



# I wish you were here everyday

BY PETE PROPHIT

PHOTO BY JALIAH ALEXANDER, HYPE STUDENT

Last year I was asked by a church member who strongly supported HYPE, to join the team of volunteers that tutor children from Bernard Terrace every afternoon. At the moment, I couldn't come up with a plausible reason to reject the request, so I agreed to show up on Wednesdays since I usually attended The Table (worship and dinner) later that evening anyway. I had a little apprehension since I had no teaching experience with youngsters, but what could be so difficult about reading and math at a primary school level? I was assigned to 4th-5th grade students—about a dozen—with a teacher and two other volunteers. My wife also came along and helped with some younger kids. The operation wasn't really heavy on structure and discipline, but my job was simply to help them with homework. After one or two sessions, I was working very hard with one 4th grade boy, Jermaine, who was really struggling with very basic work. It was almost like he didn't understand my language, and finally he just shut down.

Now I was out of my league, so I went to solicit help from the expert, my wife. Using her motherly skills, she was able to determine that he was upset about a bullying incident during the bus ride from the school. We told him that it would be dealt with by the teacher and we would follow up.

As the weeks went by, I gave him extra attention and always included him when I was helping other students because they had the same homework. He was a slow learner but he was at least trying and making progress. Later in the school year, he seldom showed up for HYPE

because there was specialized tutoring being done at school for upcoming testing. There were two family night dinners at the church, but his mother didn't show up so we would always sit with him.

Then Mary Treppendahl was appointed to take over as Director of HYPE for this year, and it was a whole new ball game. There has been much more structure and discipline and more challenges for the volunteers. Again, I was a little apprehensive about my classroom skills, but Mary was extremely supportive and, frankly, who could ever turn her down?

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I was very pleased with the progress Jermaine had made over the summer. He seemed motivated to do his best in school and was always in good spirits when he saw me on Wednesdays. But the most heartwarming thing happened last month. I was with the other volunteers at the entrance where the kids got off the bus. When Jermaine saw me, he ran over, gave me a hug, and said, “Mr. Pete, I wish that you were here every day”. Well, I was really moved by his personal remark, but I also began to appreciate the effect we were having on some of these young people. Jesus says that we should use our talents to help children in need and this program gives all of us an opportunity to do just that.



I am so thankful to the person who introduced me to HYPE and encouraged me give it a try. And I hope that my story will motivate others to get out of their comfort zones and share their time, their talents, and God's love

# a volunteer's view



We sat down for a chat with three volunteers and got their perspective on HYPE, what their reservations about volunteering might have been, and how serving through this ministry has affected their lives.



**What were your expectations, reservations, or fears before you began volunteering with HYPE?**

**Drake Walsh:** I had always thought that I did not have enough time to do something like this. How was I going to get from work (in Denham Springs) to First Methodist in time? I did worry if I had the right

personality to be a teacher in a group setting. I work in a lab evaluating coatings on paper substrates!

**Elizabeth Hackenberg:** I was nervous because I didn't know if I could do or be what the students needed, but I wanted to encourage their faith and help them find a safe haven at our church.

**Cornelia Hackenberg:** I had heard a lot about HYPE from my sister, Elizabeth. She made it sound fun and inspiring. I hoped to form a bond with the students and not only impact their school performance, but their everyday lives.

**How has your involvement in HYPE affected your faith, relationships, prejudices, or perspective?**

**Elizabeth Hackenberg:** HYPE has grown my faith immensely and made me aware of the tremendous satisfaction that can be found in helping others. At times, I feel as if the kids help me more than I help them.

**Drake Walsh:** HYPE has strengthened my faith by increasing my "love of neighbor". We are all called to serve. I volunteer with my son and we work with the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. When I leave, I always feel that my time was very much needed, and there is always the need for more volunteers.



# Helping Youth Prepare for Excellence

It does change your perspective; instead of focusing on yourself, you focus on a child in need of a helping hand. Jesus wanted all of us to possess faith like children; a pure, unassuming, and humble faith.

**Why do you choose to spend time each week serving through the HYPE program?**

**Drake Walsh:** This one is the easiest of the questions! Are we not called to be the hands and feet of Christ? I see no better way than to help the children of God.

**Elizabeth Hackenberg:** In the beginning (nearly 4 years ago) I volunteered with Hype because my parents encouraged me to. But now I do it because I enjoy mentoring the students

and I feel it's important for them to have someone they can trust and rely on.

**Cornelia Hackenberg:** I devote my time to HYPE because seeing the joy and excitement on the children's faces when they see me never gets old.

Since 2015 HYPE volunteers have worked alongside teachers with over 88 students to achieve:

- 45 students on AB Honor Roll
- 10 students on Principal's Honor Roll
- 1 student of the year 2016-2017
- 5 students elected as student government representatives

The HYPE after-school program meets Monday-Thursday, from 3:45-5:45 PM, at FUMC. Volunteers typically serve 1 day a week for 2 hours. If you are interested in being a part of this ministry, contact Mary Treppendahl at [mtrep@firstmethodist.org](mailto:mtrep@firstmethodist.org) or 383-4777, ext. 246.



OPPOSITE PAGE- TOP: Students posed for a picture taken by their fellow student, Jaliyah Alexander. LEFT: Jermain trying to beat Pete in an arm-wrestling match. ABOVE: Drake Walsh having a laugh with students & Cornelia & Elizabeth Hackenberg with their homework table group.