



## **YOUNGLIFE'S HISTORY**

The vision began in the early 1930s when an elderly woman, Clara Frasher, recruited a group of her friends to pray for the teens attending Gainesville High School in Texas. Six years later, in 1939, a young man named Jim Rayburn started a club in Gainesville, Texas. Jim was concerned about the teenagers in the town who did not show interest in participating in the traditional programs of the church and began to explore various possibilities. So Jim decided that the best setting for the proclamation of the Gospel was a Young Life Club, in the home of one of the kids. The club included singing, plays, and a short message about Jesus Christ. Jim believed that every child had a right to hear the message of Jesus Christ and to decide how to respond to the Gospel.

The young people who made the decision to follow Christ were involved in a discipleship group where they participated in Bible study, prayer, fellowship.

In 1944, Add Sewell discovered the key to getting deeper into young people: spending time with them in their own environment. Add spent hours each week with the youth, developing a relational style of outreach. Convinced that he had to earn the right to be heard, he simply befriended them. This approach eventually became known as "contact work," and it has been at the heart of Young Life's mission.

Camping has also been a significant part of Young Life's ministry. Jim's vision in those early years led to the purchase of several ranches in Colorado. Today, 33 properties continue to provide magnificent backdrops for presenting the Gospel, while at the same time giving kids the best week of their lives.

Over the years, Jim gathered a group of gifted men and women around him and sent them off to start Young Life ministries to young people across the United States. This was the staff of Young Life.

Volunteer leadership - the backbone of Young Life - emerged in the late 1940s. Staff members discovered they could multiply their efforts many times over through the strategic use of volunteer leaders. Today, more than 39,000 volunteer leaders work alongside staff members to influence the lives of young people.

In 1950, Portland staff member Bill Starr developed a new concept: the Youth Life Committee. This group of men and women supported the local ministry. Today, there are more than 18,000 members of the committee and ministry support team across the country.

In 1953, Young Life became international with an outreach in France. Since then, incarnational evangelism has proven successful around the world; Young Life ministries are now active in more than 100 countries.

In the mid 1950's, Young Life expanded its focus to become a nurturing and healing presence to young people of all races; our multi-ethnic ministries share Christ as well as meet the unique needs of these kids.



In the late 1980s, Young Life expanded its focus to include young people with special needs. Young Life's ministries to children with disabilities are in many areas of the country, allowing these children to surpass their limitations, their lives enriched, and their hearts warmed by the love of Jesus. We call this ministry, "Young Life Capernaum.

The doors of the ministry were opened to another group of young people - teenage mothers - with the beginning of the Young Lives program. The young mothers are paired with older, experienced mothers who are committed to providing support and friendship, as well as the opportunity to consider a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Today, Young Life's mission remains committed to incarnational witness: to embody and express the love of Christ through relationships with the new generation: Wyld Life is our outreach to middle school children, Young Life to those in their high school years, and Young Life College is our program for college students. In addition to the ministries mentioned above, Young Life reaches military teens through a program called Club Beyond, the Small Towns/Rural initiative brings Young Life to communities of less than 25,000 people, and Amicus is Young Life's student exchange and host program for international children.