

Our Annual Calendar

September Parent Meeting (first week of the month)—I go into greater detail on this one below.

October Outreach Event—Plan a gathering that's fun and relaxed—something your teenagers would feel comfortable inviting their friends to. In the past, we've planned events such as Battle of the Burger and Wing Bowl (both eating contests), the Amazing Race challenge, and so on. Include a short (and obvious) gospel-lesson element to this. Be mindful of Homecoming events that may conflict with this event.

November Fall Retreat—We plan an extremely cheap overnight event as a stepping-stone for younger teenagers who've never gone on an overnight retreat before or are new to the ministry and still making friends. It's a low commitment (local and short) for your leaders who have young children at home and need a sitter. Give this retreat a focus that you return to each year. In our ministry, we focus on what it means to be a godly man/godly woman. We explore diverse aspects of that each year—from dating relationships to finances to the importance of quiet times.

December Service Days—While kids are in the spirit of giving, plan short service projects for small groups. Our schedule includes a quick breakfast (donuts and OJ), a devotional, guidelines and expectations, and serving time—usually schedule from 8 a.m. to noon.

January Off-Site Event—Rent out a trampoline park or laser-tag facility as a way to encourage students to bring their friends to a fun event. Encourage your leaders to play as well. We feel strongly that leaders who play hard earn the right to be heard by teenagers. On the heels of the busy Christmas season and in anticipation of your big winter retreat, this is an easy event to promote community and relationships.

February Winter Retreat—This is another stepping-stone in our ministry—we plan it as a less-than-48-hours retreat that focuses on biblical depth and spiritual growth. This retreat should be off-campus and away from technology and the pressures kids are facing. Build in quiet times, teaching sessions, small-group times to process the sessions. And, of course, lots of play.

March Gaming Event—Continue the momentum that your winter retreat kicked off with a community-building “gaming” event—go off-site to an indoor ice rink for a broomball tourney or a YMCA for a massive dodgeball contest.

April End-of-Year Parties for Small Groups—Encourage your small group leaders to host a little celebratory get-together before the craziness of grad parties and concerts kicks in.

May End-of-Year Celebration—Consider planning a Night of Worship that includes all the favorite songs from the year. Get creative and offer prayer walls, prayer walks, and devotional experiences as part of this. This highlights the growth you've experienced together over the year.

June/July Summer Mission Trip or Camp—This trip is typically a week long and more in-depth—capitalizing on the trust you've built on the two shorter retreats. These weekend and

week-long trips are the equivalents of an entire year's worth of relationship building. Your teenagers will return with inside jokes and lots of common experiences—and your ministry will be stronger for it the following year.

August Leadership Team Meetings—Before the fall kicks off, regroup and celebrate the past year with your leadership team. Plan for the next year. Hand out the new calendar. Train and encourage them. Ask them to commit to at least one retreat/trip for the next year. And ask them to help recruit more leaders!

(Not included in this calendar are your weekly Sunday and midweek meetings or your leadership team meetings. Consider a Fun Friday for your leaders to just hang out together and bond. This team has become their small group. If they feel valued as leaders and are building friendships, the potential for leader longevity skyrockets.)