

Denver Church Naming Names for the Gospel

Riverside Baptist Church is about to turn Operation Andrew to Code Red.

The congregation in downtown Denver has fully embraced Operation Andrew for this weekend's Rock the Range Festival. So much so that white notecards with handwritten names have been plastered on the altar area of the church's auditorium.

These 744 cards represent specific people that members of Riverside Baptist Church have been praying would come to know Christ through the outreach.

And each time a person makes a decision to accept Christ, that notecard is changed to red. It's happened 11 times so far. By the end of the weekend, the church prays that a sea of red notecards will be lining the stage.

"We've just been really, really excited about being a part of it," Riverside Baptist Pastor Jim Shaddix said of Rock the Range.

The name Operation Andrew (or Operation Andy for children) comes from John 1:41-42, where Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus after finding out He was the Messiah.

Shaddix has been so eager to encourage his congregation to start praying for people who need Christ that he devoted a multi-week sermon series earlier this summer, challenging his church to fully engage in Operation Andrew and Rock the Range.

"We used that mini-series, by way of application, to kick off Operation Andrew and it was very well received," Shaddix said. "We've encouraged people to pick out a name as they walked by the altar area and pray for that person."

Shaddix said the leadership at Riverside Baptist was quick to get behind Rock the Range for many reasons.

“Why wouldn’t we do this?” he said. “It’s about evangelism. It’s discipleship-making. It’s about reaching people with the Gospel.”

And it just so happens some in his congregation have strong roots with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, dating back to the 1987 Rocky Mountain Crusade, held less than a mile away from Riverside Baptist at Mile High Stadium.

“I’ve got people in my church who were saved at that Billy Graham Crusade,” Shaddix said. “Our people have a great appreciation for the Graham Association.”

Riverside Baptist was one of the hosts for the Christian Life & Witness classes in May and Shaddix saw that training as a big turning point for his church—catching the Rock the Range vision.

“We had several hundred people participate,” he said. “They went through the training and come back with life-changing experiences.”

Life-changing experiences are exactly what Riverside members are earnestly praying will happen at Rock the Range, which is geared toward youth and family. Saturday’s event, from 4 p.m., will feature a Rock-heavy lineup that will include The Almost, Lecrae, The Afters, Skillet and a special appearance from Flyleaf’s Lacey Sturm.

Sunday’s family-friendly event (4 p.m.) highlights The Almost and Michael W. Smith. Each evening, Franklin Graham will bring a gospel message.

Kidzfest will kick off the weekend on Saturday morning (10 a.m.–noon), featuring the lively children’s band, God Rocks!

Riverside Baptist has also encouraged its children’s ministry

to get involved. Kids have traced their silhouettes on white paper and hung the bodies on the wall, with the names of unsaved friends and family members scrawled across each one.

“It looks like a haunted house down there,” Shaddix said of the walls in the children’s ministry area. “They wrote the names of the people they’re praying for. Some of them are friends. Some are parents or grandparents.”

For Shaddix and Riverside Baptist, the months leading up to Rock the Range have been an exciting and powerful growing experience for the church.

“It’s just been a great encouragement for our people, as far as the power of prayer,” he said. “This is not about an event. It certainly will be the pinnacle of the proclamation of the Gospel, but it’s about praying for people and being available for the labor of His harvest.”

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