



THE GROWING NEWS

Spring 2024

Sam Van Eman
Resource Specialist, CCO-XD



For 25 years, I've had the privilege of getting to know what's inside of student silhouettes like these. They aren't mere outlines of what we call humanity as if "humanity" were a cold noun like "fender," but rather heart-pumping, thought-provoking, tear-inducing, laughter-producing embodiments of God, whose hunger and hope bring me great joy.

To know them like this, I must have out-of-the-ordinary experiences with them, like when we stopped at a hog feed lot and the smell was so potent it gave one student a bloody nose.

I'm talking about our spring break trip, of course. CCO co-worker Steve and I took 10 students to Chicago to learn about food deserts, food insecurity, industrialized farming (e.g. feed lots), our bodies, "processed edible foodlike substances," and food as God intended. Why? Because for all the years we've been eating, most of us don't know what we actually consume, nor the cost of its effects on us and society. We wanted to look at the underbelly (get it, underbelly?) of our food system, and little of what we saw brings glory to God. Here are some highlights:

- We walked 9 miles during a 24-hour fast to feel our hunger. Being in Chicago, we just *had* to break it with Deep Dish Pizza. :)
- We sent students to a corner store in a poor neighborhood to experience lack of access. They had to rework their grocery list to cope with the unhealthy options, allergens, and limited selection.
- We held a No-Corn Dinner Challenge. Even in a store similar to Whole Foods, almost everything contains corn derivatives. We thought the students might mutiny but they succeeded instead! Fact: 98% of corn grown in Illinois is field corn, and is not edible until it's processed. Some ends up in products like corn flour, a lot in soft drinks and candy as high fructose corn syrup which fuels diabetes and obesity, and the rest goes to your car, make-up, sand paper, fireworks, and nearly 4,200 other uses.
- To close each day, we took turns on the "Hot Seat," sharing the role food has played in our lives. It quickly became a safe space for tears and healing, which makes sense: food affects our emotions, body image, family history, and more. If we want Jesus to reach all parts of us, we must surrender all parts to him—even our complex relationship with food.

After the trip, a Hindu student said, **"We learned about being mindful towards the world, the resources available to us, and the community—not just focusing on individual needs, but also our collective well-being: focusing on *our* bread, not *my* bread."** His closing line references a discussion we had about the Lord's Prayer and the meaning of "daily bread."

Another student said, **"We've got to do things differently."**



These five kept warm during a presentation on how to respond to local community needs.



The entrée group finally met their No-Corn goal, but went over budget. The cashier made them sweat by waiting till they removed enough items. :) Only then did Steve rescue them.

Thank you for
giving by **phone**:



web: ccojubilee.org/donate
or snail mail: CCO, 5912 Penn Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15206 (My name in Memo)

Contact me at
814.397.5238
svaneman@ccojubilee.org

transforming college students to transform the world | ccojubilee.org



Family Notes

With all the new flowers, grass turning green, and birds building nests, it's our favorite time of year. That's right... Yard Sale Season! We're a thrifty lot and when I'm not travelling and Julie isn't tied up with shifts at Lonely Monk Coffee Roastery and Calicutts Spice Co, we enjoy treasure hunting together.

Emma started full time as a Personal Care Aide for assisted living residents this month. After only her second day she caught a terrible stomach bug from a resident. Most of the other staff and residents got it, too, but now she's healthy again and doing what she does best: providing dignity at a stage of life when people really need it. We love her heart.

Alice is wrapping up her sophomore year at Eastern University. She has found a home and friends through dance ministry and classes, Bible study, and the Leadership Fellows Program. Next year she will serve as the vice chair for the Student Chaplain program. She's enjoying all of it.

I've talked about spring break, but as you can imagine there are more stories to tell about the Jubilee Conference, helping staff design experiences, mentoring, and the like. In a week or so, all of CCO-XD (Experiential Designs) will be taking 95 young men from Williamson College of the Trades canoeing for a week. Many of those students don't know the Lord.

One more food pun: Thank you for keeping this family and ministry fed. Metaphorically speaking, there is no high fructose corn syrup in the diet you provide, no "processed edible foodlike substances" in your prayers for us, and nothing modified or junked up to clog this ministry's arteries. Just good, clean bounty for which there is no end to our gratitude.

I'm feeling energized in this season, mostly because the past few years have offered opportunities to explore innovative ways to do my job—this food trip to Chicago, for example. Or visiting the complexities at our southern border, talking about power and privilege, and employing the mirror activity to help students see themselves as the *imago Dei*. In a way, I've been realizing that very few places or methods lack potential for students to encounter God's love for us and God's heart for everything that is broken. Even at the grocery store.

As I sign and send this letter, I pray that you will have courage to say yes to whatever God has for you. Practice Disruptive Discipleship. Chew slowly on the nourishment in his Word and world, and then watch what happens.