

10 Key People in Rural Church Ministry

Welcome to Rural Youth Ministry. The boxes are unpacked, the church fellowship (or pitch-in or potluck) is over, now it's time to get to work. You may be in a new community or new part of the country asking yourself, "Where do I even start?" Here are the Top 10 people you need to get to know as you get started in rural youth ministry:

10. *The Church Treasurer.* This person or team can be one of your biggest allies or headaches. You want them as an ally. They sign your paycheck, they write reimbursement checks, and, in some cases, can help you navigate the youth budget.

9. *A High School/Jr High School Teacher or Coach that does not go to your church.* It's easy to stick with the teachers/coaches that go to your church in building relationships. You are "their" youth worker. Build a working relationship with a teacher/coach that has no vested interest in sugarcoating anything. Their interest is you helping them by being a positive impact in students lives. That is messy kingdom work.

8. *Someone who frequents the place where all the old guys go drink coffee.* I know. You are doing YOUTH ministry, but hang with me for a minute. These are the guys who seem to know everything that goes on in town, everything that is going to happen, and someone who can find anything you would need. An odd tool? They know a guy. Need something fixed for a reasonable price locally? They know someone for that too . . .

7. *The School Secretary.* This person is a wealth of information and a powerful partner in your ministry. They hold the key to a treasure trove of information that will be ever so useful to you. It is pure insanity to even try and schedule a youth event during the school year without help from the school secretary's calendar.

6. *The person who owns the local hardware store.* You will want to get to know this person for two reasons: 1) You are in youth ministry . . . with teenagers. Something is going to break, and you're going to need to know how to fix it (maybe quickly). 2) This person has access to all the resources necessary for just about any crazy game or object lesson you could think of.

5. *The Church Secretary.* The church secretary is a person who holds contact and scheduling information that is vital to your work in youth ministry. She also needs to be kept in the loop about plans that the youth ministry has placed on their departmental calendar.

4. *A contact for the local youth ministry network.* This is vital in Rural Youth Ministry. Whether hosted by your denomination or someone like NNYM (<http://www.youthworkers.net/>), you need people that can help with resources, ideas, and relationships that tell you that you are not out there alone. If you want to know more about what networking looks like in a Rural Ministry, I spend a whole chapter discussing it in *Rural Youth Ministry: Thrive Where You're Planted*.

3. *A couple volunteers that served in your church before you came.* Find out what you can about what programming and leadership development looked like. Find out what events were well attended and why they worked. It can also be helpful to find out about what conflicts took place and how they were resolved. In many cases, reinventing the wheel is not necessary and there may be a great foundation to build on instead of "blowing it up and starting over."

2. *A member of the local homeschool network/co-op.* Rural communities often lack any private or Christian school options. This leaves parents with the choice of public school or homeschool. Many (my family included) have chosen homeschooling as an option to help ensure strong Biblical values in education. Some parents choose homeschooling for non-religious reasons. There are few "campus ministry" opportunities that reach homeschoolers. Discover how you can partner with the local co-op and provide that connection from your ministry to those homeschool families.

1. *Your direct supervisor.* In many denominations and churches, this looks different. It may be a Senior Pastor, a board, another staff pastor, or a denominational body. Find out who you report to. You may be getting bad information from someone who just wants to "stir the pot" in the local church.

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Read more from Brent at: <http://blog.simplyyouthministry.com/?s=brent+lacy>

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