

The Adventure Begins at the Expo in Jacksonville but Where does it End?



It was our 7th outreach in Jacksonville, FL this spring and by looking at the weather reports the previous week, most would have thought it was improbable that we would not get wet on both set-up and event days. However, God had other plans for us that included not only dry skies and mild temperatures but a wonderful sense of His presence and peace those days.

Jacksonville has always been our smallest venue and although the attendance of 452 may sound disappointing to some, we have always said the Expo is for those God brings whether it is one person or a crowd of 1,000. Plus by staying under 500 for our count, we are able to stay at Lake Bethesda Park, made specifically for folks with disabilities, which is where we believe God wants the Expo. Maybe God also wants to keep things this size to encourage a more personal connection.

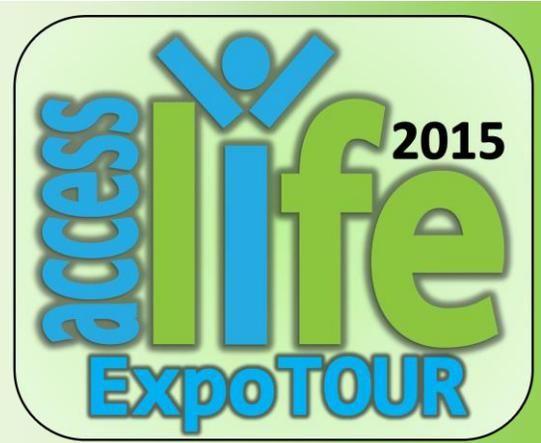
For example, with the slower pace of this outreach, I was able to spend almost a hour of one on one time helping a participant fish. His name was Robert and he had Cerebral Palsy. He used a wheelchair like me and had a lot of spasticity which inhibited his arm and leg movement. However, his speech was virtually unaffected which is a bit unusual for someone with his level of Cerebral Palsy. In any case, as we talked, I was struck by the depth and thoughtfulness of his questions and comments. He asked how long I'd been in ministry and even shared how he had been coming to the Expo since 2012. What really blew me away was that he said he watched me every year at the outreach and was inspired by how I did not let things get to me. Someone coming to the Expo every year and watching me? Wow, that's a pretty sobering thought.

After the Expo, I kept thinking about Robert. I thought about how he said he wanted to save up money to buy his own rod and reel (we are working on getting appropriate gear for him 😊), about how he had a mom and dad and about how someone so young and engaging was living in a group home. I could tell from our time together



that He had a great heart and a faith in Jesus and in turn, I know there is so much God wants to do through Robert for His Kingdom. Overall, this experience made me realize that not only is the need great to connect folks living with disabilities to Christ-honoring churches and believers but these churches could so benefit from having Robert and others with disabilities actively involved in the Body of Christ locally.

All in all, no matter the event size, we all should remember that God is making a difference in peoples lives through each Expo. However, there is also so much more that could be done in the community in the 364 days between the local outreaches. This is our hope for the area Outpost ministry, being an encouraging resource of wholesome activities and refreshment through Christ's presence. This is where positive long term connections for Christ can be made and ultimately communities will be transformed. Won't you join us on this adventure? If interested in getting involved in ongoing disability ministry in your area, give us a call at (352) 455-9926.



Please join us for an Expo near you!
Participant and volunteer registration information and links can be found online at www.access-life.org.

Feb. 8: Roaring Creek Village, Belize
First International Outreach
Blessed with 143 attendees!

Feb. 14: West Palm Beach, FL
Fifth Year Anniversary Celebration
Blessed with 1,078 attendees!

Apr. 18: Jacksonville, FL
Blessed with 479 attendees!

Jun. 13: Grapevine, TX
Blessed with 875 attendees!

Aug. 22: Jefferson City, TN
NEW LOCATION

October 3: Ocoee, FL
Fifth Year Anniversary Celebration

Access-Life in Belize!

We're hosting our 2nd annual Expo in Belize on January 23, 2016 but we'll be traveling there several days before to reach out to the villages nearby the Hearts of Christ facility where we hold the event, as for many transportation even for short distances is a big challenge. We'll be distributing mobility items and medical supplies like last year but also building beds and ramps when needed. We still have a few spots open on our mission team so if interested in going with us on this trip or if you have items you would like to donate please email doug@access-life.org.