

## What God is Up To in Rockwood



*(SOME of Rockwood's Christian leaders)*

**While we don't know EVERYTHING God is up to in Rockwood, the following letter written by Brad Ketch, the president of the Rockwood Community Development Corporation (our primary partner organization) expresses SOME of the things we are excited and hopeful about...THANK YOU for your continued prayers and investments on our behalf...**

Here is an update on the parts of our work here in Rockwood that relate directly to the **establishment and growth of the Gospel**.

Rockwood is Oregon's poorest community. The Rockwood CDC (RCDC) helps this neighborhood become a place where *everyone* can **learn, earn and belong**. When isolated people belong to a church, they gain an important asset for helping them flourish.

The strategy that we use for helping people do that is to **encourage and care for the 42 existing Rockwood churches**. We created the **Shalom Rockwood Network** two years ago. Our goal is to discover and strengthen the work that God is *already* doing here. And then to occasionally bring in outside resources *when* and *how* the people of the network ask for them.

Over the last two years, the **Shalom Network** has created a **Steering Team** of seven diverse pastors. There is also a liaison to the RCDC, who is our staff member Scott McCracken. This **Steering Team** also has subteams of volunteers from several different churches who are working on encouraging collective social action around **preventing homelessness, welcoming the immigrant and refugee, mentoring youth, and supporting those in addiction recovery**. RCDC supports these teams with networking events, fiscal sponsorship, linkages to resources from outside the community, and training in multi-culturalism.

In April, the Steering team created **Rockwood United Worship (RUW)**. *The idea was to bring the 43 churches together in a focus on Jesus and His delight in unity*. They wanted evangelist Luis

Palau to lead them, and we were able to extend the invitation because of our personal relationship to the Palau family. Luis readily accepted. We asked his team why, given how much demand there is for him worldwide, he would give an evening to Rockwood. “Every city has people who *talk* about unity,” they said. “There are fewer groups that are actually *doing* it, and you are one of them. For those who are doing it, we want to help.” Bless you, Luis Palau Association (LPA).

The gym was packed to overflowing at the RUW event in April. 525 attended, and **over 50 people accepted Christ, came back to him, or requested spiritual follow-up**. For many, the highlight was when pastors took the stage and led us all in the Lord’s Prayer *in our own languages*, and *at the same time*. The pastors recited it in unity, in English, Russian, Spanish and Arabic. The Holy Spirit just filled the room!

The Steering Team then authorized us to extend an invitation to LPA to do a large-scale festival, and **this invitation has been accepted!** **Next summer**, there could be five to ten thousand people **fill Rockwood with a multi-cultural festival and proclamation of the Gospel**. Planning and fund-raising is already underway.

While it is wonderful that a one-day Festival will occur in Summer 2017, there is a risk that the church might actually be *harmed* by it. Harm comes if our neighbors in Rockwood treat it as something that is done *for* them instead of something that is done *with* them. Now is the time to train, equip and motivate them so that the Festival is a celebratory capstone event for a year of neighbor-to-neighbor engagement. The major building blocks that are now being put into place are **networking events, a mass door-to-door evangelism event, more RUW, Discovery Bible Study, collective action events, in-depth discipleship, and prayer**. **Here they are in a little bit more detail:**

**Networking events:** Shalom Rockwood events will occur in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. 50+ leaders attend these events. There is emphasis on relationship building and collective action. Outside of our formal meetings, we now see churches getting together to develop relationships. We also know of two well-financed churches from outside Rockwood that have recently begun to co-labor on a long term basis with two local under-financed churches.

**Mass Door-to-Door Evangelism:** Rockwood Knocks! is an annual event. More than 500 students from Cru invade Rockwood for one afternoon of door knocking. See <https://vimeo.com/151086687>. Each year, we pass about 2,000 doors, collect about 500 surveys, find about 160 people who want to be involved in community building activities, get into almost 200 conversations about Jesus, and find 150 who want follow-up from a pastor. *Here is the part that warrants attention: for every two general conversations that one gets into with a Rockwood neighbor, one results in a gospel conversation. This is fertile soil. Our neighbors know that they need God.*

**Rockwood United Worship:** The Steering Team will hold RUW2 around Thanksgiving.

**Discovery Bible Study:** In the last week of June, more than 50 people from around the US will gather in Rockwood to launch Discovery Bible Studies (DBS). They will be joined by 10 or so from Shalom Rockwood churches. DBS has been used successfully all around the world to introduce people to Jesus. These people hope to launch dozens of Bible studies in just a several day period.

**Collective Action Events:** Shalom Network churches will offer significant support to the kids of Alder Elementary School. 28% of Alder kids are homeless, and everyone needs everything. The action groups are coordinating the delivery of supplies and clothing.

**In-Depth Discipleship:** A few people have started cohorts of believers who want to be discipled in depth. These groups will expand every twelve months.

**Prayer:** Shalom Network churches do a Pentecost Sunday prayer walk every year. Other, more spontaneous prayer events keep springing up, as guided by the Spirit.

The capstone to this event will be the Palau Festival in Summer 2017. We believe that there will be a very great harvest!

Please feel free to pass this invitation along to your colleagues. And do not hesitate to contact me with your comments or for further clarification at  [\(503\) 847-9163 x700](tel:(503)847-9163).

Sincerely,

Brad Ketch  
President, Rockwood CDC

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