YOUNG LIFE AT 75

Legacy and Vision

Annual Report 2016
“How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.”

— Daniel 4:3 (NIV)
In Tyler, Texas, Add Sewell made one of the greatest “discoveries” in the history of the mission. He was well aware the work there must run differently than the earlier “appearances” he and his fellow seminarians made in their weekly commutes to Houston. “You can’t have a Young Life club like that,” he said. “We had no contact with kids prior to or after those clubs.”

Sewell knew the missing ingredient was time. Kids needed adults who cared enough to come alongside them and spend time learning what was important to them. Looking for a better approach with the ministry in Tyler, Sewell started showing up at football practices, where he simply hung out and kicked the football around with the kids. In the process, he developed relationships with kids.

Sewell’s simple “discovery,” which came to be known as “contact work,” helped enlarge the staff’s vision of what kids (and adults) needed.

As Wally Howard later reflected, contact work was actually an old concept. “Our message is a person. God made Himself known to us through a person, and He still makes Himself known through people. And that’s what Young Life is all about.”

In 2016, more than 4,700 Young Life staff and 72,000 volunteer leaders went where kids were and earned the right to be heard. Their countless hours of sacrificial listening and loving helped to build bridges of friendship with kids.
Jim Rayburn wasn’t pleased with the results of his weekly after-school meetings held in an English teacher’s classroom. The kids sat at desks as Rayburn taught from Scripture; it felt like one more class tacked on at the end of a long school day. After months of averaging 10 kids each week, Rayburn began holding the meetings at night in the kids’ homes.

Once Rayburn moved the time and location of club, more kids came out and the relaxed surroundings put them at ease, which in turn created more energy and, consequently, more talk about the event in school the next day.

“When he had that Gainesville club he asked the rest of us to meet that night and to pray,” Wally Howard explained. The seminary students’ prayers were being answered, noted Rayburn. “They’d get down on their knees and spend hours praying for that club meeting. It’s no wonder we had a revival in that school!”

That club went from 75 to 96, and then to 100, and then to 119, and 135, and the week before finals there were 170 kids there.”

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“There’s no way to overemphasize the importance of that Gainesville club,” Add Sewell said. “If it hadn’t happened, Young Life might not have happened. It gave us an idea of what could be.”

In 2016, Young Life club provided kids around the world with the best night of their week. This year there were more than 7,300 ministries spread out across all 50 states and more than 100 countries.
Jim Rayburn loved introducing kids to the rugged outdoors, and the One who created it all. In the early days of the mission, Rayburn took several boys, like Bob Mitchell, out to the East Texas hills where the camping was primitive. The day’s activities revolved around armadillo and rattlesnake hunts, hiking, and reading from the New Testament by the campfire at night.

These sacred times paved the way for Rayburn’s larger dream of a Young Life camp for kids. Until this dream could be realized, Rayburn rented camp properties in the summers. Mitchell said, “It wasn’t the property itself that brought camping alive for us, but the way Jim gave us things to do and took us on all kinds of hikes. We got to know a man whom we knew had a special touch with God. Many of us opened our lives to Christ in these primitive camps.”

In 1946, Star Ranch became Young Life’s first camp. Herb and Gloria Taylor purchased the camp for $50,000 and leased the camp to Young Life for one dollar a year. Years later, when he stopped to calculate what his purchase had produced, Taylor couldn’t help but laugh. “Best investment I ever made,” he proclaimed. “Probably 30,000 kids heard the gospel at Star. That’s about a dollar-and-a-half apiece.”

In 2016, Young Life leaders enjoyed taking 280,279 kids to one of our 49 camps around the world, offering kids the opportunity to hear about the good news of Jesus Christ in a place made just for them.
The Apostle Paul would have made an excellent Young Life leader! His legacy and vision were for the men and women he befriended through his ministry:

“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy” (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, NIV).

This has also been our legacy and vision for kids from the very beginning. For 75 years Young Life leaders have befriended all kinds of kids, so they can introduce them to Jesus. We’re thankful to the Lord for His generosity through faithful donors and His direction of our talented team of staff, leaders and committees. Frankly, we can’t wait to see what He will do in the next 75 years!”

