

APU Articles

Homework House Makes a Splash Among Azusa Youth

by April Overholt '11

In July, Our Neighborhood Homework House launched its 11th Summer Splash, a four-week enrichment program designed to provide active, healthy entertainment for elementary school children in the Azusa community. Summer Splash brings the Homework House together with the [Azusa Library](#), Santa Fe Dam, Slauson Pool, and three different local churches to offer weekday events for youth.

“One of the major enemies our students face is boredom,” said Luke Spink '09, administrative coordinator. “Sometimes, they’re just kicking around the town, not knowing what to do, finding ways to get into trouble. So, one of the main reasons Summer Splash is so beneficial is that it keeps the students constructively engaged.”

Summer Splash launched just two years after the founding of Homework House. In 1997, two teachers reached out to a few local children by offering to tutor them in their family’s own apartments, and Homework House was formed. Since the original six children and two volunteers, the organization has grown to serve 150 kids from 85 families, with more than 100 trained volunteers and 4 paid staff.

With numerous APU students and alumni serving throughout its history, the Homework House has forged a strong partnership with APU and continues to grow as more APU students join the pool of volunteers.

“[Our relationship with APU] is a good model for a working community partnership,” said Spink, explaining that while Homework House benefits APU student volunteers, the university in turn lends some of its professional resources to assist the ever-growing organization. Homework House staff strive for similar reciprocal relationships with the local organizations they partner with.

The nonprofit organization's funding flows from these partnerships, many of which are secular institutions. Therefore, Christian-based activities are not necessarily supported during the school year—however, staff members pray with the students and occasionally read Scripture during “family hour” before tutoring sessions start. Summertime allows more freedom for these spiritual elements.

“Our summer mission is to make sure kids know about the love of Christ, and that there is a higher being that cares for them and made them,” said Marquez.

This mission becomes possible through Homework House's invaluable relationships with local churches. As a part of Summer Splash, various churches each host a week of Vacation Bible School (VBS). Through VBS, the kids have the opportunity to not only create crafts and play sports or games, but to learn about a God who loves them.

“It’s amazing to see that, after a week of VBS, the kids have so many questions, like, ‘What does God look like? Is he really real? Do you talk to him?’” said Crystal Marquez, program director. Marquez explained that kids often take these questions home to share with their parents. “Then it becomes a ministry for the whole family,”

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Gallery



she said. “Parents ask, ‘What does that verse mean? Explain to me what you learned.’”

This powerful message translates to the students and their families, and even to the volunteers that witness the short prayer times during the school year as well.

“At the end of every semester, every single time, the atheist tutors are the ones asking for prayers,” said Marquez. “They see that when these kids ask for prayer and share with each other, it does work.”

Homework House staff expect the Summer Splash program and after-school tutoring to continue to grow as they provide spiritual and educational support to members of the Azusa community. However, volunteers are needed for the upcoming semester. If you are interested in tutoring, visit the [Homework House website](#).

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