

# **Student Ministry Parent Orientation**

*Preparing for the teen years.*

**First Baptist Church of Springfield, Georgia**

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# The Good Old Days

From  
Understanding Your Teenager  
Wayne Rice and David Veerman, 1999

“I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent upon the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. When I was a boy, we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wild and impatient of restraint.”

- Hestes, the Greek poet, circa 800 BC

“The world is passing through troubled times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age; they talk as if they knew everything and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness for them.”

- Peter the Herman, who spearheaded the first crusade, circa 1274 AD



**The opinions of adults concerning the behaviors of teenagers has remained the same for nearly 3000 years.**

# Help! My child is a middle schooler!!

**UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEENAGER**  
Wayne Rice and David Veerman, 1999. Word Publishing.

## Teens are searching for Identity and Independence

“Our need is to be needed. Their need is to not need us.” – Wayne Rice

**Each teenager will push for independence at different times.**

## Signs that your teenager is seeking independence:

### 1. Privacy

“Most childrens’ lives are an open book, but that book gradually closes and sometimes it closes over night. Teenagers may have secrets that they feel reluctant to tell their parents.” – Wayne Rice

### 2. Roles

“If your daughter is an extrovert she may stay on the phone. If your son is a hopeful athlete he may want to hang out with the older players and buy a weight machine. Studies for some may take a new priority while for others they may take a back seat.” – Wayne Rice  
TEENAGERS ARE REDEFINING THEMSELVES INTO WHAT THEY WANT TO BE IDENTIFIED AS.

### 3. Disengagement

“Suddenly teenagers do not want to participate in family outings, vacations, and even meal times together. They don’t always want to be seen with their parents at the mall, or school, or ballgames.” – Wayne Rice

### 4. Conflict

Discussions, heated arguments, disagreements, battles.

- **Power & Authority** “Mom can I got to the mall with Cindy? - No! It’s a school night!”  
The struggle is not over the decision it is over the decision making. Who gets to decide? This does not mean that you stop making decisions for your teen nor does it mean that you micromanage them. Balance is key.



- **Behavior** “Clean up your room! – It is Clean!”  
“More often than not kids grow up and become more like their parents than they ever imagined they would. In the meantime, during their days at home, they feel compelled to assert themselves and to act and behave in ways that identify them as different from Mom and Dad. This may take the form of rebellion, but it doesn’t have to.”- Wayne Rice

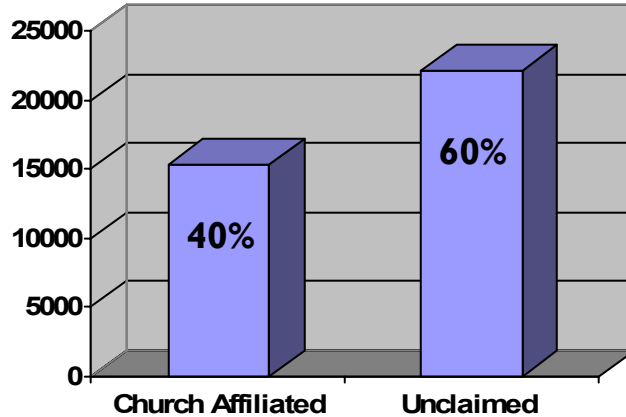
## OTHER RESOURCES FOR YOUTH PARENTS:

- The five love languages of teenagers. Gary Chapman, Northfield Publishing, 2000.
- Parenting teens with love and logic. Foster Cline and Jim Fay, Pinion Press, 1992.
- Five Cries of Parents. Help for families on troublesome issues. Merton & Irene Strommen, HarperSanFrancisco Publishers, 1985.
- The Holy Bible

# EFFINGHAM COUNTY MISSION FIELD

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2005 Est.</u>	<u>2010 Proj.</u>
Effingham Co. Population	25,687	37,535	46,924	54,807
	(ARDA)	(ARDA)	(GSS/UGA)	(GSS/UGA)

Religious Affiliation, Year 2000 (ARDA)



