

# Love Came to Town

## Community outreach and VBS lead to salvation for many

Story by Steven Douglas  
Photos by Noah Frederickson



Pastors Roger Stahlhut, left, and Pete Friese of CC Buffalo, WY, baptize a lifeguard. After watching several others' baptisms at the conclusion of a multi-church outreach in Buffalo, WY, the young man rededicated his life to Christ and asked to be baptized.

Pastor Rick Rogers of CC Quincy, CA, gave out multi-colored bracelets displaying the Good News of Jesus: red representing Christ's blood shed for mankind, white the purity of those who accept His righteousness in place of their sin, green growth in Him, etc. Rick expressed, "Because kids were boldly sharing the bracelets' meaning, several people came to know Christ. One elderly woman who came to our booth began telling others, 'You need to accept Jesus, like I did today.'" Pastor Roger Stahlhut of CC Open Door, CA, who spearheaded the outreach effort, highlighted the necessity of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. Roger said he was personally encouraged by the youth, adding, "Watching kids loving other kids was amazing."

Nestled between Yellowstone National Park and Mount Rushmore, CC Buffalo, WY, ministers to a community of less than 5,000. Pastor Pete Friese likens the town to the fictional, rural Mayberry, NC, where hunting and fishing are mainstays. "I want people here to apprehend Christ's overwhelming love," Pete voiced. "I pray God will crack the hard nut of apathy and complacency." From

the church property, Pete routinely watches medical helicopter flights landing at the local hospital. The sight burdens him with the thought that many of those passengers do not personally know Christ and might soon die—reinforcing his overwhelming desire to reach people with Christ's love.

### *For the love of Christ compels us.*

2 Corinthians 5:14a

This desire led Pete to connect with Pastor Mike Voight of New Horizon Christian Fellowship in Klamath Falls, OR. The two scheduled a July 2011 outreach involving CC Open Door from Anaheim, CA, but the plan dissolved when the California team's bus overheated climbing the mountain pass leading to Buffalo. Persevering, Mike, Pete, and the leadership at CC Open Door coordinated a new trip for 2012. They also added participants from CC Quincy, CA; Jesus Fellowship in Highlands, NJ; and CC Louisa, VA.

Anticipating the group's arrival, Pete and his wife Celeste prayed for a miracle. The

upcoming community-wide VBS critically needed another 25 volunteers, but the couple was uncertain whether outsiders without much training time could serve effectively in key roles. When the bus pulled in a day early, the team hit the ground running.



During the weeklong outreach's concluding public pool. One person was expected to be baptized, but instead about 10 chose to



Teams went door-to-door sharing Jesus.

Holding back tears, Celeste later echoed another church member's sentiment: "When that bus showed up, love came to town."

Given their enthusiastic desire to serve, the group quickly and unexpectedly became a costumed theatrical troupe. During VBS, "We presented a live-action drama," explained Celeste. "Working from booths, believers portrayed life in ancient Babylon. Through interaction with each other and the community, volunteers and kids shared biblical truth about the one, true God."

### *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*

1 Timothy 2:5

"On our last day when they invited children to pray," said Bob Moyer from CC Open Door, "a lot of kids got on their knees and accepted Jesus Christ."



Jake Biffonnette from CC Open Door in Anaheim, CA, greets VBS participants.

After VBS each day, the group split into teams and blanketed the city. Anticipating God-given opportunities to share Jesus, they engaged people in conversations and invited them to evening evangelistic services. Pete reflected, "We wanted to do more than say 'Jesus loves you.' So we sought to demonstrate His love by engaging our community with a clear presentation of the Gospel."

Celeste reflected, "It was incredible seeing what the Lord accomplished through those who labored with us. Much more than an open door, they were open hands and open hearts for God to use." The week-long endeavor concluded with a concert in City Park and baptisms at a community pool. There outreach participants were



Many children got on their knees and asked Jesus into their hearts at VBS.

overjoyed to see about 10 others, including a lifeguard, elect to join the one person who had planned to be baptized. While watching, the young man explained, he had been convicted regarding his need to re-surrender his life to the Lord. ✚

Since the outreach, Roger Stahlhut has moved to New Horizon Christian Fellowship in Klamath Falls, OR, as a supporting pastor.

### **CC Buffalo, WY**

[www.calvarychapelbuffalo.com](http://www.calvarychapelbuffalo.com)

[buffalo@calvarychapel.com](mailto:buffalo@calvarychapel.com)

307-684-8725

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