— John Brandon, Chair
Young Life Board of Trustees
This year saw the culmination of Reaching a World of Kids (RWOK), the mission’s seven-year initiative to double our outreach from one million to two million kids per year. Begun in 2009, RWOK ultimately helped the mission reach more than 2.1 million kids, mobilize more than 72,000 volunteers and establish more than 7,300 ministry locations. During this time, we also witnessed club attendance more than double from 354,352 to 804,966, affording even more kids the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus’ love.

COUNTRIES WHERE MINISTRY BEGAN DURING RWOK

- Abkhazia
- Bangladesh
- Belize
- Bulgaria
- Burundi
- Colombia
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Cuba
- Djibouti
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Georgia
- Ghana
- Honduras
- Hong Kong
- Israel
- Jamaica
- Lithuania
- Macedonia
- Mali
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- Northern Ireland
- Palestine
- Panama
- Poland
- Puerto Rico
- Scotland
- Senegal
- South Africa
- Swaziland
- Tajikistan
- Vietnam
- Zambia
- Zanzibar

REACHING A WORLD OF KIDS

REACHING A BROADER LANDSCAPE OF KIDS
- Texas Latino Initiative
- Young Life College – 30 to 180 schools
- Explosive growth in focused ministries such as Capernaum and YoungLives
- The Atlanta Project

RAISING UP MORE LEADERS
- Developing Global Leaders
- Latino Student Staff

CREATING MORE CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES FOR KIDS
- New camps in Scotland, Armenia, Missouri, Oregon and North Carolina
- Campership Legacy Fund
- Camp On Wheels in Latin America and Africa

It took the mission nearly 70 years to reach one million kids annually. Through RWOK, it took us just seven more to reach more than two million.
The Gospel is on the Move

The gospel is flourishing among us. We are in the lives of more than two million kids in over 100 countries worldwide. We are in awe of God’s provision, of the many new faces and places of Young Life. Yet we are aware that the gospel is not static, that we serve a God who is on the move — within us, among us and ahead of us. As we have prayed, discussed and planned over the last year, we believe a renewed vision is coming into focus, a plan for thriving, sustainable ministry that we’re calling Forward. Because that’s our gospel reality in Young Life — we lean into things, our hearts beat for the new and the next.

Moving Forward, we seek to increase our global impact through focusing on four mission strategies:

- **DEEPER IN CHRIST** — Seeking the Lord first and helping kids grow in their faith.
- **TOGETHER** — Building and equipping teams that reflect the worldwide body of Christ.
- **INNOVATION** — Creating new ways today to reach kids tomorrow.
- **GROWTH** — Impacting all kids within sight and just out of reach.

As a mission, we’re uniting around these four mission strategies toward the vision of sustainable, worldwide growth both in kids impacted and lives transformed through discipleship.

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do. Forgetting what lies behind and reaching **forward** to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

— Philippians 3:13-14 (NASB)
Dawson Trotman, who in 1933 had formed the Navigators ministry, had seen Rayburn lead many kids into relationships with Christ. Trotman implored him to follow up with these newborn believers and shared his emphasis on discipleship with Rayburn, who then used the Navigators materials in Bible studies with his high school friends.

“The early leaders started meeting with kids who had become followers of Jesus,” Mitchell said. “They called these groups ‘Campaigners,’ from the early tent meetings which were called the ‘Young Life Campaign.’ Our group of boys met at Jim Rayburn’s home on Sunday afternoons. For two hours we each gave a weekly report on our assignments, studied Scripture, memorized Bible verses and learned to pray.

“The same things went on in the girls’ Campaigners groups, led by Gracia Roche, Ollie Dustin, Kay McDonald, Wanda Ann Mercer or Anne Cheairs, some of the first women to join the Young Life staff. These women, and many others, would be legendary in their contribution to the mission.”

GOING DEEP WITH CAMPAIGNERS

In 2016, 115,407 kids came out to Campaigners. Young Life’s group designed to help kids grow in their faith through study and service.
By 1950, Bill Starr acutely felt the disconnect between Young Life and the local church. He wanted to make sure Young Life was “not simply outside the church, but a part of the ministry of the church. I wanted us to have a representative body out of the congregations. So it forced me to go to pastors, explain who we were, what the goal was, and how we wanted to participate with them rather than outside what they were doing.”