*“If anyone is  
thirsty,  
let him come  
to me and  
drink.”  
-Jesus*

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL 2006 POPULATION: (GDE)

<b>Middle School (Grades 6-8)</b>	
Effingham County Middle	620
South Effingham Middle	875
Ebenezer Middle	914
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,409</b>
<b>High School (Grades 9-12)</b>	
Effingham County High	1,462
South Effingham High	1,319
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,781</b>

RECENT MS GROWTH 2/1/2007 = 2,500
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RECENT HS GROWTH 2/1/2007 = 2,957
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TEEN PREGNANCY: (GSS/UGA)

Year 2004 - Effingham County Teen Pregnancies = 106

Year 2004 - Effingham County Teen Abortions = 85

*80% of total teen pregnancies were aborted in 2004.*

FAMILY POVERTY: (ECBE)

- Of the 2006 Total Effingham County Middle School Students—44% were considered poverty level and eligible for free lunch.
- Of the 2006 total Effingham County High School Students—30% were considered poverty level and eligible for free lunch.

REFERENCES:

ARDA—Association of Religion Data Archives

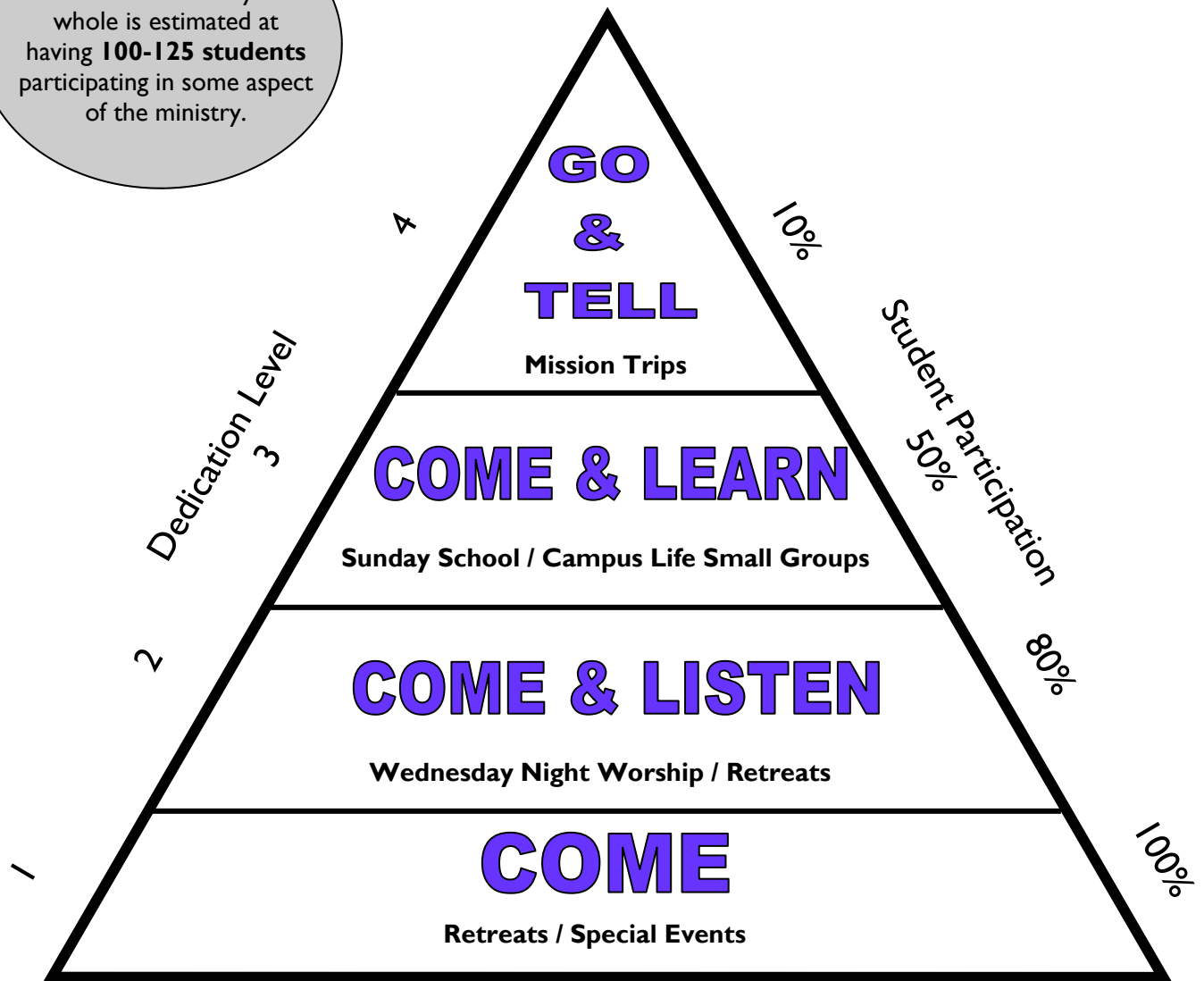
ECBE—Effingham County Board of Education

