

Youth Center

North America

2023 Impact Report



Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the year just past, we can't help but feel an overwhelming gratitude for all those who assisted in our efforts. The dedication and commitment of those who gave their time, energy and love helped create golden opportunities for young adults to come together and build community.

Here at the Youth Center for North America (YCNA) we are amazed at the work of God we have seen in the lives of young adults this year! It was truly a journey witnessing the growth and development of so many and the impact is immeasurable.

We hope you'll enjoy this report and that it can in some way bring you back with us to those magical moments of light and joy!

Thank you for being with us on this journey.

In gratitude,

Mike Morse and Layna Souza
YCNA Coordinators



Youth Retreat, Texas

YCNA carries out its mission with young adults and adults from all across North America who are dedicated to its goals. It is guided by the spirituality of unity of the [Focolare Movement](#), founded by Chiara Lubich.

Vision - "May they all be one" (Jn 17:21)

Mission – YCNA inspires and mobilizes young people from all backgrounds to live for a more united world.

We create and plan opportunities for young people to come together and build community through activities and programs that help develop the whole person. YCNA's core value is respect for each person as expressed in the **Golden Rule**: "Do to others what you want them to do unto you; don't do to others what you don't want them to do unto you".

- Youth Retreats
- Leadership Workshop
- Luminosa Youth School
- Genfest 2024 journey
- Chiara Luce Badano prayer Service



YCNA is motivated by the life of **Blessed Chiara Luce Badano** to live out its mission. "I discovered the Gospel in a new light. I realized that I wasn't an authentic Christian because I didn't live it all the way. Now I want to make this magnificent book my only purpose in life." (Nov. 29, 1983)

Blessed Chiara Luce Badano was a young girl who lived her life bringing people together, spreading joy, and living the focolare spirituality. Once she learned about her terminal illness at the age of 19, she gave even more joy to others, brought even more people together around her bedside and accelerated in living a life of love.

Sponsors



SETTANNI
FINANCIAL

Wealth Management, helping clients build their futures.



Landscape
MEDIA

Using video to help you build relationships in your community.

Experienced artist creating memories, inspiring individuals, and championing inclusion.



Providing stress-free moves with quality service!

YCNA Leadership Program

The YCNA leadership program equips young adults so they can discover and develop strong and lasting skills that will allow them to navigate through every day and sometimes challenging life situations.

The second edition of the **“Adjusting the Sails” Leadership Workshop** took place in June 2023.

The leadership workshop is a training program for young adults which allows participants to explore leadership values & styles, communication skills, goal setting techniques, personal strengths & growth, career prep, college success, and ethical aspects.



The participants of the 2023 workshop heard from a variety of speakers and presenters. The sessions were engaging and thought provoking which provided space for discussion and dialogue. Whether in Hyde Park or Harlem, the opportunities to get to know one another and highlight commonalities were not lacking.

The impact was immeasurable, showing discoveries and acquired knowledge.

- “Really insightful to see written out examples of different leadership styles and how they work in different settings. Helped me to see what kind of leadership I can be in different settings.”
- “(The speaker) really helped me realize that there are other ways to become a great leader.”
- “It was interesting discovering the Leadership challenges in the law field.”
- “Loved the strengths-based leadership, especially the importance of a well-rounded team and not just a well-rounded leader.”
- “You really get to see the ethical boundaries and how they can be pushed...”



The YCNA Leadership Program also hosts **1-on-1 sessions** over a 6-month period. Over a dozen young adults participated in leadership sessions in 2023 which provided space for growth and development, discovering greater self-awareness and building confidence that paves the way for developing relational skills.

While each person's journey is unique and a true gift, it's a discovery of talents, characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. We looked at the roots of our faith and marveled at the blessings received. We recognized our limits and shortcomings but welcomed the opportunity to start again and receive God's overflowing mercy. We contemplated the people in our lives and explored ways to care for and love them concretely, everyone, right away, as we love ourselves, as if walking in their shoes.



For some it led to finding internships and jobs. For others, it allowed them to take on a life-changing experience.