Starr visited local churches in Portland, Oregon, and asked for someone from each congregation to become a part of the area ministry. And thus was born the Young Life committee.

“None of these people had any Young Life connection,” he said. “There were a couple of things motivating me: I wanted them to be part of the overall ministry taking place in Portland at that time. I also thought this could help decentralize fiscal responsibility.

“Jim took it all on himself; he’d go out and raise money and distribute it. Well, that seemed to me to be unfair to him and to us. We needed to assume and accept our responsibility, and the move really freed us up to grow.”

Rayburn’s reaction? Starr laughed, “I think he was thrilled!”

All historical excerpts taken from Made for This: The Young Life Story.
### MINISTRY STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RWOK Begins</th>
<th>09/09</th>
<th>10/10</th>
<th>11/11</th>
<th>12/12</th>
<th>13/13</th>
<th>14/14</th>
<th>15/15</th>
<th>16/16</th>
<th>% Growth Since Base Year</th>
<th>Annual Average RWOK Growth</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kids Involved Weekly in Club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>113,352</td>
<td>119,456</td>
<td>129,890</td>
<td>135,557</td>
<td>138,257</td>
<td>145,316</td>
<td>153,266</td>
<td>157,105</td>
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<td>International</td>
<td>33,445</td>
<td>37,907</td>
<td>46,913</td>
<td>50,288</td>
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<td>58,184</td>
<td>62,463</td>
<td>67,197</td>
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<td>23%</td>
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<td>Kids Involved Weekly in Campaigns</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>42,331</td>
<td>45,244</td>
<td>49,555</td>
<td>53,144</td>
<td>56,983</td>
<td>61,476</td>
<td>66,804</td>
<td>69,482</td>
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<td>10,278</td>
<td>12,393</td>
<td>14,947</td>
<td>22,023</td>
<td>29,963</td>
<td>33,299</td>
<td>45,925</td>
<td>412%</td>
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<td>Kids Impacted by Young Life*</td>
<td>1,029,411</td>
<td>1,106,326</td>
<td>1,199,347</td>
<td>1,228,082</td>
<td>1,434,869</td>
<td>1,686,061</td>
<td>1,864,257</td>
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<td>3,818</td>
<td>4,039</td>
<td>4,297</td>
<td>4,500</td>
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<td>3,179</td>
<td>3,330</td>
<td>3,448</td>
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<td>4%</td>
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<td>Jr. High/Middle School</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>1,151</td>
<td>1,208</td>
<td>1,281</td>
<td>1,328</td>
<td>1,438</td>
<td>1,517</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>216</td>
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<td>Capernaum</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>136%</td>
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<td>YoungLife</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>243%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural/Urban</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>1,006</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>Small Towns</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,120</td>
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<td>5%</td>
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<td>Military</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-35%</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Estimated, based on “club cards” collected by each Young Life mission unit. Includes U.S. and International.
2. Young Life ministry in unique, non-school settings.
3. This figure is included in the International Ministries total.
4. As of FY2016, Capernaum is retroactively included in senior high outreach.
5. All summer-season campers, leaders, caretakers and adult guests at Young Life-owned properties or Young Life ministries camping at non-Young Life properties.
6. All school-season campers, leaders, caretakers and adult guests at Young Life-owned properties or Young Life ministries camping at non-Young Life properties.
7. All school-season campers, leaders, caretakers and adult guests.
8. Includes leaders accompanying campers, Young Life Expeditions participants and others.
Not long ago I was handed a dog-eared pencil-and-ruler-drawn chart showing contribution growth in 1962. When Jim Rayburn looked at that year’s donations — almost $840,000 from over 7,300 faithful friends — my guess is he praised God for His lavish provision. What would Jim think if he saw these numbers today? Over 214,000 financial partners contributed millions of dollars so more kids than ever could hear the good news of a God who considers each one of them His beloved. And for the first time in Young Life history, we received over one million individual gifts in a single year! (Thanks to our one millionth donor, Corlea, whose gift served kids in Houston!) Jim would be blown away and humbled. As are we.

Cynthia Koerner, Chief Financial Officer
2016-2017
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