOLUNTEER in one of YFC's many exciting programs around the country!  
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