



NORTHEAST REPORT

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RUF at School



"I can't do it!" the middle school girl wailed as she stared despairingly at her math homework. She might have given up, but Mojo Alabi, a freshman at Brown University, had not. Mojo spent that Saturday morning patiently explaining how to graph, and by lunchtime, the

girl was graphing independently. In that moment Mojo realized with joy, "I actually helped her."

Most Saturdays Mojo and five other volunteers from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) tutor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Providence, Rhode Island. They teach math, reading, and writing to Liberian children, ages 5 to 18. Attendance of the children and the tutors varies from week to week, Mojo says, but she estimates that they typically tutor 20 students.

Five years ago RUF students from Brown and RISD created the Love in Action (LiA) tutoring ministry to help children within Trinity's congregation whose education was interrupted by Liberia's civil war. The ministry quickly expanded to include other Liberian students. Many of these students were not performing at grade level when they entered Rhode Island's school system. LiA helps these students succeed academically and hopes to inspire them to seek higher education.

The children are normally split into separate age groups for tutoring, but occasionally the groups will be combined. Mojo typically tutors four middle school students. She begins by helping them with homework, usually math or English. If time is available, she will organize other educational activities, often using workbooks at the church.

Occasionally the tutors will have a lesson planned. A few weeks ago, they instructed the students to write a script in 30 minutes and act out their play. Some of the plays were spooky. Others were silly. All of them revealed a creativity that Mojo would not have seen otherwise.

Mojo finds her work with LiA fulfilling. "I really enjoy it," she says. "I'm quite passionate about it." She hopes to one day assume a leadership role in the ministry.

Brown's RUF leadership team is also excited about the ministry and recently directed additional funding to LiA for the purchase of math and writing workbooks and children's picture books. Additionally, Brown's Africana Department donated books, including poetry by Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes.

The campus minister, Eddie Park, explains, "Love in Action is a great way for RUF to demonstrate ministry of word and deed, and to create opportunities for students to serve alongside the local church in order to meet the needs of the city, to share the good news of Christ, and to bring glory to God."

— by Rebecca Trudeau

RUF Behind the Scenes

Do you ever wonder what RUF ministers and students do when they are not in Bible studies or at the Large Group Meeting, at a weekend conference or a spring break mission trip? Lot's of things, apparently, from tutoring children to eating tacos to "assassinating" their friends. We expect God to use scripture to equip and motivate RUF students to be a Christian influence in everything they do in every aspect of campus life — even the crazy things! Here are five crazy activities RUF students are doing around the Northeast.

Taco Talks in New York City

Suffering. Transcendence. Death. Identity. Each of these are difficult to talk about, and even more difficult to talk about with people who see the world differently than we do. Last semester we gathered every month at NYU for "Taco Talks" to have conversations about these hard-to-discuss subjects. Each time we gathered we ate tacos (a real crowd pleaser!), watched a TED Talk on one of these topics, and talked about it. Our goal was to cultivate conversations that matter between Christians and non-Christians. Lydia needed to try to make sense out of the longing she has for transcendence, a life that is about something bigger than her own happiness. Jeff needed to hear Christians respond thoughtfully to suffering. Sarah needed to be challenged to think about her life in light of her (eventual) death. As we had these conversations Christians had to learn to articulate their faith in ways that

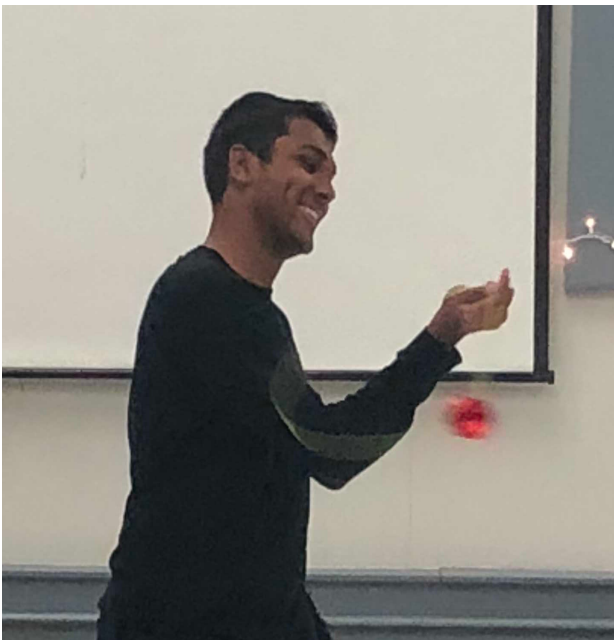
are intelligible and compelling to their non-Christian friends, and non-Christians were challenged to think about the world in a different way. Our hope is that these conversations between friends of different perspectives will be the first of many that lead to even more opportunities to share the gospel. *Matt Terrell, Campus Minister in New York City*

Mr. RuF at Penn State University

We do Miss RuF in the fall and Mr RuF in the spring. These are both talent shows after our Large Group Meeting. Here is what a student had to say about this semester's event. *Joe Dentici, Campus Minister at Penn State*

I'd heard a lot about the Mr. and Miss RuF talent shows from my friends in RuF since I'm a pretty new member of the fellowship. I'd seen Miss RuF happen and it was a mix of actual attempts at showing talent and simply messing around or doing something funny for the whole crowd to watch. I was pretty nervous having to take part in it myself for Mr. RuF since I didn't feel like I had a talent to show, as well as having a little stage fright. But the moment the first person went on, I couldn't help but just laugh and smile the entire time til it was my turn to go.