S.D. expressed the desire to pause his life of work and family to participate in a 10-month program of spiritual and human formation in Switzerland. The 1-on-1 sessions were a great opportunity to explore aspects of his life and prepare for the new experience. It was a journey understanding how balance in life can bring stability, peace and confidence. Other topics including finance, spiritual growth, and sense of harmony were discussed and reflected upon.

B. P., who works as a physical therapist and is studying, pauses weekly for a chance to discuss challenges, talk about faith and learn techniques that help in relating to friends, clients and colleagues.

YCNA assisted some young adults in their **work and entrepreneurial endeavors** this year ranging from website creation, business startup needs to marketing, technology and sustainability. Their mission connects well with that of the youth center and they are very grateful for the collaboration, the concrete help and journey we are taking together. One young man said: "I hope to one day have the opportunity to pay it forward and make a difference in someone else's life, just as you have done for me."

Luminosa Youth School (LYS)

The youth school program provided a learning experience in key aspects of the focolare spirituality as well as aspects in human development. Sessions on the spirituality focused on the Art of Loving, key points of the focolare and church teaching while other sessions included a study of leadership, American history, music, Church social teaching, ecology, communication and a host of personal stories from focolare members.

Volunteering at Habitat for Humanity was an added element to the LYS program. Habitat for Humanity is a global nonprofit housing organization working in local communities across all 50 states in the United States and in more than 70 countries around the world. Habitat's vision is of a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Habitat works toward our vision by building strength, stability and self-reliance in partnership with people and families in need of a decent and affordable home.



Our participants spent time working inventory and restocking at a nearby facility which provides household items at discounted prices. It was a concrete contribution of helping clients locate what they need and an opportunity to work side by side with fellow volunteers.

Another added feature was an afternoon at the Norrie Point Environmental Center, home of the Reserve's core programs which offers interpretive exhibits, classroom space, and educational programs to the public side-by-side with the Reserve's research lab, weather station, and conference space for our professional training programs. The youth learned about the local environment reserve and how systems are impacted by community lifestyles and then got their feet wet and boots muddy discovering the Hudson River estuary. It was a lot of fun and quite educational.



Youth Retreat, Dickinson, Texas & Montreal, Canada

Two retreats, in Montreal and Texas, were a great occasion to come together and build community. Through presentations, group discussions, walks, games, reflections and prayer participants were able to focus on topics such as unity in diversity, living a balanced life, how to handle suffering, the life of the Gen and excerpts from Pope Francis' book *The Courage to be Happy*. Each presentation provided fundamental concepts along with practical ways to live the aspects. There was a greater understanding of how our uniqueness, which is a gift, can contribute to building unity.

Reflecting on how to handle suffering, we took time to recall the suffering Jesus lived, how he accepted it, and how he continued to love which encouraged us to accept the sufferings that come our way and choose to love just the same. Chiara Lubich's invitation "If Jesus suffered the most when he felt abandoned by his Father, we will follow him forsaken" paved the way for us to follow him as well.

The *Unity in Diversity* topic highlighted what makes us all different in the human race and how we can still love those who are different, have conversations with people who have a different point of view, and work for the good of society with people who have different backgrounds.



It was an intense and rich program which gave everyone a renewed energy to then bring it to their own environments.

They commented:

