

Oregon's Camp Joshua: Training and Equipping Pro-Life Youth

BY Jessica Rodgers

For the past six years, Oregon Right to Life has put on Camp Joshua for 16- to 21-year-old youth over Spring Break. The camp's motto tells it all: "Training and equipping pro-life youth to influence their peers today, becoming the pro-life leaders of tomorrow."

The teens come from all over Oregon to a retreat center and spend three days immersing themselves in information about the nuts and bolts of the life issues. Throughout their three-day/two-night stay, they are educated on stem cells, public speaking, leadership, euthanasia, post-abortion syndrome, and many other relevant topics.

This youth leadership retreat provides them with practical knowledge about how the government works, their role in and the history of the right-to-life movement, and how to start and what to do with a Teens for Life group. Sessions include "Abortion 101 and 102," "Politics Anyone?" and "Putting a Face on Abortion." Among the most popular sessions at the camp is "When They Say, You Say," training on how to respond to pro-abortion arguments.

It's not all work, though. Breaks are taken for ice-breaker games, teamwork exercises, and pro-life versions of such shows as *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and *The Apprentice*.

These young adults at Camp Joshua come from all across the state and from different backgrounds, brought together solely because of their passion for life. The camp caters to all types of interests, with an emphasis on medicine, politics, and public speaking.

No matter what their goals, however, these campers are taught how to use their talents to best effect change in our world. They leave Camp Joshua feeling empowered to go out and make a difference. The camp provides opportunities for volunteer experiences, and helps each person find their individual niche in the pro-life community.

Christy Boespflug, one of the camp's attendees, wrote, "I was really shy at the beginning. I didn't want to stand up and be made wrong, but this training has made me look past my fear and look more at what will happen if my voice isn't put out there to be heard." (For a visual tour of the camp, go to http://www.ortl.org/camp_joshua/tour.html.)

You might wonder from whence the camp's name comes. In Deuteronomy 31, we are told, "The LORD gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: 'Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you.'"

Thus comes the name of Camp Joshua. It empowers today's youth with the knowledge and skills they need to be strong and courageous leaders for Life.