GDE—Georgia Department of Education

GSS/UGA—Georgia Statistics System / University of Georgia

# STRUCTURE OF FBCS STUDENT MINISTRY

The Student Ministry as a whole is estimated at having **100-125 students** participating in some aspect of the ministry.



Model by: Doug Couch, Ga. Baptist Convention Youth Ministry

It is our goal to take students from the bottom of the student ministry model to the top. Not all students will be involved at each level. As students come to be with friends at the bottom of the model, we hope to develop deep relationships with them that earn us the right to be heard at the second level. Through these relationships the gospel is shared and it is our prayer that life transformation occurs. Leading them to Christ is only the first step. Once they are led to Christ then we are faced with the challenge of helping them walk with Christ and serve Christ. This occurs in the third and fourth level of the model. We seek to lead these students to encounter the living God and to walk with Him for life. It is a process that takes a lot of time and patience. Spiritual transformation and maturity do not happen over night. Please pray for our student ministry. These students come from many different backgrounds, but all have the same need— Hope in Christ.

# To Be or Not To Be!

## 6th Graders in Student Ministry

Darren W. Thomas Ed. D.  
First Baptist Church Springfield, Georgia

There are certain questions that seem to be “age old” questions that we constantly ask ourselves and ponder: “Will we recognize friends and family in heaven?” “Why do bad things happen to good people?” and “How can chocolate be so bad if it tastes so good?”. All of these puzzling questions seem to continually find their way back to the forefront of our minds, but they never have an answer that satisfies our curiosity. So the question continues to eat at us?

In student ministry, there is a question that continues to surface each year with rising potential students and families that are anxious to have their children involved in a vital student ministry, “Can my 6th grader come to the student events?” Unlike the prior questions, this one does have a legitimate answer.

Across the state of Georgia the 6th grade is considered Middle School age, however some schools have the 6th grade on campus with the 7th and 8th grade while others may not. In most scenarios this is due to a space issue. At one time, the Effingham County 6th grade was segregated from the Elementary and Middle Schools and was held in a location of its own for a few years due to space. In the mid 1990s the Effingham County 6th grade was integrated with the 7th and 8th grade onto the Middle School campuses. Now all Effingham County Middle School campuses include 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. Since that integration of 6th grade to the Middle School campus there has been an ongoing debate in the church as to whether or not to allow 6th graders to participate in student ministry activities. At First Baptist Springfield we have held to the position that 6th graders are not allowed in the student ministry. There are some very definitive reasons why we have chosen to do so.

### 1. **Most of our Student Ministry programs and events are all inclusive: Middle and High School.**

We feel that 6th Graders do not belong in large group settings with High School students. With the exception of Sunday School and Sunday night small groups, Middle School students (7th & 8th grade) are included in all student events with High School students. We feel this would be too much for the 6th grader to process. Until recently we have not had the number of students nor the adult volunteer leadership to staff two separate ministries: Middle and High School. Therefore most of the events have been held with both age groups involved. Most 6th graders are not prepared mentally nor socially to enter into an environment where there are 16-18 year old students. We are just now trying to develop a specific Middle School ministry that would be separate from the High School ministry. If this were to come about, then we may consider allowing the 6th grade to attend the Middle School events, but this would depend on the Middle School ministry being a stand alone ministry and it would also require a lot of adult and student involvement.

