



History of Youth Transition Network Inception through July 2007

The effort to create a national bridge between youth and collegiate and career ministries began in early 2004 with the Collegiate Ministry Leaders Group. This team assembled to share ideas and reach the campus at Arizona State University (ASU). In this context, Jeff Schadt raised the question of how many lost young adults (Christians who had fallen away from the church) were on campus. In that meeting, it was estimated that there were 7,500 to 13,000 at ASU alone. Today we know those numbers were low.

As a result, a discussion ensued as to how these college ministry leaders could connect with incoming freshmen and ideas began to form. The magnitude of the loss rested heavily on Jeff's heart. His continued research led him and the ministry leaders to the realization that they had less than 72 hours to connect with an incoming student or that student would likely never become involved with any campus ministry. Because of this, there was a conclusion that contact with the incoming student needed to happen before they arrived on campus.

It became apparent that a significant majority of Christian students at ASU were falling away from the church during their collegiate years. Equally apparent was the fact that these students made many decisions during these years that affected the rest of their lives: their careers, lifestyles, spouses, etc. Even if they came back to the Lord later in life, this time of falling away often had the life-long implications and for some created life long scars.

During Jeff's process of discovery, he examined a variety of statistics that supported his findings. This led him to a defining point that this would require a full-time effort to try to build a bridge between youth and college ministries. During that year, Jeff hosted a college ministry leader's conference while working for Phoenix Seminary as the Director of Enrollment. A large number of Arizona collegiate ministry leaders were in attendance and it confirmed the need and calling for this effort. In the November 2004, Jeff left his job at Phoenix Seminary, sold the family home to finance this new ministry direction and formed Ministry Edge as its Founder and President. The Board of Directors was formed and included Stephen Boatwright, Tom Brown, Gloria Gabler, Jess Lorona and James O'Connor.

Shortly after beginning work to bridge the gap between youth and college/career ministries in Arizona given that so many students left the state to attend schools in other states, as other students from other states transitioned to Arizona. This led to a meeting with Paul Fleischmann, President of National Network of Youth Ministries (NNYM), who received a copy of Jeff's plan by Corkie Haan of Mission America (MA). That meeting resulted in an April 13th, 2004 day-long MA/NNYM forum on the loss of youth issue with Jeff, Corkie and Paul Fleischmann, president of NNYM, presenting to 27 youth and college ministry leaders. At the conclusion of the forum the group formed the Youth Transition Network (YTN) and asked Jeff to lead the effort. Also created at that time was an Executive Committee of advisors which included Dr. Kara Powell, Executive Director of the Center for Youth and Family Ministries at Fuller Seminary; Chris Renzelman, Northwest Regional Coordinator for NNYM; Paul Fleischmann, President of NNYM; Tim Eldred, President of Christian Endeavor International; Corkie Haan, National Facilitator of Ministry Networks for Mission America; and Bill Tell, Vice President of The Navigators.

In January of 2006, a powerful DVD was created which graphically depicted college students' stories of their transitions. After showing this video and conducting sessions on culture shock with students at state youth conventions and at the Urbana conference, YTN found that these students were dramatically impacted, increasing their desire to: connect to a ministry, find a Christian roommate and to continue to follow Christ for life.

The formation of YTN led to a series of meetings defining a coalition and leading to a meeting of denominational leaders led by Jeff, Paul Cedar, President of Mission America, Bill Tell Vice-President the Navigators and Josh McDowell in January of 2006 in Orlando, FL. At that meeting were The Salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene, the Evangelical Free Church of America, and the Church of God of Prophecy, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Ekklesia, Christian Endeavor International, Sojourn Church, MA and NNYM. At that meeting, the DVD was shown and there was a unanimous conclusion that YTN needed to move forward with the goal of motivating,

preparing and transitioning our nation's youth into college, career and military ministries.

Throughout the rest of 2006 Jeff worked with various college ministries to bring together the receiving side of the equation, which resulted in an all-leader gathering in October 2006 in Chicago, IL at the IV Press headquarters. The national leaders there were:

- Bill Tell, Vice President, The Navigators
- Chuck Schwaninger, Campus Crusade for Christ
- Dan Hardaway, Campus Crusade for Christ
- Dennis Gaylor, Chi Alpha (Assemblies of God collegiate ministry)
- Evan Hunter, The Ivy Jungle Network
- Jeremy Story, Campus Renewal
- Mark Lydecker, North American Mission Board
- Matt Bennett, Christian Union
- Melanie Mar Chow, Asian American Bible Fellowship
- Mike Jordahl, The Navigators
- Mike Woodruff, The Ivy Jungle Network
- Rod Mays, Reformed University Fellowship
- Steve Masters, LifeWay (Southern Baptist Collegiate Ministries)
- Val Nordbye, Campus Ambassadors

In January 2007, YTN and Ministry Edge were combined into one effort headed by Jeff Schadt as the Executive Director. This decision combined the coalition structure of YTN with the operating structure of Ministry Edge to move the effort toward a national launch.

