

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your willingness to entrust your children to our program! I'll explain our Bridgebuilder program in depth in a few moments, but for a broader overview of our entire ministry you can check us out at www.sunshinegospel.org. You can also get a sense of the Bridgebuilder program in the following short video:

<https://www.chalmers.org/media/entry/helping-without-hurting-in-short-term-missions-chicago>

Our Bridgebuilder program is a service-learning program dedicated to hosting teams of high school, college or adult participants for a week or weekend in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago, IL. While the more common moniker of "short-term missions trip" can be accurately applied to our program, it does not capture the depth of our program when used in the traditional sense. Our program is based on a "Listen-Learn-Serve" model and has been influenced by the Chalmers center and the recent book "When Helping Hurts" by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. It is our goal to provide a healthy, sustainable and reciprocal program where participants and locals are mutually empowered. Bridgebuilders places a heavy emphasis on listening to and learning from our community and neighbors as we serve alongside one another. We believe that God has revealed himself in unique ways in low-income, minority-populated, urban contexts like ours and we are very excited to share this with our brothers and sisters in Christ who often come from primarily suburban/rural, middle-class, mostly white areas of our country.

As such, each day we seek to provide participants with an opportunity to *listen, learn* and *serve*. Our daily service projects have included (but are not limited to) serving in local churches and ministries, working with youth outreach programs, various construction/demolition projects, community beautification, and serving in local schools. Our daily listening opportunities vary each day but are aimed at exposing participants to different ways in which God is at work in different urban contexts. Examples include visiting Pacific Garden Mission, Lawndale Community Church, and Emmaus Ministries. We also often use a variety of customized experiences such as riding the EL train and having a meal with a homeless person downtown, depending on the week. While we hope that every opportunity given to our participants will also be a learning opportunity, the most formal learning opportunity is in our daily bible lessons whose focus revolves around the biblical discussion of God's justice and mercy, God's heart for the poor, a biblical response to race and class and other similar topics.





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Bridgebuilders has been running for approximately ten years and has equipped and empowered thousands of students to return to their own contexts with the tools to begin dealing with such difficult issues as race, class and poverty while giving them the biblical foundation necessary for engaging in such weighty matters.

I hope that this has lent some clarity to you as you consider sending your student to Bridgebuilders! I look forward to partnering with your student(s) and their whole team. If you would like other materials such as a FAQ sheet or packing list I would be more than happy to provide those to you. If you have any further questions or would like clarification on anything I have written or omitted, don't hesitate to contact me by phone or via email.

Grace and Peace,

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