### 2. **Beginning 6th grade is a huge adjustment for most 6th graders.**

If you are a parent of a 6th grader you know how stressful it was for your student to prepare themselves to go onto that Middle School campus. It may have been more stressful for you. Beginning Middle School for a 6th grader is equivalent to a senior graduating and leaving home to enter the college campus. Though the 6th grader is still at home, the pressure is still the same. New environment, new influences, increased peer pressure, increase in extra-curricular school events, and a higher level of academic expectation is a lot for a student to process in a year. There is much more of an adjustment to make between Elementary and Middle School than there is between Middle School and High School. We do not feel that we should add to that pressure of adjusting to a new school environment by asking the 6th grade student to adjust to a new environment at church as well. Giving them a year to acclimate themselves to the new school environment before they are forced to acclimate themselves to the new church environment, which includes High School students, makes for a much easier transition for the student.

**3. 6th graders are not mature enough to be involved in a student ministry that is all inclusive.**

There is a huge maturity level difference between a Middle School student and a High School student. But there is also a huge maturity level difference between a 6th grader and an 8th grader on the Middle School campus. You will see a greater diversity of maturity levels on a Middle School campus than you will on a High School campus. By the time a student has reached High School they have made many strides in their process of “coming of age”. Yet on a Middle school campus you may find one little boy who still has his toys scattered all over his room while at the other end of the spectrum you will find a young man beginning to find interest in the opposite sex. At the same time you may find a little girl on campus who wants to talk about her “American Girl” doll collection while there are other girls that are talking about the latest fashions and the “cutest” boy on campus. The 6th grader is not mature enough for student ministry trips, more advanced Bible study discussions, and the social scene of the student ministry.

**4. Having 6th graders involved in the student ministry negatively affects the level of involvement from the High School and older Middle School students.**

Imagine a 6th grader on a church van with a junior or senior in high school. High School students have a certain level of discomfort in having younger Middle School students participate with them in student ministry activities. This sometimes hinders the participation of High School students because they feel their student ministry has become more of a children’s ministry. Having the 6th grade involved in the student ministry also makes it difficult for the adult leaders to address issues such as sex, dating, and relationships on a level that is relevant to the High School student as well as the older Middle School student.

The other question that often follows this question of whether or not to allow 6th graders into the student ministry is “If 6th graders can’t be involved in the student ministry, can we have something special for them?” The 6th grade is a tough age group to keep involved in the church. It is a concern that is felt in most of our churches across the country. The 6th grader feels too old for the children’s ministry, yet they are a little too young for the student ministry. Often this leaves them feeling left out. We would love to have a ministry specifically for 6th graders. We tried having a ministry solely for the 6th grade last year called FUSION. It was actually very successful. We had approximately 30-35 6th graders coming once a month for a time of worship and Bible study on Wednesday nights. But adult involvement was very slim so we had to end that ministry. The harvest is plentiful but without the workers we’ll never reach the potential. I would be more than willing to help a group of adults formulate such a ministry again, but it will take parent involvement.

So as a parent of a 6th grader, what do I do in the mean time. If you are a parent or guardian of a 6th grader, try to assure them that it is best that they wait until 7th grade to get involved in the student ministry and assure them that it will be worth the wait. Be understanding of their frustration during this transition time and help them to make the necessary transitions to prepare them for the coming year when they will be able to participate in student ministry activities. Also, talk with the church staff, particularly the youth pastor, or the youth ministry volunteers to see how you can be more involved in developing a Middle School ministry that is separate from the High School ministry. But most importantly realize that you are the primary spiritual influence over your child. Your 6th grader can learn more from you than he or she can ever learn from a pastor or other adult volunteer in the student ministry. Pray with them and for them, encourage them, love them, study the Bible with them and you will see that the 6 months to a year that your child waits to get involved in the student ministry may be the most precious time you have with your child before they become even more independent.

