

Teens tank up with spiritual ‘fuel’

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‘It’s not about the numbers; it’s about spending this time together to connect with God. Make it your small group, make it your community. Seek God and you will find Him tonight.’

As the band gets up to play the context has already been set. This isn’t a show. It’s not about the lights, the PA, the food or even the girls. There’s something deeper; something worth searching for.

Three and a half years ago, the staff at Central Coast Adventist School (CCAS) had a dream to provide something extra for the school students that would give them a chance to connect with God. Friday nights are known for their parties on the NSW Central Coast, as is the case in most parts of Australia. The Central Coast however, seems particularly prone to the effects of binge drinking, underage sex and teenagers who generally have little parental input into how they spend their time on weekends. It was within this context that the dream was cast to provide an alternative for teens who didn’t want to get caught up in the whole party scene but, instead, wanted to seek an encounter with God.

The surprising thing to note about the FUEL programs that run at CCAS is that the majority of students who attend do not come from strong Christian homes. These students have made their

own decision, without any prompting from their parents, to step away from the scene their friends are caught up in and spend their Friday nights at FUEL.

There is little difference between the actual program format for FUEL and that of many other church programs. There’s a welcome, praise and worship music, a talk, and maybe a video.

But what does set the program apart is that it’s run *by* teens *for* teens. The setting up and packing up of equipment, the music, and often even the talk all happen because of the teens that help out. The ‘older’ staff, usually in their mid-twenties to early thirties, believe strongly in the idea of mentoring these teenagers to be leaders amongst their peers. The philosophy is that a friend, used by the Holy Spirit, may lead you into a relationship with Christ even more powerfully than perhaps an adult.

Although the numbers may not be ‘going through the roof’ and finances mightn’t be ‘flowing over’, FUEL is definitely developing its own spiritual culture. And for the teens who make FUEL their ‘church,’ they wouldn’t go without it. This isn’t the church of tomorrow making a stand for the future; it’s the church of today making a stand for the teens of today. **TEACH**

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1 Fuel.

[Photography: Elia Krevar]