

S.P.L.A.S.H.

by Cynthia Brown



“Why would kids come to church on Wednesday nights?”

Faith, Troy answered this question three years ago by creating S.P.L.A.S.H. Zone. No, we have not built an indoor water park; but rather, we have created a place where kids can Serve People and the Lord as Students of Him.

This program originated from our children’s ministry’s commitment to supporting the mission of the church at large. In order to do so, we evaluated how we position children for growth in the five areas of Discipleship, Stewardship, Outreach, Worship, and Community. Stewardship came up lacking. Our creative team brainstormed how we could practically help children serve Jesus and others. Thus, S.P.L.A.S.H. Zone was born.

When families arrive, they check in at the main desk. Parents take their little ones to self-contained classrooms where they learn foundational Bible stories and truths. Second through fifth graders meet together in a large room to learn songs to sing in worship services and to engage in weekly devotions. Then they are dismissed to their elective classes where they first discuss the devotion and pray with their group. The remainder of the time is spent learning their elective skill.

Six electives are offered to the second through fifth graders each quarter. In each elective, children learn skills that enable them to serve. The “techies” learn how to run sound, lighting, and power point in Sunday’s Kids’ Connection. Crocheters make blankets for hospital preemies. Puppeteers put on puppet shows for the Easter Fair and Christmas Extravaganza. Children in Games.com lead gym class for the younger children. Scrapbookers make cards for the military and scrapbooks of various Faith events. Budding chefs create meals to share with the elderly or the ill. But what makes these classes different from local Parks and Recreation programs is the spiritual component.

This format change rejuvenated Wednesday nights at Faith. It clarified our mission. Kids brought more friends because they loved coming themselves. Volunteers found teaching six to eight week sessions less daunting than signing up for an entire school year.

One of the families impacted by S.P.L.A.S.H. Zone is Lynn and Jeff Sharbaugh and their three children. “Last year my friend invited my children and me to come to S.P.L.A.S.H. Zone and she

even picked us up each week. My husband liked how the kids came home excited. We had our kids baptized on October 29. We now go to church and I go to Elise’s (pastor’s wife) Bible Study. We saw the importance of putting the kids in parochial school. Now I help in S.P.L.A.S.H. Zone and learn right along with the kids.”

To complement S.P.L.A.S.H. Zone, programs and classes are also offered for middle and high school students, adults, and parents. Childcare for little ones enables parents to attend more easily.

Sunday work obligations prevent Laura and Ken Goins from bringing their children to Kids’ Connection on Sunday. Wednesday evening is where Laura invites many families – including the Sharbaughs - to attend with her. “My kids and I ask kids at school to come with us to S.P.L.A.S.H. Zone. It’s a great, great program. They make it so fun for kids here and the kids get the message. We talk about God more at home now. My kids make better choices. I love it here. My kids love it. I joined for my kids and now I’m proud to be part of this place.”

Cynthia Brown is the Director of Kids InC (In Christ) at Faith, Troy.