

Ottawa Youth on Fire for Gospel

Imagine preaching the Good News of Jesus on the corner of Pennsylvania Ave., in Washington, D.C.

Or holding an **evangelistic crusade** on the Mall near the prestigious row of Smithsonian museums.

In many ways, that's the challenge this fall in Ottawa, Ontario, where Rock the River will be spreading the gospel to the youth and families in Canada's political capital.

"Pray for us," said Rock the River Ottawa director Dave Ingram. "We're in the nation's capital. To have something happen here could really impact other parts of the country as well."

North of the border, there is a big disparity in the acceptance of the gospel, where less than 4 percent of the population are evangelical. Recently, Canada held a **National Day of Prayer** and the Prime Minister, a known Christian, would not get close to the event.

"The prime minister would never attend that, even though he's a strong believer," Ingram said. "The question of a person's faith is a much stickier issue up here."

But even though Ingram knows Ottawa might be "a tough sell," in terms of proclaiming the gospel and overall a "spiritually dry place," the small evangelical church base is quite enthusiastic about sharing Christ.

"By the same token, we've been able to engage a good number of churches," Ingram said, "and get a lot of support."

Perhaps the best evidence of this was the recent FM419 Youth Training, which drew over 500 youth from area churches. More

than 100 made commitments to accept Christ into their lives and over 100 registered to be Rock the River Ottawa counselors.

“There was just a really good spirit, a really good energy in that room,” Ingram said. “For the number of churches in Ottawa, we were really pleased.”

Rock the River, with its heavy emphasis on reaching the youth of Ottawa on Sept. 29 and families on Sept. 30, has a variety of musical artists coming to Mooney’s Bay Park, which overlooks the Rideau River in downtown Ottawa.

Canadian band Thousand Foot Crutch will headline the first night with The Afters, The Almost, Flame and Lacey from Flyleaf, all wrapped around gospel messages from Franklin Graham.

Michael W. Smith headlines the Sunday family day, with The Afters and Canadian Matt Maher setting the stage for the Gospel to be preached.

But both events will likely draw youth to this outdoor concert venue and Ingram has sensed strong interest in uniting the churches from around Ottawa, specifically from the youth pastors.

“There’s a very good youth network that’s very unified,” Ingram said. “They have a yearly youth event on Good Friday called ‘No Other Name,’ which is a training event teaching kids to live out their faith.”

The youth leaders talked about using the Rock the River fall event as a place for the Ottawa youth to put into action what they’ve been learning through training.

“They’ve been really challenging the youth here to share their faith with their friends,” Ingram said.

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