

Kids tackling poverty

Teens exceed goal of raising money for poor countries

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Mica Dalton's goal was to raise \$500 for Outreach International, a charity organization that works with poverty-stricken countries.

With the help of her parents, her church, friends and area businesses, this teenager exceeded that goal, taking in \$709.70.

Dalton, 16, and her good friend Nicole DeLong, 14, organized a Christian rock concert called the Hunger Challenge Concert and a lock-in Saturday night at Community of Christ, 1212 Goetz Blvd.

Dalton's mother, Melissa Johnson, said the girls are planning to make a check presentation to an Outreach International official who will come to Joplin to receive money from the fund-raiser.

Dalton said she attended an Outreach International youth forum in July in Independence that touched her.

"They have youth conferences all over the world and they had video from different countries," Dalton said.

Dalton said her maternal grandmother, Sharon Burkhalter, and maternal great-grandmother, Mildred Burgess, visited Africa through Outreach International and they told her stories about people they met there.

She said she had imagined that people in poor countries would not be happy with their condition, but her grandmothers told her some of the people they met and how happy they were and how they wanted to work and improve their lives.

"They want to learn how to do stuff themselves," Dalton said. "They don't want stuff handed to them. They want to grow."

After showing the problems in poverty-stricken countries, the Outreach International organizers challenged the youths to bring something back to their congregations that might help.

Dalton and her friend came up with a Christian rock concert after rejecting an earlier idea.

"It started out to be a fast and everyone had to go and get sponsors," Dalton said. "Fasting seemed to be kind of lame."

Dalton and DeLong decided to book bands for the concert instead. They started organizing the event about three weeks ago.

They won the cooperation of bands Everwill, Sounding the Silence and Scarlet Remembrance whose members volunteered their time and talent.

"It's a big thing around Joplin," Dalton said about Christian concerts and events. "We saw how The Bridge and other churches have brought the community together and helped them to reach their goals, for fund-raising or whatever they were doing."

Dalton's parents, Melissa and Jeff Johnson, got the idea to serve hamburgers, hot dogs and other food that was donated.

Young people were invited to spend the night during the lock-in after the bands stopped playing.

Dalton and DeLong distributed fliers and people spread the word about the concert and lock-in.

"We totally re-did our church (last week) and they let us take control of it and they told us they trust us as a group," Dalton said.

Dalton estimated that more than 100 people came to the show.

Kevin Deems, 16, a member of Sounding the Silence, said his band came out Saturday because its members enjoy performing and support the cause.

Deems was not staying for the lock-in Saturday night because he planned to film a horror movie for this JET 16 Joplin Eagles Television class at Joplin High School.

Michael Mason, 17, a member of Everwill, said it was his band's first time to perform at a lock-in, but he too was not going to spend the night because he planned to attend his own church the next day.

"It was awesome," Mason said of the concert. "It's a chance for kids to just have fun and stay out of trouble and it's also supporting this church by outreaching to kids by inviting them to the lock-in."

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