

Student Prayer Movement Reaching More Public Schools

See You at the Pole enters its 13th year this month, while newly formed 30KD expects record participation

Thousands of middle and high school students across the country will be engaging in prayer from the flagpoles to the hallways of their campuses this month in an effort to see their generation won to Christ. Many will participate in the See You at the Pole prayer event at public schools on the morning of Sept. 18. Others, implementing a different strategy, will pray inside schools on every class day of September.

See You at the Pole, a grass roots prayer event that began in Texas, has since 1990 seen millions of students pray together around their schools' flagpoles each September on the third Wednesday of the month.

For the last three years, teens taking part in a different prayer initiative—the 30 Second Kneel Down (30KD) –have kneeled at their lockers for 30 seconds every school morning in September to pray for their campuses. This year is expected to bring the largest level of participation yet.

“The time is now for prayer to be back in schools,” said Tom Sipling, a youth evangelist from Harrisburg, Pa., and the founder of 30KD.

Fueled with the statistic that 85 percent of all Christians are converted before age 18, Sipling leads youth to lay down their reputations and take prayer beyond the campus clubs and

youth groups to reach the unsaved of their generation. Using the 30KD model, teens kneel in front of their lockers to thank God for His presence that day, to pray for their schools and to ask for boldness to be the messenger of God's love to those around them.

"At first, I was nervous to kneel down because I go to public school," said Michael Burnette, 14, of Florida. "Some of the kids were laughing. Some came up and asked me what I was doing when I was praying. They kept asking me more questions, and I invited them to youth group. Our youth group is, like, 400 to 500 kids every Wednesday—and we're growing."

The 30KD prayer challenge often raises the question of whether or not U.S. students have the legal right to pray in public schools. According to The American Center for Law and Justice, students may gather before the beginning of any school day and pray on the public school campus, inside or outside. Prayer is not prohibited as long as it isn't disruptive to what's going on in the school.

Sipling told Charisma: "One youth pastor in a rural town in Iowa contacted me and said the superintendent and principal of their school were going to challenge the students' right to pray, but later discovered they had no grounds to file suit. Prayer can be propagated by the students, but not by the school district."

Thousands of teens have accepted the 30KD as a calling to pull themselves out of their comfortable Christianity and plead to God to help save their campuses—a calling that sometimes makes them vulnerable to persecution.

Describing her kneel-down experience on 30KD's Web site, Christina, a teenager from California, wrote: "Comments were made to me that hurt, but they didn't hurt me personally, nor was I offended. I was hurt that someone could be so lost that they don't even realize they are mocking the lover of their soul."

She added: "Tomorrow, if you're in the 300 hall and looking for me, look low, for every school day until June 8 between periods I will be found kneeling and praying in obedience to God's calling."

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