

# connections

Working Together to Grow the Kingdom

LEADERSHIP NETWORK®

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## Reaching Out: Touching Lives of Today's Teachers

CHRIST  
COMMUNITY  
HONORS LOCAL  
TEACHERS

### FEATURED CHURCH:

Christ Community  
Church

LOCATION: Omaha,  
Nebraska

ESTABLISHED: 1921 as Omaha Gospel  
Tabernacle; 1975 as Christ Community Church

SERVICES: 2 weekly services in 2 venues  
(4 services total)

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE: 2,500

It's no coincidence that the churches with the fastest growing memberships and most excited members tend to focus heavily on serving others. They know that a primary measure of a church's success is the impact it has on the local community.

Many flourishing churches that emphasize service belong to Leadership Network's Externally Focused Churches Leadership Communities. These Communities allow members to come together to share ideas, offer encouragement and develop "best practices." As participants listen to and learn from each other, good ideas become great ones. And the gains for the Kingdom are enormous.

Jaimie Cogua, Assistant Director of Community Relations at Christ Community Church in Omaha says these Community meetings allow her to take ideas home to her church ... and to those they serve.

### HELPING THOSE WHO HELP KIDS

Jaimie is the City Coordinator for Omaha's groundbreaking "Embrace Teachers" effort. Embrace Teachers was started by Christ Community's pastor and two other local ministers. The three men met several years ago to think creatively about ways to have a lasting impact on their community by showing love and good deeds.

They came up with an idea to support teachers because teachers support the city's children—the same children who will become the city's leaders. It only made sense to give teachers as much love and encouragement as they could.



*Embrace Teachers volunteers reach out to teachers in their community by providing lunch.*

The pastors approached the superintendent of Omaha Public Schools with their ideas. He thought the concept was brilliant and sold his school principals on it. Going to the top to get program approval was key to its quick support and success.

Launched in Omaha Public Schools in the fall of 2003, Embrace Teachers first concentrated on teachers in the heart of the city, as these professionals often lacked the financial and parental support of teachers in other areas of the district.

Embrace Teachers' goals are for its volunteers to provide three random acts of kindness and one physical demonstration of love to its teachers each year.

But most volunteers far exceed those goals and interact with the teachers at least every month. They follow the program's tenet, "Promise small so that you can deliver BIG."

## THE SUCCESS OF EMBRACE TEACHERS IN OMAHA HAS BEEN A BLESSING. IT'S A BLESSING THAT JAIMIE WANTS TO SHARE WITH MINISTRIES IN OTHER CITIES.

### FULL CIRCLE

As fate would have it, Jaimie was one of the first recipients of the program. Before she became involved in the ministry full time, Jaimie was a public school teacher in the city. She loved teaching and said being on the receiving end of Embrace Teachers was "mind-boggling."

### WHAT LEADERSHIP NETWORK MEANS TO ME

Leadership Network is awesome. It is incredible to meet with other leaders from churches across the nation. We learn from each other not only how to tell people about God but how to show people how God works in our lives. Leadership Network has been a huge resource and support system. It's always helpful to be able to talk to someone outside of your immediate sphere. It's just great!



—Jaimie Cogua, Assistant Director of Community Relations,  
Christ Community Church

## GET INSPIRED!



Following are just a few examples of the big-hearted acts Embrace Teachers does for Omaha's public school teachers.

- Holds kick-off parties in the fall with breakfast, cakes or other treats
- Creates back-to-school teacher survival kits
- Caters monthly luncheons for teachers (above)
- Stocks teachers' lounges with soft drinks
- Buys items on the teachers' wish lists
- Coordinates in-class volunteers
- Provides a never-ending supply of chocolate treats for the teachers' desks
- Renovates and redecorates teachers' lounges
- Sends birthday cards to teachers
- Awards gift certificates to teaching supply stores
- Washes all the cars in the teachers' parking lots
- Gives hand or foot massages to teachers
- Stocks teachers' restrooms with goodie baskets of potpourri, lotions and special soaps

"I couldn't believe that these people wanted to do so many nice things for me!" Jaimie says.

Teachers today share her sentiments. The program continues to grow, and Jaimie reports that 19 area churches are actively involved. As the City Coordinator, she meets with program directors from those churches monthly to make sure the program is on track, to brainstorm for ideas and to think of ways to recruit volunteers.

### REACHING OUT TO OTHER CITIES

The success of Embrace Teachers in Omaha has been a blessing. It's a blessing that Jaimie wants to share with ministries in other cities.

She is currently developing a CD-ROM that other churches can use to launch their own programs. The CD will contain the history of the effort, best practices, examples of church covenants and recommendations for building a team of dedicated people.

These efforts are just one more way that Christ Community Church is reaching out to others and demonstrating loving good deeds. **LN**