

God Made an Appearance at Our Yard Sale

03-19-07 by Laura Bohanan

You know, God always surprises you when you least expect it. When you are being faithful, sharing His love and working for His purposes, He slips in almost undetected unless you really stop and look for His touch and gentle hand.

Set up Friday night (03-16-07) for the Yard Sale started at 6:00 pm and went until 8:00 pm, although we were there until almost 9:00 pm because none of us really wanted to leave. I can't count the times someone said "OK, lets go." It always happens, and it's not just because we are Baptist (ha ha). When believers get together and work, their hearts are bonded together in His service. There is a deep sense of family that permeates the gathering. Sorrows are shared, hearts are ministered to, funny stories are related, and great rejoicing at good news. Sharing our lives together in the simplest of times unites us at a deep level.

Saturday came too early for all of us, but we all looked forward to not only sharing more time together but reaching out to our community. You see, a Yard Sale, our Yard Sales are not really about making money, but using the Yard Sale as a means of reaching out and touching our community. We always have too many works, just like we did for this one.

This Yard Sale had a few new twists to it though as we tried to expand our reach into the community. We handled out about 400 flyers throughout the neighborhood announcing a Community Yard Sale; people could come and shop or set up shop and sell items of their own. We also placed ads in the PennySaver and The Anons (Russian Christian Newspaper) as well as setting out signs in front of the church a few days before the Yard Sale.

A steady stream of people were coming and going from 7:00 am to 2:30 pm and the parking lot in front of the Sunday School building was full all day long ! Not only did we get to serve the shoppers but also two families and Mark Gorney's father who set up shop with us. The bounce house entertained an untold number of children throughout the day while parents watched and reveled in the glee of their children.

But even more exciting, was that every time I looked around, I saw one of the workers talking with visitors, helping them to their cars, showing them where to find something, or answering questions. What an awesome thing to watch - God working through those around you. I can't count the number of smiles I saw on visitor's faces, or the laughter coming from inside and out, or the "Thank You's" that were heard. I saw God's love pouring out on the people He loves and those He desires a relationship with.

I can't thank the workers enough for their generous gift of time and effort. They worked so hard to make this all happen but they reveled in the joy of being used by God. Clean

up was done in less than an hour and many of us could be found at Baskin Robins enjoying an ice cream sunday afterwards.

But here's the catcher . . . after practically giving away every thing at ridiculously low prices, God blessed our efforts. You see, we don't set prices really, we often ask the purchaser what they are willing to pay for the item(s). And we strongly believe in what God says in His word about 'not muzzling the ox that treads the corn/grain' (1 Corth 9:9; 1 Tim 5:18), so the workers were encouraged to take things that caught their fancy, free of charge (although I think everyone of them mischievously paid).

And I must admit, after having a number of \$300-\$400 Yard Sales in the past, my prayers were only slightly challenging to God as I asked Him for \$500. As with all our events, we do not focus on the money but on reaching others with God's love. We know He has all the money in the world and He'll bless us according to His desires. After each event two appointed counters quietly slip into a room and count God's gift, only informing the leaders of the totals for accountability purposes. This event was no different, but the results were far beyond any of our wildest expectations. Bobbi Flanders was one of the counters and she emerged crying and praising God. Her joy was contagious as she spread the word of how God had blessed us. God not only met my personal prayer request but tripled it. . . . yes tripled it ! Again we generally don't talk about the money, so it is not our focus, but how could we not share how God had worked ?

I haven't even thought of the ways we can use this money to bring about God's work in Ukraine. The farm animals it would buy, or the furniture for the Rehab Center, or the Rehab men it will feed for months ! Praise God, Praise God !

How precious it is to be 'in' God's will, doing His work, loving His people. There is no other place I'd rather be in all the world.

THANKING THE WORKERS OF THE HARVEST. . . .

Bobbi Flanders who was the cashier for the Yard Sale was awesome as always. She has the gift of making people feel like they are the center of her attention and that they are important to her. Norma Wood was with Bobbi and often you could hear them laughing like a couple of school girls with the visitors. Bobbi truly made their experience with El Camino Baptist Church one full of His love and enjoyment.

Norma Wood was faithful and true. It doesn't matter when or where, if missions are involved she is there. I'm going to tell on you Norma ! She had to leave early Friday night due to back spasms but she was there Saturday morning taking her place with a smile. She worked the cashier stand with contagious joy and like I said, when she and Bobbi are together, you know there is cackling in the wind !

Also part of the cashier crew was the ever constant Jean Shari. I think she was responsible for inviting half her apartment complex as well as the Country Kitchen (next to the church) regulars. I could swear (oops should I do that?) that she knows just about

everyone ! What can I say, that those of you who have encountered Jean don't know? She is hard working, always there, and I love that Japanese riotous laugh and twinkle in her eye.

The Towns boys, Cameron, Ceontae, and Charles were there too. For boys so young, they were hard workers. It has been remarkable to see how they have grown over the past years as they have dived into Sunday School and there great adventure to Mexico last year where they ended up accepting Christ as their Lord and Savior. Ever wanting to encourage young men, Mark rewarded them with making a donation to their Mexico Mission Trip fund accounts for this coming year's trip.

Joyce Fuss has found her callingshe is an excellent personal shopper. She was stationed in the old sanctuary and helped a number of visitor with personal attention and care. She helped them find specific items they were looking, helped them match up different dishes, and just lavished God's love on them.

Denise Spaeth helped to set up Friday night. She is so much fun to be around and her giggling was so contagious that she'd get us all going. Denise tackles the work before her with such passion that it can only encourage you to work as hard as you can. She was back off and on Saturday and she couldn't seem to stay away and would sneak in a visit during her errands and other appointments.

Ed Jensen, that old dog, was in charge of the dogs, hot dogs that is. He cooked up the lunch for the workers, ECBC and our guest Yard Sellers. Some events are just made for hot dogs and a soda. Ed also was a great help in breaking down the Yard Sale. I can't recall ever seeing the Head Deacon of a church working so hard, yet causing so much mischief. He and Mark can be a handful sometimes, but you can 'feel the love' as they harass you.

Butch & Brenda Kennedy, I tell you they got busy ! There were there Friday night setting up and then Saturday during the entire Yard Sale. This was my first real experience at working with them, and they are definitely workers. Brenda continued to straighten the tables after visitors had combed through the items making them easy to view for the next set of visitors. Butch was instrumental in setting up and tearing down, which can be tiring work. My hats off to you guys !

Friday night Bethia, Jaffette, and Rebecca Estevez helped set up for the Yard Sale, then bright and early Saturday morning they were back helping with the final set up. Bethia was our Spanish translator and she sought out visitors who spoke Spanish and made sure they felt welcome and their questions answered. During the break down, Harold Estevez was able to join in and help pack up the left over glass dishes. He then cleaned up the old sanctuary after all the tables and boxes were removed. What beautiful examples of time stewardship this family is ! They are Guatemalan Jewels !

Oh yeah, and Cody Spaeth too. That girl she wears me out. "Oh Lord that I might have half the energy and enthusiasm as that young lady !" At only XX, she is a ball of fire for

the Lord. I can't even image what God is going to do with her. I remember my first encounter with her. Mark and I visited her 3rd Grade Sunday School Class and showed pictures of the children in Ukraine and Mexico. She went straight home after church and pulled out clothes, shoes, toys, and school supplies to be sent to the Ukraine & Mexico. Even then God had a hold of her precious heart.

A special thanks to Mark Gorney's father who donated a percentage of his own earnings towards our work in Ukraine. May God bless your generous heart !