

One-Millionth Teen Missionary Recognized at Teen Mania Event

Since 1987, the 15-year-old ministry has sent 30,000 teens on missions trips in more than 50 countries

Teen Mania recently celebrated the training of its one-millionth teen-age missionary at an Acquire the Fire conference in Baltimore April 27-28. Michael Netherton, 17, of Berkley Springs, W.V., was honored as the one-millionth person to walk through the doors of an Acquire the Fire (ATF) event.

To commemorate this milestone, Ron Luce, founder and president of Teen Mania, presented Netherton with a trophy, a free trip to next year's Dome event in Indianapolis and \$500 toward a Teen Mania missions trip.

Netherton, who had never attended an ATF event before, told Charisma it had been "an awesome weekend, and the perfect place to seek help with my relationship with Jesus Christ." He hopes to use the money to go on a missions trip to a Third World country.

"This particular milestone is really exciting for us," Luce said, "because it means there have been a million young people who have been trained and equipped to go out and change their generation."

Teen Mania celebrates its 15th anniversary this year, continuing to grow in its three main ministry outlets of ATF, Global Expeditions and its Honor Academy. The first ATF event was held in 1991 in Batavia, N.Y., with a few hundred people in attendance.

Teen Mania now sponsors approximately 30 ATF events annually in cities across America, reaching more than 250,000 teens each year. This year's ATF events have hosted several nationally known speakers, Christian music artists and a new theatrical production, "The Bema."

"Our goal is to reach kids at ATF events, teach them to go after the Lord with their whole heart, and then encourage them to go out and make a difference in their world," Luce explained.

In addition to ATF, Teen Mania recently began holding annual stadium events. The first two Dome events were held in 1999 and 2000 in the Pontiac Silver Dome in Pontiac, Mich. Last year, 30,000 young people gathered in St. Petersburg, Fla.'s Tropicana Dome for Stand UP! Florida.

Next year's event, scheduled for April 19-20, is expected to draw 50,000 youth from across America to the RCA Dome in Indianapolis for Stand UP: The Invasion.

Teen Mania also is well-known for its short-term missions. Since 1987 they have sent approximately 30,000 youth to more than 50 countries. In the summer of 2001, an estimated 6,000 young people will participate in short-term missions trips with Teen Mania.

The Honor Academy, a leadership and character-building internship program, began in 1988 with six interns. Last year, 650 high school graduates participated in the yearlong program at Teen Mania's headquarters in Garden Valley, Texas.

"Young people come here not to get a degree they can hang on their wall, but to get character they can hang on their heart," Luce said. "We want young people to go to college because they are the next leaders of the world, but they need to go armed with character, focus and vision."

Luce sees a commitment among this generation of Christians that he says the church has longed for in the past. "When you let [young people] know what Jesus demands, they respond fervently and wholeheartedly."

Teen Mania's Web site ([www.teenmania.com](#)) gets 9 million hits a month, with 50,000 registered users for their daily online devotions.

What does Luce see as the biggest success of Teen Mania? "It's not about a program or an event or a show each weekend," he says. "But when I see the light come on in the face of a teenager who has a radical encounter with Jesus, or a teen overseas sharing the gospel for the first time, that moves my heart, and I have hope for a whole new generation of revival."