

Ministry Minute

Parents' Night Out

"Getting Time for Themselves"



Everybody needs a break from their routine now and then.

For parents, that "routine" can get pretty crazy when life revolves around children's extracurriculars, homework, family commitments, church activities, household demands, work schedules, and the list goes on and on...

During the busiest times, the stretches between parents' breaks can get longer and longer. Westwood stepped up recently to ensure some of its parents got at least one of those necessary breaks. Nine adults and 13 youth volunteers (grades 7-12) found ways to keep over 50 children ages 3 to 10 busy while parents had a three-hour window to do as they wished, go out to dinner, clean the house, or even enjoy some quiet relaxation.

Alison Broman and Ann Sundermeyer, team members of Westwood's Children, Youth, and Family (CYF) Ministry, organized the event, which included art activities, outdoor time, games, and snacks.



"Parents' Night Out is a gift to parents," said Dannica Olsen, who took advantage of the "me" time offered by the activity. Dannica is Westwood's Director of Youth Ministry for grades six to 12. "It's an incredible way to support parents and a fun time for kids to be in a place they love with their church friends."

Parents' Night Out was offered in October 2023 and recently in April 2024. As the CYF team plans for the next program year, Ann Sundermeyer commented that Fall and Spring options are already in the works. "It was well received by parents, and kids had a blast—they were excited to be there! We learned what worked and where we can adjust for the future."

Parents' Night Out demonstrates Westwood's values on many fronts and its commitment to families. It serves not only parents but also allows children to play and socialize with church friends. For older youth, it offers an experience to volunteer, and it reveals Westwood as a community dedicated to serving others and building friendships.

"Parents' Night Out supports parents in a way that allows them to enjoy a bit of time together or to do what they need to do without kids around. It is important -- a value statement for sure!" Dannica said.

Claire Patterson, 16, was one of the volunteers who supervised preschool children at Parents' Night Out. She kept them busy with coloring projects and a lot of time spent playing in the park. "I love working with kids and babysitting. The children are really fun to play with," said Claire, who has also worked with Vacation Bible School. She recommends similar volunteer opportunities. "The evening gave parents a nice break where they could be away for a while and relax."