# A WORD FROM THE MISSION FIELD

The following are testimonies of teenagers that are being touched by a local mission sponsored by a Southern Baptist congregation with a heart for kids.

When asked to answer two questions regarding their experience in this mission the students responded with these brief testimonies. The questions: “What have you learned about God while attending the mission?” and “How do you feel different as a result of what you have experienced here at this mission?”

**15 year old female:**

I have learned that God loves you no matter what you look like, who you are, what you do, and that nobody's perfect. And that he can wash away all of my sins. That he's a great man and loves everybody. I feel so much better. Almost like a new person. God has helped me through some very hard times. I really love this church. It is amazing.

**12 year old male:**

I have learned that God created this earth. God has given us this life and our spirit. God has given us the strength to walk and talk so that we can speak. God is not a sinner, he is a Saviour to all planets. God has given people different technology. I feel different because they speak good things about God. Another difference is that I can tell people good things about this church. I am going to tell people to come to this church so that they can have more people at church. It is not bad to talk about God. God can change people's lives in an instant.

**17 year old male:**

I've learned that God loves you and that he only wants to help you. I've learned that God doesn't want you to sin and that if you do he feels sad. He doesn't want you to judge people by what they wear or what they look like. And I've changed by respecting other people. I have also learned that God is always watching you. I've started living life to its fullest. I've started listening to other people and what they have to say. I have learned that and changed in the way I move and act. I've stopped criticizing people and I've started talking to people and trying to help them out with their problems.

**16 year old female:**

I've learned that God loves us all even if we do mess up in life. He is with us no matter what is happening. He makes us go through life the way we do for a purpose. We learn things from his words he spoke through the Bible, the stories he told, everything he does, he does for us. I've changed a lot through this church. I've been to other churches in my life but this was the first to touch me in some ways. This was the church that I was baptized at. I've become more open with things. I've changed with feelings.

**15 year old male:**

I have learned loads of things. It is not what I have heard though but by the actions of the people God has worked through. I have learned that people can be awesome because of God. Our youth is like a big family. I have become happier with my new found family.

**13 year old male:**

I have learned more about God than I had before. I learned about what God has in store for his believers. I am actually more at one with myself after learning stuff about God. I am less violent and vulgar and bad.

**15 year old male:**

I haven't really learned much because I haven't been saved for long but I learned that Jesus loves you no matter what you look like or how you act. I also learned that he is forgiving and he cares about everyone. I notice that I have been nicer and more forgiving. I have had more fun and I have more friends.

**16 year old male:**

While attending this church I have really enjoyed the fellowship of fellow Christians. I must be honest though, I have not learned much about God, but the reason is that I am a Christian and have learned about God. Nevertheless, I have grown closer to God and become a more devout Christian by attending this church.

**15 year old female:**

I have learned so much about God! He is truly my Lord – Saviour! I have learned that he loves each and everyone no matter how they dress and no matter how they act. As a result of my experience here my walk with God has been more eventful and worth giving. I have truly become more aware of my actions – what I say. I speak and act more like the way I feel I should have been my entire life.

**16 year old male:**

I've learned that God is here for us and that he wants us to worship and to have good faith. And that he wants to refine us so that God can shine through us. I've changed by becoming more sociable and I changed because I've made more friends since I have joined this youth group. And I am not as shy as I used to be. I have more fun here than at home.

**13 year old male:**

I've learned in this church more about God than at any other church. I've learned that God is very caring and loving. He is also very forgiving. . . . Also that I'll go to heaven when I die.

**16 year old male:**

I've learned two important things since I've been here. One is that it doesn't matter what you wear or what "group your in" it only matters what's in your heart. I also have learned that you should give God All of your problems. I still haven't done that yet. . . But I'm trying to.

**14 year old female:**

I've learned a little more to make me believe God is real. Since I've been coming here, I've also learned I feel better about myself.