We had someone turn a styrofoam cup inside out, someone literally hold their breath for nine seconds, some played instruments and sang, some played fake music but tried to make it look real while singing, and I myself decided to show off my yoyo skills. I managed to win somehow, but that really wasn't the point at the end. It was about entertainment and having fun. Everyone was either smiling in awe of the talents or laughing at the pure idiocy of some of the acts, and the idiocy was what made them so much fun. All in all it's probably one of my most memorable moments in RuF and also one of the weirder things



Adi Suresh winning Mr. RuF at Penn State with his yo-yo skills

that a fellowship would do – but that made it even more special to me. *Adi Suresh, student at Penn State University*

No Dating at the University of Pittsburgh

About once a year we here at PITT like to spring a little surprise on our students. Those who have seen it before are almost always excited. Those hearing of it for the first time are usually a bit confused. So we try very hard to make it clear what we are offering, and why we are doing this. That surprise is an event we call “Not-a-Date.”

To be very, very clear “Not-a-Date” involves setting up students on something that's not a date. Willing students sign up, and are then paired randomly. Guys call gals, they set a time, and they go out on a “not-a-date.” That's it; a guy and a gal getting coffee, getting to know one another, no pressure, no misunderstandings.

So why do we do this? Lots of reasons, actually, but here are a few. We are giving students an occasion to get to know people of the opposite sex, no agenda, no pressure. We have a wonderful group of students here, but it's hard to get together on this urban campus. Moreover, add in the fish-bowl gossip possibilities of a random guy-gal sighting, and students of the opposite sex can be reticent in getting to know one another. So, over the next month about 20 not-couples will grab coffee or lunch, ask each other questions, treat each other with respect, and get to know one another. That is good for our group, and that is good for them. *Derek Bates, Campus Minister at the University of Pittsburgh*

“Assassins” at the University of Connecticut

It has become a tradition each Spring in RuF at UConn to play a game of “Assassins” with our entire group. In Assassins, each player is assigned a target to “assassinate” (squirt with water). If you take out your target, you then inherit that person's target until only two players remain. It is a great way to get to know new people in the group since you have to find out from other people where your target will be so that you can take them out. It also adds a ton of excitement to daily life on campus, because at any moment, someone could appear with a water bottle to take you down!

Our game this year took about a week and a half, and it was a great way for our students to connect with each other. Friendships were forged, alliances were made (and broken), and there was a ton of laughter throughout the week. At our weekly large group gathering, which is a safe zone where no assassinations are allowed, all of our students could not stop trying to figure out who was still in the game and who might be targeting them. It was loads of fun, brought our students closer to one another, and created some much needed excitement during this point in the semester when many of our students are dragging and beginning to long for summer break.

Midnight Dogs at the University of Maryland

Jesus said, “let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” *Matt. 5: 16*

Emily Marsteller (first year intern) had an idea for outreach to Maryland students going to and from the bars on busy weekend nights. After more discussions with the Ministry Team, we launched “Midnight Dogs.” In a strategic foot traffic area near the bars next to campus we set up a portable “hot-dog” grill and a spread of candy, baked goods, and water on a picnic table. As students get off the buses and head to the bar area, they stop by – attracted by the smells, warm grill on a cool night, and bustling student activity. We have done the event twice now and probably touched well over 100 students each night who would stop by for a hot dog, brownie, or a bottle of water.

The big attraction of course has also been the real live canines! Emily has brought her two dogs from home and one of Ministry Team women brought another. The dogs have broken down barriers as students want to come and pet them. In the process we offer a hot dog and food. What happens next is community and relationship building. Some kids never make it to the bars because they like



what we are doing and the “cover” price is too expensive. Some simply stay with us for the two or three hours that we are there, 11:30 PM – 2:00 AM. Some take a card telling them about RUF supper club. Others just engage in conversation.

Each night we have had many existing students from our ministry help serve, and some significant spiritual conversations have taken place. One student Allen (not his real name) came to our table and revealed how he was so touched by “Olive,” Emily’s yellow Labrador Retriever. He revealed that his dog had just died while his family was away on vacation and he was still mourning the loss. We spoke that night for some time about his life and where he was from. Amazingly and seemingly out of the blue, the very next morning I received a text from a mutual student friend of Allen’s (connected to RUF). This believing friend said that Allen had been talking to him about faith and his

recent departure from atheism due to a study abroad trip to Korea just hours before Midnight Dogs. The believing friend was wondering how to talk to Allen about the Gospel and what he truly believed!! Fast forward a few weeks. Due to this friend, Allen has recently been attending Wallace Presbyterian Church and has been meeting with me and my intern Drew Dempsey to talk about the gospel and our faith. God is good. RUF seeks to be a place where we shine the light of the gospel of Christ to a campus walking towards the darkness. There are those who notice and want something different. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at the University of Maryland*

Stay Connected to RUF!

