

How the Detroit Area has Overflowing Weekends

by Jerry & Fran Ashe and Fr. Edmond DesForges

After reading the Alabama accomplishments (WOW!), we thought it was time for an update from the Detroit Area. We really want to encourage other Areas, and let them know what works.

The past few years, we were either canceling or having low counts on our Weekends, pretty much every month (we have 8 Weekends scheduled each year). Now we are growing our Weekends in leaps and bounds, and it all started with Prayer and the Build It Workshop. Starting 6 months after the Build It Workshop and implementing jBlast! (automated fax), our Weekends are overflowing (waiting lists every W/E).

Number of Sacraments completing the W/E:

September 2004	22
October 2004	26 (including 1 priest)
November 2004	34

Upcoming Weekend Counts:

February 2005 - 38 registered (our W/E starts tonight)
March 2005 - 24 couples registered and counting
AND we even have registrations for April, May, and June Weekends

What we did:

March 2004 - Team & Advisory Council prayed the rosary daily and fasted
April - Hosted "Build It" Workshop [Build-It materials are available on ERL in the Weekend Pillar section]
April - Started weekly jBlast! bulletin announcements to all parishes in our Area
May - Contacted 19 Elementary schools who agreed to put WWME flyers in student take-home folders
June - Developed an Inviting Presentation for Sharing Groups
Sept through Nov - 3 couples gave Inviting Presentation to all Sharing Groups to solicit an Inviting Liaison from each group as part of our Inviting Committee
Dec - Announced Pulpit talk challenge for year 2005. Sharing Group with most, wins Romantic Dinner hosted by Ecclesial Team
Jan 2005 - Pulpit Talks at 5 parishes (all Masses), with more scheduled

A wonderful thing - the first two items we initiated/coordinated; the rest were initiated/coordinated by other couples as they got excited about the possibilities and seeing the results.

An even more wonderful thing - our once stagnant and dwindling community is growing again. More couples on the Weekend means more couples in community!!!

One last note: Our finances were at a really, really low ebb when we started this, and it was a very difficult decision to commit to weekly jBlast! faxes (even though it is only \$.07/fax). It was truly the best decision we could have made for our Weekends, and an added bonus is that our finances are very strong at this point.

Dream Big, with God at the Helm!

*Love,
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Section 6 - Detroit Area*