

Dream Center Launches College to Train Students for Service

✖ A Los Angeles ministry that assists thousands of poor, homeless and addicted people each week will soon launch a college to train students for service.

The Dream Center College will allow students to earn college credits as they give one year of their lives to help inner-city youth and families.

“It’s kind of like the Peace Corps of colleges where people can learn, grow and develop at the same time they get college credits,” said Matthew Barnett, co-founder of the Dream Center and pastor of the nearby Angelus Temple, a 7,000-member church founded in 1923 by charismatic evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson.

“They can go to the college onsite and get all the things the Dream Center provides with hundreds of outreaches on a daily basis,” Barnett said.

The college will be located in a newly refurbished, 160,000 square-foot tower at the Dream Center, established in 1994 by Barnett and his father, pastor Tommy Barnett of Phoenix First Assembly of God. Located in the “heart of poverty, hopelessness and violence,” the volunteer-driven center provides food, clothing, shelter, life rehabilitation, job training and biblical training through 273 ministries and outreaches.

In a city where 11,000 people sleep on the streets each night and most shelters have six-month waiting lists, the Dream Center reaches out to more than 50,000 people each week. Free of charge, the center houses up to 1,000 at-risk youth, low-

income individuals and families. By providing the basic necessities and emergency assistance, the center helps people reach self-sufficiency. It also offers parenting classes, after-school activities and residential recovery programs for men, women and teens.

Cody Cressey, 23, is one of hundreds of students planning to attend the Dream Center College when it opens in September. The Spokane, Wash., native thought about going to Bible college, but wanted to get hands-on ministry training too. The Dream Center College allows him to take college courses and experience the “heartbreak” of families living on the mean streets of the City of Angels.

“It just breaks my heart going out there,” Cressey said. “You get to see and feel the need first-hand. I feel called to the ministry, like, full-time 100 percent, and the Dream Center College is an amazing place. I don’t know of any better place to learn and get this hands-on ministry training.”

Cressey is currently enrolled in The Movement, a ministry training and discipleship initiative at the Dream Center that will become a one-year certificate program this fall under the new college. The ministry’s goal is to raise up the next generation of “world changers.”

“What we find is that young people today want to live for a cause,” said Kelli Bradley, co-director of The Movement. “They love the fact the Dream Center has such a great cause. We are reaching out to the hurting, the poor and the down and out. That is the purpose of the Dream Center. We are reaching out to the community to make it a better place to live and so the students get really excited about the prospect of being able to do that.”

The Dream Center College is accredited under the Oakland, Patten University. During the one-year certificate program, students will receive 24 college credits, 12 from classes

taught in a traditional classroom by professors and the other half through hands-on ministry practicum and spiritual formation classes.

The classes will include Intro to Old Testament, Intro to New Testament, Christian Doctrine and Theology and Christian Social Ethics. The credits can transfer into most degree programs as history or philosophy credits.

Each year, the Dream Center houses up to 2,000 short-term volunteers from around the world.

“I just feel like God is mobilizing our generation,” Cressey said. “People are just pushing the envelope and doing things I haven’t been used to seeing. I feel like there is a move of revival coming through the land. We see the need out there, we see how the younger generation is suffering like never before and we have to do something about it. We realize there is a lot of hurt that needs to be healed and only God can take care of that.”