Aren’t these great stories? It is easy to see that these activities are fun and edifying. What is not as obvious is their evangelistic impact. Many of the participants are unbelievers who are being drawn to Jesus through the love of Christian students.

You do not have to wait until the next newsletter for the latest news of RUF in the Northeast. We have rebuilt and are relaunching our RUF Northeast website. The first reports are from the Mid-Atlantic Training Conference. Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this code →



You can make donations to our ministry here: <https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. → Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at Northeast@ruf.org. And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at Northeast@ruf.org.

Focus on Nick Owens



A shirt transformed Athena’s college experience. In the jubilant chaos of a University of Delaware football game, Athena spotted a slogan on a young man’s shirt: “Love God. Love others. Love UD.” She was so transfixed by the words that she

photographed the shirt to remember them.

Athena had recently transferred from a southern university

to the University of Delaware. While at her former school, Athena had converted to Christianity through the ministry of CRU. But in the process of transferring to the large state school, she lost connection with other Christians. Instead, she felt compelled to bond with her swim team, perform well in classes, and transition to life at UD. She quickly realized that she needed a community of believers at UD to encourage her growth spiritually.

Sometime after the football game, Athena remembered the t-shirt and contacted RUF minister Nick Owens. He brought one of the RUF student leaders to meet with her – that student happened to be the same one who had worn the shirt. Athena has since become regularly involved in RUF, and she recently told Nick that RUF “literally gets me through the week.”

The memorable t-shirt was created for fall outreach this year. Three years ago, Nick and his wife, Erin, were the sole members of RUF’s outreach team. They recruited a handful of students to form the new RUF chapter at UD.

When the Owens first moved to Delaware, Erin went to campus regularly with Nick. She attended Bible studies and large group meetings and met with the women individually. Erin, who has a master’s in counseling from Westminster Seminary, also started a counseling ministry at Evangelical Presbyterian church in Newark, Delaware. She currently counsels several people a week.

Erin’s involvement with RUF has evolved since the Owen family expanded to include Liam, age two, and Abigail, three months old. While Erin cannot come to campus as often, women meet at Erin’s house during naptime where they enjoy sipping tea or coffee in a peaceful home. Erin and Nick also alternate hosting girls-only nights or guys-only nights. This March, Erin held a question-and-answer time for the women to discuss marriage and dating.

Over the past three years the student leaders have gained a vision for RUF. Nick no longer needs to teach students how to host events. Instead, the students lead Bible studies and seek to evangelize their classmates.

RUF outreach has morphed from a focus on new student orientation into a year-long project spearheaded by RUF student members. The students hope to spark conversations about faith through events such as TED Talk discussions.

Occasionally the students set up tables around campus to engage their classmates. “Tabling” is primarily used to connect with students during the first few weeks of school and often features gifts, food, and sign-up sheets. This year several RUF students are using tabling to increase

the ministry’s visibility on campus and address the concerns of the broader student population.

In one tabling event RUF students asked their classmates, “What do you fear about the future?” They invited passing students to write their responses on a poster board. Many students cited concerns for success in school work and career. Others fretted about finances and relationships. One student wrote “the robots.” No one admitted to fearing death or hell.

Their answers, Nick says, reflects the culture of the campus. It is a pragmatic place where students concentrate on concrete goals rather than abstract ideas. In the next large group meeting Nick addressed many of these concerns and the Bible’s response to them.

Nick and the student leadership team see these discussion boards as a way to apply to the gospel the campus directly. They hope people see that “we are a ministry for this campus.” Nick says, “We care about what they are wrestling with and why they don’t or do believe.”

– by Rebecca Trudeau

Spring Reflections



“While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table.” *Luke 11:37*

Most of our attention to Jesus is on His teaching and miracles. But these are hung upon the framework of very ordinary events, such as meals, traveling, and sleeping – and it is within these events that Jesus taught and ministered to people. In this incident in Luke, Jesus taught His host that holiness is a matter of the heart. And it was while Jesus slept in the boat that the disciples learned that there was nothing to fear from wind and waves.

In RUF also much ministry happens within everyday activities. May God so work in us that Jesus shines through, no matter what we are doing.

David Green



NORTHEAST

Prayer Requests, March 2018

1. Pray for Mojo and her friends who tutor children through Love in Action – for God's sustaining energy and a strong Christian witness.
2. Pray for God to bless Midnight Dogs and the other out-reach events of our RUF ministries.
3. Pray for the love of God to shine through RUF ministers and students whatever they are doing.
4. Pray for God to finish His work of establishing RUF at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Only a few steps left!
5. Pray for recruiting and all the preparation going into the summer conferences in May.