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July 2021 Newsletter

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Col. 4:5-6

Summer greetings from our home to yours! I just love the Keefer month of July. Two different weeks of vacation with both of our extended families, weekend trips up to Grandma and Grandpa’s lake, and fun and encouraging times with the students who are around Ann Arbor make for a refreshing and fulfilling month for me. I am not sure what things are like with the pandemic in your community, but it sure feels great to have restrictions lifted here and be able to be in the actual presence of people! Just last week we were able to host some students in our home (for the first time in over 16 months!) and my heart was just bursting to see my living room full of people opening God’s word together. Also, I was finally able to actually MAKE food for them, rather than serving only pre-packaged snacks, like we were asked to do during Covid! Needless to say, the students were excited to have homemade treats and there weren’t too many left afterwards :) We are trusting God for continued relief from Covid so we can do more hosting in our home and return fully back to face-to-face ministry on campus. Thank you for laboring alongside us through your prayers and finances over the course of the pandemic. We truly believe God used your partnership to open doors for the gospel to make an eternal impact in the lives of the students here at the University of Michigan.

Ultimate Training Camp

Every year Athletes in Action puts on what we call Ultimate Training Camps (UTC’s) in different locations around the country. At a UTC athletes learn about how to blend faith and sport by gaining a Biblical perspective on topics like motivation, attitude, leadership, persevering through tough times, and winning & losing. It is an amazing week that catapults so many in their faith.

Due the pandemic the UTC went virtual in 2020 (and will be again August 8-12 if you want to check it out at www.ultimatetrainingcamp.com). This year AIA decided to try a new strategy in addition to the virtual option with UTC’s that involved local campuses hosting their own weekend version of the camp. I must admit, when I heard about the 2021 UTC plan, I was a bit skeptical. How would this work with a smaller, socially-distanced group who couldn’t compete in the team atmosphere that is usually created at a UTC?? Well, God had big plans in store for our local UTC back in June and I was blown away by how well it went and how engaged the twelve U of M and eight EMU student-athletes were! We asked our students to share how God worked in their lives during the weekend, and we were able to fit two of their testimonies on the back of this newsletter. We wish you could hear them all, but space will not allow for that! Enjoy!



"The greatest takeaway that I had from my time at UTC is the concept of having an audience of one in our Heavenly Father. Personally, sports have always been a struggle mentally for me as I constantly compare myself to teammates both on the mat and in the weight room and question my ability. In addition, it has always been difficult to drown out the crowd noise and all of the outside chatter of spectators talking about my individual performance. I never once thought throughout all of my playing days that the only person I am trying to impress is the Lord. With this new thought process, I have been able to be more confident not only in my sport, but also in myself, as I have incorporated this concept into my everyday life. The only person I need to "impress" in my life is God, and that's a simple task when you break it down knowing how much God loves us, no matter the result on the mat." ~Dylan



Jackson (our son!), Dylan, Jackson and Sam



Lauren, Abby, Job and Amber

"This past year I struggled a lot with finding my self worth. Running was taken away from me due to injury and covid. I blamed my high anxiety and feeling of emptiness at the time to the fact that running was my stress reliever. I thought that when my stress reliever was taken away from me, I couldn't operate how I was supposed to. But this was actually the opposite of what running was for me.

During the first day of UTC, I acknowledged that I idolize my sports performance and the opinions of others. Running wasn't a stress reliever... it was where I gathered my self worth from. Day one and the first two principles made me think about why I run track in the first place. Any reason I could come up with revolved around the value that others give me, whether it be my speed, my fitness, my physical look, my work ethic, etc. Then I heard and processed God's formula for my identity, and the fact that it is only what God says about me.

The realization that my value doesn't change depending on what I do made the intense exercises so much more rewarding and enjoyable. The rest of the weekend was powerful in the way it helped me learn to put this to use. I was doing it for no one other than my audience of one. I chose the phrase "I am free" to remind myself of this as I went through the weekend. The abilities that God has gifted me I now know to use to thank Him for giving me my worth, instead of to prove to Him that I might be worth His love." ~Lauren

Please pray...

...for the students who attended our local UTC. Pray the seeds that were planted in their hearts about identity and motivation in sport would grow.

...for Michigan students to register for the online version of the UTC coming up in August, and for God to move in their hearts through it.

...for our weekly AIA gatherings here at Michigan the rest of the summer. Pray students would invite their friends and people would experience Christ.

...for wisdom as we begin to consider which student we will select and challenge to be part of our core leadership group in the fall.

...for God to refresh our hearts as we take another week of vacation to visit Sarah's family in Minnesota.

You are very much appreciated! Thank you for all you do for us!!



Big news around here...Mikayla verbally committed to play volleyball at Marist College in NY for the fall of 2022!!