

Covenant Youth of Alaska

Impacting Lives, One Life at a Time

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Internships

As a ministry, we are blessed with the opportunity to see young people express themselves, grow, be challenged, learn, and live into their potential while serving others. One of the ways that we get to witness this is through internships. Not only do we have the blessing of seeing CYAK interns grow and lead, but we also are blessed to partner with churches who have their own interns working with youth. Collectively, these young adults are making a positive impact in the lives of young people in their communities.

Currently, we have four CYAK interns. Charis and Willow are working with young adults in Anchorage. Matt is working with middle and high schoolers at First Covenant in Anchorage, and Erica is serving alongside CYAK Staff person James Ventress at the Checkpoint Youth Center in Nome. Two Unalakleet Covenant Church Interns, Kaylin and Leiscia, have been an incredible blessing as well – they have been working with youth in Unalakleet alongside Adam London. Without a doubt, we are grateful for their heart and service!

It is our hope that each intern will come away from their experience with a deep desire to serve the Lord in all areas of life. We are truly grateful for those who have made these internships a possibility through their generosity and prayer. We look forward to the way God will continue to use these young people to reach their peers with the love of Jesus! Praise be to God!



Clockwise from top left: Charis, Willow, Matt, Leiscia, Kaylin and Erica



Ministry in the Eyes of: James Ventress

My name is James Ventress and I live in Nome with my wife Rachel and Silas, our 15 month old son.

What is your role in Nome?

I serve as the Associate Pastor for Youth Ministries at Nome Covenant Church and as the Director of Checkpoint Youth Center. This position and ministry are jointly supported by the local church and CYAK.

What are the different ministries you help lead?

We have a lot of different things going on in Nome right now. Our church was small and we didn't have a very large youth group. When Samaritan's Purse built us the new larger church and also purchased us a building specifically for youth ministry, we saw it as an opportunity and responsibility to share it with more than just "our" youth in the congregation. Long before I arrived in Nome, the leadership of the church in prayer had a bona fide vision of a brightly lit building where any youth from Nome could come for warmth, friendship, advice, a meal, counsel, prayer and the excellent news about Jesus. Checkpoint Youth Center is the answer to that prayer.

Tell us some more about Checkpoint Youth Center.

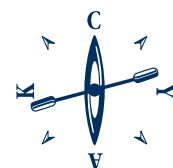
Now, we have moved from a congregational model of youth ministry to a community youth ministry. This means that we have a very diverse range of students coming through the doors on different nights. At around 3,500 people, Nome is not really a village. We do have a lot of Alaska Native families from Nome and the nearby villages, but there are also families from the "lower 48", other parts of Alaska and even immigrants from other countries like Nigeria, Korea, and Latin America. We have youth who live in severe poverty, as well as kids who live in nice homes and vacation in Hawaii or the Caribbean.

Youth group on Tuesday night looks more like a Vacation Bible School for teenagers, with stories about what Jesus did and who He is while youth group on Sunday nights is currently a study of Hebrews and its theme of the supremacy of Christ over the things of our past. The kids have always chosen their own youth group and there is some voluntary cross over, but it is nice to have a neutral building where we can do relational ministry that is accessible to all youth who want it. Before we had Checkpoint, I could invite kids to youth group all the time but they wouldn't consistently come into the church because it was a big unknown to them. In Checkpoint we can be all things to all people between 6th and 12th grades.

Right now we are open Tuesdays through Thursday evenings from 5:30 to 9:00 and Sunday evening 6:00 to 8:30. I have a great staff of adult volunteers from the church and also our first CYAK intern, Erica Stone, a recent graduate of Alaska Christian College who came to Nome about a month ago from Hooper Bay, AK.

Most nights we try to feed a hot meal if we can; we rely on donations of conventional groceries and fish or game meat shot by myself or church

Covenant Youth of Alaska serves Alaska youth and young adults through Christ-centered ministry, partnership, and discipleship, to raise mature believers who will lead the church for generations to come.



members. We offer free tutoring to all who will remember to bring their homework. Tuesdays and Sundays are teaching nights while Wednesday and Thursday are more unscripted. We might have a talking circle to discuss and pray about a common topic or serious need many students may be facing. But we may also have board game nights, play a wild game like giant jenga or just visit with each other. We are not trying to replace parents in their role (even if their role is dysfunctional) but we are trying to be a home away from home for kids that have next to nothing where they spend the night.

What are some of the greatest struggles for youth in Nome?

How can we be praying?

