

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



What I Wish I Had Known

I've been doing this youth ministry thing for a long time. Long enough to have teenaged friends whose parents were in elementary school when I first got involved in youth work. I was only 21 years old when I first became a youth pastor. Twenty-one.

No wonder I was intimidated by parents back then!

I sided with my students on kid-versus-parent issues. I tended to view parents through very young and immature eyes. I saw parents as hopelessly out of touch, unbending, irrational, and above all – OLD. They were scary because they could make my life miserable. Their phone calls were intimidating. Having to meet with parents was something I avoided at all costs. I had an adversarial attitude back then.

Then a strange thing happened: my own children became teenagers. And I was still a youth minister. By this time, I was doing what I do now – helping churches get their youth ministries up and running – so I wasn't THE youth pastor at my home church.

I discovered how valuable youth leaders are to a parent. I found that I was praying every day for the youth leaders who were befriending my children. I was looking for ways to help, for concrete actions I could do to benefit the youth leaders. I wanted to be involved in the youth ministry – and with my kids' permission, I was – but I knew I

couldn't be the youth leader for my kids that I had been for so many others.

I wish I would have known how parents viewed me back when I was a rookie. I could have had a ton of more assistance, support, and camaraderie than what I allowed. I could have seen more results in the lives of those students and their families. I could have saved myself much headache, worry, and work. I wish I would have known then that youth ministry can't exist separated from ministry with the entire family system.

So maybe this issue of *Youth Leaders Only* will help YOU to learn what I wish I would have known. Here you'll find a bunch of insightful articles written by other youth ministers who've been there and done that. You'll discover a bunch of other helpful resources too: Bible studies written around a song from each album in this YLO; re:Tuned discussion starters that use secular songs as a hook; chord charts for your worship band; a Thematic Listing of all the songs on all the YLO albums, and more.

Godspeed,

Ken McCoy

