

Movement Works to Get Saints Back in Church

✖ National Back To Church Sunday, a cross-denominational movement to reverse declining church attendance and encourage everyone to revisit congregational life, is set for Sept. 18.

Lending his voice to this year's event is Texas Rangers all-star Josh Hamilton, the 2010 American League Championship Series MVP who credits his comeback from drug addiction and suspension from the game to his faith and church.

"God's Word tells us to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, and not give up meeting together," Hamilton says. "We are to walk through life with other believers. My family and I have found that church is a wonderful way to do this, so I encourage you to join thousands of Americans as they go back to church on National Back To Church Sunday."

National Back To Church Sunday has become the single largest community outreach in the nation, with 10,000 churches expected to participate in 2011. This event reignites the power of personal invitation to empower church members to bring the community back to church.

Since the initiative began in 2009, National Back To Church Sunday has seen increased success with church members inviting more than 1.4 million family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers to special services last year. Some 3,800 churches participated in 2010, reporting an average 26 percent increase in weekly attendance.

National Back To Church Sunday was launched in response to a 2008 study by LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board of 15,000 adults that found that 67 percent of Americans say a personal invitation from a family member would be

effective in getting them to visit a church. Sixty-three percent say an invitation from a friend or neighbor would likely get them to respond.

“We found that the effectiveness of the invitation was often tied to its form: the more personal, the more effective,” says Philip Nation, ministry development director of LifeWay Research and National Back to Church Sunday spokesperson.