

# Michael W. Smith's Rockettown Ministry Changing Young Lives for 30 Years

Nashville is known as Music City; it's also home to one of the country's most unique inner-city ministries. Rockettown has been helping kids stay off the streets and find Jesus for three decades. And you might be surprised who started it.

Teens who are into skateboarding, video games, need a hot meal, or just a place to do homework can find it all here at Rockettown, an outreach with a mission to help young people experience the love of God. The mind behind Rockettown, now in its 30th year, is Christian music artist Michael W. Smith.

He tells CBN that, back in 1991, he literally heard God say, "Build it and they'll come. And I kept thinking, no, that's the baseball movie, that's Kevin Costner. And I just kept hearing it, 'build it and they'll come, build it and they'll come.'"

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"And so, I did a bunch of research, and we had meetings, and everybody said it would never work, and three years later we opened up Rockettown in Franklin, Tennessee," recalls the ministry founder.

CEO Kenny Alonzo says their first priority is getting kids in the door.

"If it's going to excite a kid and get 'em in the building, we're going to do it. And so, once they're here, we get to love them and care for them and provide for them. And we try to be the hands and feet of Jesus. I know that's said a lot,

but honestly, that's what we do," said Alonzo.

As for who is walking through the doors, Alonzo told us, "We are within a mile from the most violent public housing community in the state of Tennessee. And that's saying something because Memphis is pretty rough, and we have a lot of kids that come out of that community and they're here in their safe environment every single day.

"We've had everything from couch surfers who have a home, but they don't want to stay there, to kids who live in storage units with mom because they don't have anywhere to go. And then some kids from the street, and they just come in here because they can get warm when it's cold," he said.

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Ages here range from 10 to 20, with a focus on high school students like 15-year-old Lemy Sanders who enjoys skateboarding and working in the skate shop. When asked what Rocketown means to him, Lemy told us, "For me, it's just, being in a community that you do fun things for kids like me."

Nineteen-year-old skateboarder Izzy Hopkins, who's been coming here since he was about seven years old, said he likes that "it's a safe environment, a fun place, great place to meet new people."

Another cool feature of Rocketown – a recording studio for those who feel called to the music industry.

"That's a no-brainer to me. We have a lot of creative kids,

and so this gives them an outlet to go in, and with technology today, you can do some pretty extraordinary things,” Smith said.

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