

Train up a Child



Who is the smiling person training, teaching, loving and encouraging youth at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge? It's Jo Seltz. She was born and raised in Fort Dodge and is well acquainted with St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School. Jo was 'trained as a child' for eight years in the Lutheran school and has attended St. Paul Lutheran Church all her life.

For six years, Jo worked with the St. Paul and Prince of Peace Preschool and for the past ten years, she has been training many children as the youth director of St. Paul Lutheran Church. Jo works with grades 3-12 conducting after school programming, teaching confirmation classes, teaching Bible classes and leading the high school youth group.

When asked what her favorite activities are, she said, "All of them!" Jo has a very unique after-school ministry on Tuesday and Thursday for grades 4-12. Fifteen youth are involved in making quilts.

Jo said, "A fourth grader may be confused when they start their first quilt in the fall, but there is such a change and so much joy in seeing their confidence and feeling of accomplishment by spring." Jo's goals of the after-school program are to offer fellowship, Bible study, and a feeling of accomplishment. The first quilt they make and design, usually 50" x 70", is for them to keep and enjoy. The next ones they make are given to graduating high school seniors who are members at St. Paul. As they receive their quilt, a note to the seniors reminds them that they are wrapped in the love of St. Paul Lutheran Church and more importantly in the love of Jesus Christ.



On Wednesday, after school, you will find Jo with grades 3-5 learning and experiencing the life of LCMS missionaries. Jo was excited to share that <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2530> offers a free, downloadable curriculum, LCMS Mission Friends, with amazing information on various countries with projects, crafts, language and cultural differences. The youth have a great time learning about and eating foods from the country they are focusing on. They have passports that are stamped to show where they have visited and a prayer journal to list the people they are praying for.



The high school youth are blessed to have Jo lead their Bible study on Sunday mornings. The youth also meet twice a month on Sunday evening. Once a month, they have Bible study and discussion. The other, is a fellowship event. Some of these events include: photo scavenger hunt, Wii tournaments, guitar hero, bowling, Christmas parties and service projects. Some of the projects are serving a meal for a fund raiser for St. Paul Lutheran School, Easter breakfast, raking leaves and painting the Agape Church in Fort Dodge.

Jo said, "I enjoy sharing God's love with the youth through Bible study much more than the fellowship. Although, the fellowship is the way to form relationships with the kids and to get them to come to youth group. I close every letter and email to the youth with '*My Only Prayer is that you know the love of Christ!*'"

Another unique project that Jo has been involved with for eight years is a faith chest. The chests are made by her husband Rich and are given to infants on their baptism. In the faith chest is a booklet about the role the parents have in their child's faith development, a cross, the white cloth and shell used at the baptism and the baptism certificate. The parents are encouraged to add the child's first Bible and any other items that the child receives throughout his or her faith journey in life.

Jo has shared her many talents with youth throughout Iowa District West by being on the planning committee for the Senior High Youth Gathering for the past seven years. Her talents as a member of the IDW Family Ministry Task Force are also very much appreciated. The task force provides family devotions for Advent, Lent and Sunday School Rally Sunday. This includes crafts, family and youth devotions, adult and children's sermons, and the order of worship.

What does Jo do in her spare time? She spends time with Rich, her husband of 30 years, and their family. Rich and Jo enjoy sharing in the lives of their three daughters, Amanda, Brianne and Sigourney and son, Josh. Three cuties call her 'Grandma.' She is excited that all of their children currently live in Fort Dodge.

May 31 will mark the end of Jo's title as youth director at St. Paul. When asked her future plans, Jo said, "I am retiring to destinations unknown at this point."

I know that wherever God leads her, she will be a blessing to the people she is involved with. As a high school freshman said with a sad voice, when discussing Jo's leaving, "I don't know what we will do without Jo. I do not remember a time when she was not part of my life."

God's blessings, Jo, on the next steps of your journey in serving Him.

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