



www.afterschoolhangout.org

Making a Difference Through “After School Hangouts”

Hillsong Team

<http://hillsong.com/contributor/hillsong-team/>

Carl W. Buechner says: *“They may forget what you said, but they will not forget how you made them feel.”*

Young people in our community are going through a wide range of issues, from bullying and body image to life changes and social pressures, to name just a few. We don’t pretend to have all the answers, but we can be present – and in a lot of cases, this is all a young person needs to find their way through such a pivotal time in their lives.

We have found that, in any local community, there is a need for young people to have a positive environment to go to when schools are done for the day. Local police have said having a positive environment significantly reduces public loitering, theft and general mischief for students without supervision. Presently, “after school hangouts” or engagement activities are proving to be a great way to connect with local teenagers in our community.

What this generally looks like is having an activity, loud music and food – the universal languages for any young person. It is a relaxed environment where they can unwind, have fun and engage with our team. Over time, trust is built, and young people inevitably start opening up and asking questions about topical issues in their world. Our teams are there to listen and be a consistent encourager and support for them to make positive choices in their lives.

Practical tips to consider in running an after school hangout:

After School Team – Check the availability of volunteers to ensure that there is ample manpower to proceed.

Hot Spots – Take time to think about your local area and discover the spots where young people naturally spend their time. Make it your goal to establish a hangout near where the youth are already congregating.

Culture – Think about the demographic of the young people you are trying to reach – what hobbies they enjoy and what they do for fun, i.e. basketball, skateboarding, food and styles of music. Make this the focus of your hangout.

Have FUN – Be the hub of the energy and fun happening at the hangout. Get involved in the games you play and invite people to join. When you have fun, people want to take part in it.

Consistency – Once you commit to something and it is in motion, be there every week. Trust is built through consistency. The young people will start expecting you to be present.

Flexibility – Seasons change, and so do young people. What works in winter may not work in summer. Young people may want to have a change in activities or schedule. Be willing to “tweak” things so you stay relevant.