Throughout 2007 Ministry Edge/YTN worked with the coalition to refine the launch strategies and materials. In March of 2007, Jeff was invited to hold a session about YTN's work at the Fellowship of Christian Military Ministries conference in Colorado Springs. There he addressed a group of leaders from the military ministry world: Campus Crusade for Christ's Military Ministry, The Navigators Military Ministry, Officers' Christian Fellowship, Military YoungLife, Military Missions Network, Cadence International, OSU Tour and Military Community Youth Ministries. At that meeting, they decided they would be a part of transitioning youth into military ministries and then between bases thereafter. The timeline created showed a release of the military side of LiveAbove.com in February of 2008.

In May of 2007 the Board of Directors approved hiring Scott Blanford as our Director of Operations to oversee and co-lead the projects executed by the staff team.

Two websites now exist: www.LiveAbove.com, the site for youth to connect with post-high school ministries before arriving on campus and

www.YouthTransitionNetwork.org, the site for parents, leaders and supporters to be connected with resources to curb the loss of Christian youth. LiveAbove.com currently has about 5,400 ministries on more than 3,000 campuses. YTN's preparation and motivation content for parents and churches represent the hub of the Be Prepared campaign of 2007/2008, where we hope to see 50,000 churches play the DVD for their juniors and seniors and for 20,000 parents to become YTN Ambassadors to help their church's youth pastor conduct Be Prepared sessions at their church.

YouthTransitionNetwork.org is a website for pastors and parents that has:

- a video room for viewing full-length versions of our videos
- an explanation of the Be Prepared campaign and YTN Ambassadorship
- separate informational pages for Parents, Ministry Leaders and (investment) Partners
- An online donation system for materials. Churches and parents can use with their youth.

Parental involvement is essential, given that youth leaders are so busy. We are trusting God to bring 4,000 parents to become YTN Ambassadors to help facilitate preparation in churches across America. This is possible given the unprecedented level of cooperation between the church and para-church and parental ministries as they work together to help our graduating students.

LiveAbove.com is a website for students that has:

- Christian Community look-up for over 4000 campuses and 500 military bases all over the US and Canada that allows students to view all the church and para-church ministries available at that location.

Each campus or base has various pages:

- Home page leads student to the ministries available
- Listing of the ministries' leader contact information
- Forum for students to ask questions of ministries
- Master calendar of all the ministries' events
- Christian roommate posting/search
- Ability for students to send a direct email message to LiveAbove.com administration for any request

Each ministry has a variety of options for students to see:

- Summaries of who they are, what they are about and what they believe
- Photographs
- Contact information
- Calendar of events
- Discussion Forums to interact with students and leaders online

- Ability for students to send a direct email message to the leader
- In some cases, the ministry will have their own website showing within their LiveAbove.com page

In June 2007, a Launch Summit was held in Denver with many of the coalition members to prepare the final practices and plans for going forward. There are currently over 50 leaders of national ministry organizations in the coalition. YTN hired Zeal Media Group in July 2007 and by the end of the month they were already seeing significant media opportunities.

Part of this success is because of a brand-new partnership with LifeWay Research. In early August, they will be releasing a clinical data study which resulted in a definitive percentage of youth who left the church during their collegiate years. Since their results confirmed what YTN had found, a new synergistic collaboration will result in YTN mentions of Lifeway's research in their media dealings, and LifeWay Research mentions of YTN's solutions for the loss in their media dealings.

YTN is now comprised of four staff members (Jeff Schadt, Scott Blanford, Greg Hardin and Holly Bodine), four Board Members (Bill Tell, Steve Boatwright, Roger Ball and Jeff Schadt), seven Executive Advisory Council (EAC) members (Bill Tell, Chris Renzelman, Chuck Schwaninger, Corkie Haan, Doug Tegner, Jeff Schadt and Kara Powell), and more than 50 Guiding Coalition members (list available).

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