**15 year old female:**

In these past 3 years that I've been in this youth group, I have learned so many things about life, God, and relationships. I'm so grateful for being able to be at church most days of the week. I can socialize with people I don't usually get to see during the week and it's a great opportunity to talk about what's going on in our lives, whether its about God, or just everyday things like school. I've learned so much about God and his love for people. People that are all so different. Even though I wasn't saved through this youth group, I've been shown what being a Christian means and my relationship has really been improved.

**14 year old female:**

What I have learned about God is that he is a friend, a father, someone who is there, someone who loves me for me, someone who I can always count on no matter what. Before I thought he was just something to do because my family wanted me to. And now this youth group has taught me what he really is and how I have a relationship with him instead of just a—I have to be here—thing. Now I love Jesus.

**17 year old female:**

I have learned many things, but above all of them the one thing I will carry with me forever is that no matter how insignificant you may think you are, you are never too small for God to do something powerful in your life. I have seen people who I thought were "unreachable " discover God and become changed. I have also seen the looks on elderly people's faces after we raked their yards. I did not know that doing so little of a deed could bring so much joy. Seeing the positive way people have changed has made me begin to realize that just loving God is not enough. You have to love his people. After all his two greatest commandments are love the lord God and love people as yourself. I had heard that saying my whole life, but not until recently have I truly discovered what loving others is all about. It's about putting aside your differences and coming together for a common cause, and doing something good even when no one is looking, because after all boasting about your good deeds doesn't do anyone any good. In my humble opinion this youth group is touching people and changing lives.

## **Who is sponsoring this mission and how can I get involved?**

The Southern Baptist church sponsoring this incredible mission is yours. The testimonies of these teenagers are teenagers that you may pass in the hallways every Sunday or Wednesday or throughout the week. Some of them you may pass on the streets and not even realize that your church is touching their lives. This mission began over 150 years ago with the vision of 5 individuals to win their world for Christ. The torch has been passed from generation to generation and just 11 years ago this congregation left its comforts of home and moved to this new location on Keiffer Hill to win its community to Christ. As always the Lord is proving himself faithful and lives are being changed. If our original 5 charter members could see what God is doing through their church today, I imagine it would thrill their hearts. Maybe they can. To learn more about the student ministry or other ministries of this mission and how you may get involved you can call the church office and talk with Pastor Jeff Rollins, Min. of Ed. Darren Thomas, or any of the adult volunteers within the student ministry.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF A TYPICAL SPECIAL EVENT PERMISSION FORM THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED BY EACH STUDENT FOR RETREATS:

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## First Baptist Church of Springfield Student Ministry Parental Consent Form

For Labor Day Retreat – Sept. 2-4, 2006

*This permission slip is to give permission for my teenager to attend the Labor Day retreat to Copper Hill, TN White Water Express on Sept. 2-4, 2006 with the First Baptist Church of Springfield Ga Student Ministry.*

**Call the church office if you have questions.**

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE IN SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

Address & Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Below list parent's names and where they may be reached. Also list the name of an emergency contact other than parents and your family doctor.

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

I give my teenager (name) \_\_\_\_\_ permission to participate in the labor Day Retreat to Copper Hill TN, White Water Express Rafting Trip with the Student Ministry of First Baptist Church of Springfield, Georgia. This includes riding in the church vans, private vehicles with the Student leaders driving, swimming, rafting, games, and other recreational activities. I give permission for any necessary emergency treatment and will assume responsibility for payment, fully understanding that I will be notified as quickly as possible. I release the First Baptist Church of Springfield, private property owners who have allowed us to use their facilities, and anyone acting as agents of any responsibility and liability in case of accidents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent

I understand that I will be attending a Student Activity and that I am expected to behave in a Christian manner at all times. I will obey all the rules and will be respectful of the adults and other students attending. I know that my parents will be called immediately if I do not behave.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

If possible attach a copy of your insurance card to this form or copy all the needed information to the back of this sheet, also please list any necessary medical information or restrictions on the back of this sheet. Make your Student leaders aware of any restrictions. Thank You.