There's not really any way to list them or be short. So many issues and problems are interwoven. I guess the single greatest need of youth in Nome is biological parents/guardians who will commit to do whatever is necessary and possible to safeguard the well being of their kids, and also a safe home to do it in. I am in everyday contact with kids who are abused, neglected, hungry, and injured and who have the mental, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual scars to show for it. Parents often grew up the same way and so trauma becomes generational.

Drugs, tobacco and alcohol are easily available to youth in Nome, which is a huge issue. The housing situation is also a real issue that affects youth and families, as many homes are beyond their normal lifespan, not properly sealed against the weather (frequently cold and expensive to heat) and too small for the number of occupants. One consequence of tight living quarters plus substance abuse is a high rate of sexual assault of women and children. Most of our young girls and many boys do not make it to adulthood without suffering some type of sexual abuse.

So you can pray for all of the above. That's a pretty big prayer list, but we have big prayer needs. I know we also pray to a big God and he answers big prayers for big needs. Pray too for our volunteers, and for me and my wife that we all will have joy and not grow weary or lose heart. This is sometimes discouraging work and our hearts are being continuously broken and healed by the things we see and hear. Pray for healing for people in Nome, kids and adults. Pray for continued resources to continue our efforts. Pray for wisdom and humility for me. This is the greatest job I have ever had and I am always forgetting that.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2 that his ministry couldn't be with persuasive words of man's wisdom but by demonstrating God's Spirit and Power so that the faith of the Corinthians would rest on the power of God and not on Paul himself. I know from experience that my wisdom

doesn't mean much to kids with so many obstacles before them. So I have to continue telling them about a Man who can speak to them and who one day will make them new again. For now these kids will continue to be "our" kids and like King David in II Samuel 9 we will attempt to love and invite them to eat at our table continually.

Check out a video about Checkpoint Youth Center by Samaritan's Purse!
<http://video.samaritanspurse.org/a-gift-for-the-youth/>



Erica Stone: CYAK Youth Intern - Nome

My name is Erica, and I am a Youth Intern for Nome Covenant Church. Before I was accepted for this role, I had been praying and wondering what God would want me to do. It hasn't been easy to figure that out, but I can say that my faith has been stretched. In the process, I became more willing to be used and directed in whatever

way God would choose. So, long story short, here I am—still transitioning from village life to a multi-cultural "village life." I am enjoying it thus far, and I'm looking forward to witnessing what God chooses to do.

Along and further down the road, I picture myself growing deeper in love with God. I envision that love, so contagious to my brothers and sisters in Christ, that it sets flame to those who come to Salvation in Jesus Christ. So, I am serving not to make someone of myself, but serving to make our God known since He is the one Who made someone of me.

On this note, I like adventures - outdoor adventures! I can't wait to explore the land around here, and I am looking forward to learning new things. God's handiwork is amazing, and I am continually excited to learn how to be amazed even with the "small things". So, as He speaks through creation, He also has children He created. Therefore, let's purpose to speak of Him by word and deed for His glory...I'm still learning what that truly means.

"If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.

So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." - Romans 14:8

PRAYER PRAISES & REQUESTS

Praises:

- For the **CYAK interns** we are blessed to have!
- For **Justus**, a young man who is participating in the Covenant Church's Hechos 29 Discipleship School in India for the next three months.
- For the birth of a **healthy baby boy** to CYAK Staff Adam and Shirleen London in December, and the birth of a **healthy baby girl** to CYAK Staff Jamie and Erica Rose in January.

Prayer Requests:

- Please pray for the **CYAK Young Adult Retreat**, taking place February 20-22 - a wonderful time of worship and fellowship!
- Please pray for plans and prep for a **youth retreat** in the YK Delta.
- Please pray for **Lindsey Clise**, CYAK's newest staff member!
- Please pray for **villages** who currently don't have pastors or youth leaders.

Thank you for your generosity in prayer! We are grateful for people like you who faithfully lift CYAK's ministry up in prayer - Quayana!

WAYS TO GIVE & GET INVOLVED!

- **Online Giving:** Visit www.cyak.org to set up monthly, yearly, or one-time gifts using your credit/debit card or checking account.
- **Check:** Made payable to: Covenant Youth of Alaska
PO Box 203356
Anchorage, AK 99520
- **Planned Giving:** If you are interested in including CYAK's ministry in your planned giving, please visit our website and click the 'Get Involved' tab for info.
- **Prayer Team:** If you are interested in receiving monthly prayer updates, please visit our website and click the 'pray' button on the home page.
- **Advocate!** Interested in sharing about CYAK's ministry with others? We'd love to help! Contact David Rurik at david@cyak.org to learn more.