

## **Three Reality Distinctives**

Integration In everything we do in Reality Ministries, we will strive for integration between diverse people groups. We desire to bring adolescents together in a way that is not normally reflected in the school cafeteria. Towards this end, we will not be satisfied with “homogeneous” programming that contributes more to the problem of our segregated community rather than to the solution. Whether it be on the easier side of the challenge (for example, bringing typical students together from different schools), mid-range in difficulty (young people with disabilities together with able-bodied persons), or the extreme side of the challenge (economic, as in rich with poor and/or racial relations – not only Black-White, but Black and Latino), bringing different kinds of adolescents together will be a hallmark of Reality Ministries.

## **Service**

Reality Ministries features a two pronged service component. In the first place, all Reality volunteers will serve in an official capacity in area schools or service organizations. These volunteers will commit to serving at expected times and for a consistent number of hours per week. All volunteers involved with Durham Public Schools, for instance, will fill out DPS Volunteer Applications, complete with background checks, before they will be permitted as Reality volunteers to serve in special needs classrooms or as tutors, coaches, substitute teachers, etc. Reality Ministries desires to demonstrate a servant-leadership attitude by meeting specific and legitimate needs in the places we serve.

Secondly, service is our desired goal as a culminating “third step” in our relationship building with adolescents. While step one involves a Reality leader going deep with a few young people, and step two involves an integrated, shared experience between diverse groups of adolescents, step three is the taking of that shared experience to a new level, that of sacrificially serving others in need.

## **A Community Based Ministry**

One of the key characteristics of Reality Ministries is our commitment to community based ministry, rather than a school based one.

In the school based approach, the focus is on the individual high schools and each high school volunteer team. In that model, a weakness is that college volunteers are not present in the community for a large percentage of the calendar year. The ministry in a particular school fluctuates wildly depending on the strength of the team and often on the ability of team members to travel from their college campuses to the particular high school.

The transient nature of this kind of college volunteer work is not ideal, especially in inner-city areas, as people in these more oppressed environments are used to seeing “do-gooders” pass through with discouraging frequency. To be effective in these environments, longevity and consistency are critical. It takes more time than usual to establish a credible witness in the inner-city.

In Reality Ministries we desire to stake a presence in the downtown Durham area, closer to the priority demographic we want to reach. Because most of our staff and college volunteers do not live downtown, the concept of a community-based urban ministry is an irrelevant one without a home base within the community! We resist the notion of attempting ministry in lightning-like fashion where we bolt in and out of the city, and we envision a Reality Community Center as a real antidote to the limited and transient nature of our college volunteer corps.

Ideally, Reality Ministries will operate a community center and athletic facility to host Reality activities, sports leagues, Special Olympics, and church and community events, along with providing a wide variety of educational options(e.g. ESL classes) and support services.

The Reality Center will enable Reality staff and volunteers to have a common meeting place to build relationships with young people and families in the community. It will provide an opportunity for Reality to meet the needs of students in various ways, such as after-school tutoring and leadership development classes for people with disabilities. As a safe place to congregate, the Reality Center will encourage interaction between groups of people that might not otherwise interact.