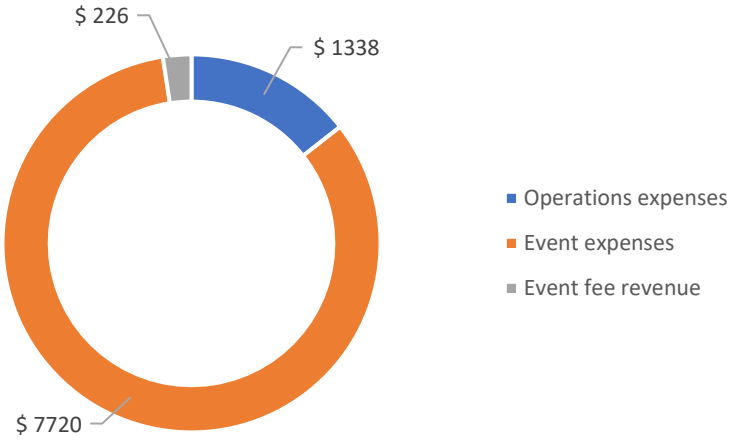
- "I learned that as Gen it is important to love one another despite our differences."
- "I've always known the importance of turning to God during suffering but learning about Jesus Forsaken made me feel more prepared to face those hard things. It helped me understand how to connect with Jesus on a deeper level."
- "It was a good presentation I learned that we have no excuses not to love. Even when you suffer there is always a way to love."

Prompted by "what do you take with you?"...

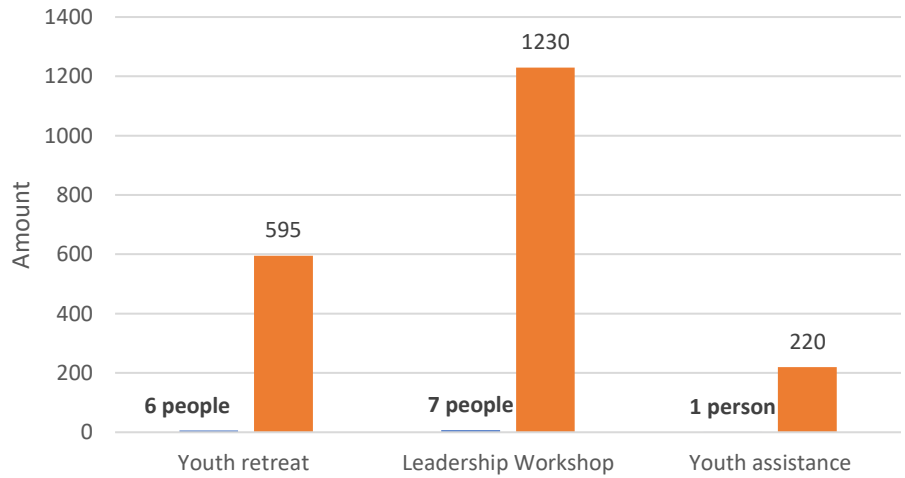
- Live the colors intentionally for a balanced life.
- Be more open and just listen to others to help build that unity.
- To live Jesus Forsaken not just because he died for us, but because he made himself one.
- Jesus forsaken, Blessed Chiara Luce and how to move forward not only to heal as a person but be there for anyone and everyone as well!
- To handle my sufferings with the idea of Jesus Forsaken.
- To live a life that promotes unity
- To live a balanced life.
- Communion and unity with others is possible even in the face of adversity.



