



## Questions You May Have about

# SoJust, UrbanSpirit's program for middle-school students...

- 1. What is the half-week program like?** This event is a “social justice camp” which includes a service project, worship, learning activities, including games and movies, (around character, relationships, economics and biblical themes). And, of course, meals and sleep. Participants will experience only a little bit of the discomfort of poverty, eating less than usual and perhaps skipping a meal. We'll begin about 8 am each day and go until about 9 pm, just like camp. Groups should plan to arrive by 3 pm the opening day; we'll finish about noon the last day.
- 2. Is there a minimum or maximum number of people?** Our capacity is 60. It takes at least 6 people for a group to register.
- 3. How many adults do we need to send?** We require one adult for every 5 youth, but there must be at least one male and one female, if the group has boys and girls participating.
- 4. Is there a minimum age requirement for participants?** This program is designed specifically for middle school students – those completing grades 5-7. Some groups want to include those completing 8<sup>th</sup> grade, which is fine; however, those completing 8<sup>th</sup> grade (entering high school) are probably ready for the full Poverty Immersion Week.
- 5. Can all our students just do the full Poverty Immersion Week instead?** We have had success in the Poverty Immersion Week with students who have completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and would certainly invite you to consider that for your more mature students. This pre-immersion event was developed for youth who may not have been away from home for an extended time, who may not have thought much about social justice, and who would benefit from “character development” sorts of activities, specifically about how we treat people who are different. Be aware, however, that students are not eligible for Level II (the post-immersion leadership event) until they have completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 6. What are the facilities like?** UrbanSpirit is housed in a 1930s church building, where we teach, play, worship, eat and sleep. We have a fellowship hall; dining hall; and two dormitories, each with several sleeping rooms and a bath/shower room. Heat is available throughout the building; a/c is in the dorms. Staff members live in the house next door, and are always available.
- 7. Where does our money go?** Your per-person fee covers everything for your experience here: meals, lodging, materials for programs and work projects, and staff leadership. Since poverty education is our year-round mission, your fees (along with donations and grants) support our year-round work of development, service, advocacy and teaching.
- 8. What do we need to bring?** When your registration is confirmed, you'll receive a packing list. Please be aware that you'll have to bring sleeping bags, pillows, towels and toiletries. You'll be asked to leave at home (or lock in our office) all electronic games and gizmos, including cell phones. (Adults will keep their phones, for emergency-only use.)
- 9. Do we need ground transportation when we're there?** No. If you fly here, we're happy to provide transportation to and from the airport. During the week, all movement is by foot or public transportation.
- 10. Our group wants to help other people. How will we do that in this program?** During your event, you will do volunteer service through one of our partner agencies in the community. Work may be programmatic, like reading with children or playing games; or it may be manual labor, like picking up trash in the neighborhood or organizing the food pantry. Keep in mind, too, that by participating in an educational experience to learn how to be a better, more concerned person, you will be helping people for a long time!
- 11. What kind of interaction will we have with the community?** Limited and supervised, generally through service projects.
- 12. Is the experience dangerous?** Any camp or mission trip can be dangerous, but at UrbanSpirit, we follow basic safety rules: we don't permit power tools; we require proper clothing and shoes; we insist that all activities are done in teams, that all teams are “home” at the church before dark, that each team have at least one adult with a cell phone; and we constantly remind participants to drink enough water to avoid dehydration. (We distribute water bottles to everyone.)
- 13. Who leads the program at Urban Spirit?** Our pastor, Deb Conrad, with a Doctor of Education degree and lengthy service in ministry, is the facilitator and spiritual director for the week. The team also includes college and seminary interns, adult volunteers, and neighborhood agency reps.
- 14. What is the role of our church's adult chaperones?** Choosing mature, responsible adults is vital to the success of this or any program for youth. Your adults will experience all the same things (like hunger), participate in all the programs (like community service, bible role plays, singing or crafts), and encourage the youth to squeeze all the lessons they can from the event. You'll be asked to guide them without dominating, a sometimes tricky balance that affirms the leadership and ideas of the young people; and to support the staff as we work to keep groups focused and engaged. In non-programmatic times, you are responsible for the group's general behavior, ensuring the youth are respectful, house rules are followed, and everyone gets enough sleep. You'll also take the lead in helping the youth plan a way to share this experience when they return home.
- 15. Will we get to/have to talk about God with people in the neighborhood?** Typical “evangelizing” isn't part of our ministry. As we live our faith, we pray for the neighborhood, and ask regularly, “How is God calling us to live?”
- 16. What if someone in our group has special needs?** Call us. We'll accommodate needs to the degree that we're able.