



ASLAN Youth Ministries

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Dear Friends,

It's good to be writing to you again at Christmastime, and we hope this wondrous time of year brings many blessings to you and those you love. This has been a difficult year financially for Aslan, and there is no way to sugarcoat the hardships we have experienced. There is, however, a way to put these hard times into the broader perspective of Aslan's work over the past 34 years.

I was recently asked if maybe we are wasting our time because we simply cannot reach every child that needs our help. In spite of the fact that no group can reach every child they want to help, I took this opportunity to give a reasoned response. Jesus spoke of the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to search for the one who was lost. We are and will always be a ministry to "the **one**." We may die trying . . . but we will move heaven and earth for "the **one**." There is no better description than this, of who Aslan is and why we exist. Jude Thaddeus is known as the patron saint of "lost causes" and "cases despaired of." I wish I could have known Saint Jude, because I cannot think of a better description of the love that has driven us since we founded Aslan in the cold winter of 1975.

There are 1,800 individuals, organizations and churches who currently receive our letters, but only 500 have given to Aslan this year. You are the lifeline between us and these children. You are what connects the dots. You are what determines how many children we are able to reach. Aslan has taken extreme measures to reduce our costs for 2010. In September, all of us at Aslan took pay-cuts and reduced expenses to the bone. **But because of continuing low donations we are now forced to lose one of our valued staff members on January 1st and move two other staff members to part-time for the foreseeable future!** So that not one of the 150 Aslan children in New Jersey and another 150 children in Haiti are left behind, we're all going to be pushed to the breaking point.

As hard as it will be on our tiny staff of six, we are not cutting our services! And the children I write about below are the reason why. Take a moment to look at a small sampling of the latest generation of Aslan kids whose lives are being changed this very moment.

Gerald* is growing up with an aging single-parent mother with serious health problems. An older brother is in prison for life, but Gerald is not going to end up like his brother. He's a little shy at first, but when you get to know him, Gerald's smile can light a room. He's a faithful part of our Bible class program and biking programs,



and he's been with us twice to Haiti. He's already planning for college, and the sky is the limit for this talented young man.

Alicia* has been with us since she was eight years old. She grew up in as tough and difficult a home as any child we've ever worked with. For the last eight years, Alicia has come every time our doors have been open – for Bible classes, tutoring, bike trips, summer camp and two trips to Haiti. Most people thought she'd never amount to anything, but Aslan never stopped believing in her for a minute. Alicia just entered college in September.



Marquis* started coming to Aslan eight years ago, as a belligerent and deeply troubled five-year-old. For the first year he was with us, we had to take him back home from Bible class every week. Even his mother told us she wouldn't blame us if we gave up, because we weren't about to. If you could see the transformation in Marquis at age 13 today, you would not believe it's the same child! With the help of a dedicated, patient mentor, he's on his way to becoming a mature young man who loves the Lord.

Lisa* was so quiet and reserved when she started coming to Aslan 7 years ago that we wondered if she would ever break out of her shell and become anything. Her mother was struggling with substance abuse, and it took years

before Lisa was able to blossom. In September, she entered a prestigious women's university and is preparing for a wonderful career as a teacher!

These are real young people who have overcome tremendous obstacles to be where they are today. And Aslan Youth Ministries has been there for them every step of the way. A few months ago, I posed the question, "What if this were to be the last generation of Aslan students?" Sadly, if we're not able to turn things around financially, this generation might be the last. We're about to enter our 35th year of changing the world for the better. **We can only do it with the kindness and generosity of friends like you.**

Merry Christmas, and may God bless us everyone!

Craig Bogard



P.S. Fifteen minutes ago I stopped to fill up our school bus after Bible classes in Asbury Park. It took \$75.00 for just over a half a tank of diesel fuel. If each one of you reading this were to just send us what it costs for a half tank of diesel, it would give us a boost this Christmas beyond what you can imagine. Hopefully, some can send even more, but **please ~ whatever you can give ~ don't forget Aslan's kids this Christmas.**



* We've changed the names of Aslan children to protect their identity

If you'd like to receive our newsletter by email please fill out the response card and mail it back!



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*