

After-school program in 7th year at American Lutheran Church

Written by Stephanie Aden
Wednesday, 20 April 2011 21:17 -



JAM serves community's young people.

One hundred elementary school students, 200 pigs in a blanket, 300 apple slices and nine dozen cupcakes might seem overwhelming in most situations, but it is just a normal Wednesday afternoon at American Lutheran Church.

The church's "Jesus is Alive in Me," or "JAM" program is preparing to wrap up another successful year of serving the community's young people with food, fellowship and faith.

The program, is offered after school at the church and is open to all children in grades one through sixth, regardless of church affiliation.

Lonna Grabenstein, parish ministry associate at American Lutheran Church, coordinates the program along with Bev and Chuck Titkemeier. The Revs. Matthew Groenke of American Lutheran Church and Matt Copen of First Presbyterian Church of Gothenburg greet, teach and interact with the children at JAM.

Volunteer Karan Smith started helping with the food service at JAM when her grandchildren, who are now in their 20s, were in the program as elementary students.

Because some of the children in the program may not receive a good evening meal, program officials said the volunteers do their best to provide a substantial snack for students when they arrive.

Smith and fellow volunteer Carol Slack plan the meals, shop for groceries and prepare and

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serve the food.

“I just enjoy being around the kids. I do it for them,” Smith said.

Other volunteers, like Nancy Aden, Annie Aden, Molly Magana, and Marianne Boyd, begin preparing food at 2 p.m.

Many volunteers who cannot be at JAM offer assistance by donating baked goods and snacks.

Once the children are fed, they participate in prayer and song as a large group in the church’s sanctuary. Afterwards, they break up into groups by grade and each week rotate through a different lesson based on an overall biblical theme.

JAM participant Ainsley Rickertsen attends church with her family at First Presbyterian Church but welcomes the chance to attend a program with students from different denominations.

“At JAM we get to enjoy being with friends from our church but get to

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