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Student ministry begins with passion

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By Rebekah Shirar

"It's funny that I'm a nursing major because I know that I don't want to be a nurse," said Sarah Boesing, a junior at [Anderson University](#), "I know what I want to do: Break the Grey."



Break the Grey exists to show the love and hope of Jesus Christ by serving and supporting families facing childhood cancer or other life altering illnesses.

Boesing wants to use nursing as a way to be more informed about the diseases that give cause for her ministry and as a way to meet families who are in desperate need of hope.

Break the Grey was birthed from Boesing's own experience with terminal kidney disease. At age 11, doctors told her that without dialysis or a kidney transplant she had only six months to live. It was five months later that a woman from Boesing's church, who was a kidney match, saved her life. "I wanted to do something to give back," Boesing said.

One of the new staples of the ministry is "No More Chemo" parties. These parties are where Boesing connects with families and serves them throughout their stay at the hospital. "We met one little boy who was diagnosed with cancer in December. We threw a 'No More Chemo' party for him that following September," she said. For Boesing, it's about more than just throwing kids parties – it's about supporting them no matter the outcome.

Boesing, her family and other members make regular visits, bring gift baskets and simply spend time with the families. "God just started blessing us with opportunities to meet these families where they were. It's one thing to go in once a year and hand them a present and hear their story and say 'Oh, that's so sad. Jesus loves you, here eat some more food,' but it's another thing entirely to walk with them through that battle," she said.

Not every child Boesing ministers to survives. "I've been to a couple of funerals," she said, "We want families to know we're going to be there even if their child doesn't make it."

She draws the strength to balance school and her ministry from God. "I have a personal understanding that helps – I deal with a life-altering illness," said Boesing. About six years after her kidney transplant, Boesing was diagnosed with an immune deficiency. She was on treatment for two and a half years and wears a face mask during this flu season. When people stare, she takes it as an opportunity to reflect Christ. "I've had a lot of lessons in trust — balancing everything with school, my immune deficiency and ministry," she said, "I can feel sorry for myself or I can do something about it. Christ has called me to a purpose, even when it's not fun."

The excitement of others also helps keep her going. Boesing's family is heavily involved in Break the Grey, and it has been a good outlet for her four younger siblings. "My little brother gets excited when we collect toys for the parties. He likes to pretend that we're Santa Clause," she said.

For Boesing, it's all about passion. "Seeing other people get passionate really lights my fire. Starting out at 15, I had no idea what I was doing. I just knew it was what I wanted to do," she said. Her favorite high school Bible teacher called her "ridiculously passionate" and it stuck. By the time she graduated, she had reached over 100 families. Even when situations seem hopeless, her passion to serve never fades. She recalls a special moment with one mother who just found out her son was going to live.

"She started crying because she couldn't understand why her son was going make it when they just met another family in the unit whose child was dying. Why would God let her son live, why had he done so well with his cancer and why not this other child? That was really a profound moment. I think that's really where ministry happened, because we just stayed with her while she cried and tried to encourage her, reassure her. That's one of the hardest things that we run into with Break the Grey. People want to know how a good God would let their kid get cancer or, why everyone can't make it," Said Boesing.

Boesing realizes Break the Grey ministry isn't for everyone. For some people it's eye-opening. "Once we had a kid who had to

leave a party because he just had chemo and he needed to go get sick. [Volunteers] weren't used to seeing that. When they see kids without hair or hooked up to an IV poll, some realize it's not really their place of ministry. That's a challenge sometimes. I realize not everyone is going to be passionate about what I'm passionate about, but that's just not what God's called them to do and that's OK," she said.

Boesing wants Break the Grey to expand. Their next goal is to become a not-for profit. They are in the process of raising that money. "The Indianapolis Children's Museum gave us a \$2,000 grant in 2006, so we've made it stretch until now. We only have a few hundred dollars left, so we're hoping that people will step up and donate more than that," she said. God has always provided for the ministry and given her ideas to raise money. Recently, she came up with the idea to collect \$1,000 in spare change. "That's something anybody can do," she said.

She has a dream of building a campus where families dealing with illness can live. There would be a wellness center similar to AU's, a library, support groups, music and art therapy, tutors for children in school and counselors to help families deal with loss. "I would rather families be together...in a community, but the catch is, I want it to be free," she said. Boesing's not sure how she will accomplish this, or when, but is confident that it will happen. "Figuring out the logistics and going into non-profit is going to be an adventure," she said.

For any student with a desire to start a ministry, Boesing has this advice:

"Even if people say you can't do it, don't listen. Go with what you're passionate about. God puts desires in you for a reason. A lot of people think that they can't do anything because they're just one person – which isn't true. I understand that I'm not changing the world, but I believe that I can change lives, that Christ can through me."

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