

Woodlawn’s annual investment in **Children and Youth Ministry** is \$115,350. This includes direct expenses as well as the staff to lead these great programs. This outlay enabled Woodlawn to spiritually shape 84 distinct youth and 140+ distinct children each Wednesday and Sunday of the year through small groups and Sunday School!

It can sometimes be difficult to keep children and youth engaged in a world saturated with technology. Great curriculum is vital because our young people carry the spiritual lessons they learn with them throughout their lives leading to a significant and lasting return on our investment! An example of such engaging curriculum is “The Action Bible” which tells the stories of the Bible in a comic book sequence with fetching artwork to help shape our young Christians to be the Heart, Hands and Feet of Jesus in the world!

Each summer Woodlawn normally hosts Sports Camp, Vacation Bible School, and Science Camp attracting well over 200 individual participants. Children learn the great stories of the Bible, experience God’s gifts and discover a church full of adults who love them! One couldn’t ask for a greater return! This summer Covid forced staff to rethink how we could continue to carry out this mission. Because we’d already invested in children and youth ministry, a virtual VBS was quickly put into place. Staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to produce in-house videos and assemble a craft and activity bag for each child containing everything needed for a fun filled week of VBS at home!

Did you see “How the Grinch found Christ in Christmas?” Our investment in children’s ministry secured all of the sets, costumes, supplies and even the musical itself so that Woodlawn’s children, youth and adults could pull together in order to proclaim God’s love and grace to our church and the community!

Prior to the pandemic, Woodlawn’s youth ministry experienced tremendous growth, particularly the high school group. Group meetings continued even through the shutdown using ZOOM conferencing. Eventually meetups in the park were held so kids could safely see their friends. Youth and children’s activities continue online for the moment with creative approaches like custom printed gift boxes with supplies that were distributed this fall to each student. Bibles were even given to 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and backpacks blessed for the return of the school year in an imaginative drive-by event!

Funding Confirmation is crucial to help young people claim the Christian faith as their own and become members of the church. These new members are beneficiaries who receive a life-long return on this investment! Sadly, Covid delayed the start of this year’s Confirmation class but plans are being made to launch this important journey as soon as our confirmands can safely gather together.

And while Covid altered Woodlawn’s annual recognition of our graduating seniors it did not stop it! Short videos featuring our seniors were shown online during worship in May. Many graduates leave home to attend school or pursue their career, and this recognition is one way to let them to know how much their church loves them and cares for them as they move into the next chapter of their lives.

Finally, as Woodlawn invests in youth and children’s ministry, we also invest in a great many volunteers who work alongside our staff. Some serve in ongoing roles while others step up to sponsor special events or trips. The return on this investment comes in the form of the caring relationships that develop between young people and the adults who care for them and nurture their spiritual development.