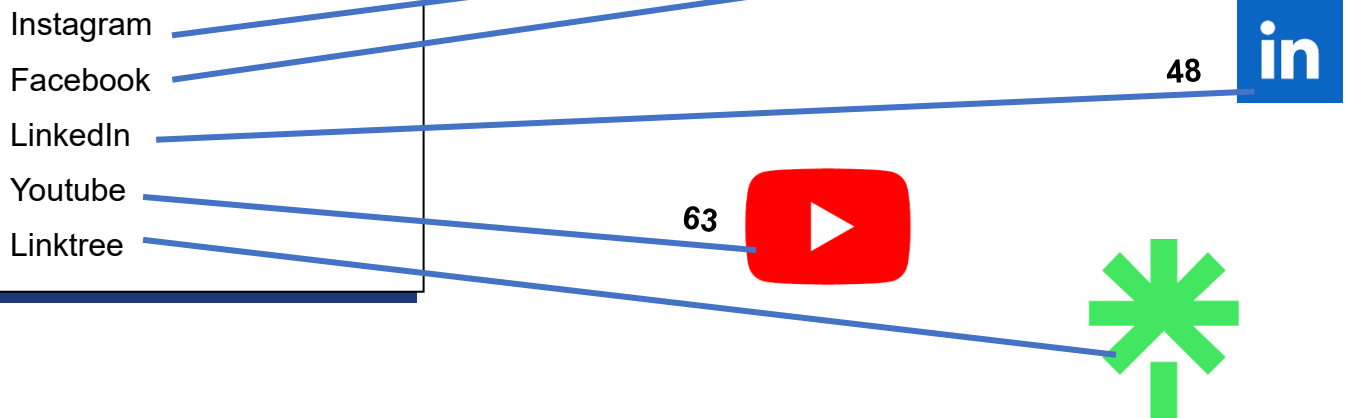
Operations



Scholarships/assistance



YCNA connections



World Youth Day

A group of young adults from North America attended the 37th **World Youth Day** in Portugal last August. Living that experience with the Pope and the many young people left a lasting impression. Their words like “burst of joy”, “excitement”, “laughter and love”, “diversity and energy”, “united together by faith”, “strengthened me” express the dynamic and powerful impact it made on them.

“Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39) was the theme of this event which was open to all young people who wanted to take part in a festive encounter centered on Jesus Christ together with their peers. This event gave participants the opportunity to personally experience the universality of the Catholic Church, and to share with the whole world the hope of many young people who are committing their lives to Christ and His Church.

- “The first time I got chills during the trip was when I heard people chanting, “Esta es la juventud del Papa”, and I just felt a burst of joy and excitement which lasted all throughout the week.”
- “In the end I think being able to overcome these challenges was part of the journey, and the fact that we as a group were able to take on these challenges together was truly something special.”
- “World Youth Day was a wonderful experience filled with laughter and love. Not only did I reflect on my Catholic faith, but I also connected with the other people in my group--creating countless memories in the process. I thank God everyday that I had the privilege to see the diversity and energy within the young people of the Church. Now that I am back home, I hope to carry the love and spirit of World Youth Day to each new environment I live in.”
- “At the welcome ceremony, I saw for the first time thousands of youth from all over the world gathered in one place. It was very moving to be in the midst of it all, seeing so many young people like myself united together by our faith. Attending WYD has helped me deepen my personal relationship with God and has strengthened me to continue living my faith, not only through my experiences in college right now but also life in the future.”



Laudato Si' Action Plan

YCNA wants to give an active response to the ecological crisis, so urgently illustrated in Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si'. We are also inspired by the words of Focolare founder Chiara Lubich: "Let's do what plants do. They absorb from the earth only the water, nutrients and other things they need, and not more. So, each of us must have what we need and everything else be given away and shared with others."

To act now, when it is "urgent and necessary" (LS 57), YCNA has created an action plan located on the Laudato Si' platform. It offers concrete actions, assistance and support so that we may continue together to care for our home!



Youth Center for North America (YCNA)
Laudato Si' Action Plan

At YCNA we create and plan opportunities for young people to come together and build community through activities and programs that help develop the whole person. Its vision - A united world where fraternity is lived among all people. Its mission - to inspire and mobilize young people from all backgrounds to live for a more united world.

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Faith Journey Series

Kevin Silva, a student at Texas A&M Commerce in Dallas, shares his faith journey, with a focus on how he is engaged in his faith, the impact it has on him, the challenges he meets and how he remains faithful. Prayer, the bible and signs help him engage in his faith which has a great impact. "My faith helps me build a stronger me, it helps me build stronger relationships with other people, but most importantly it helps me build a stronger relationship with Jesus." He goes on to say how prayer and reading the bible brings clarity to his everyday life as well as a greater peace.



Youth Retreat, Dickinson, TX



CHRISTIAN RENEWAL CENTER
In Dickinson, Texas - 30 Minutes from Houston



Youth Retreat, Montreal, Canada



Genfest 2024

Genfest is a powerful, unique experience of community, social action, celebration, stories, and service. It gathers young adults from all around the world, of different ethnic groups, cultures, and religions to experience servant leadership and care for the planet, the people around us and those that suffer.

A group of 30 young adults from all over North America have come together ready for this experience. The event offers a chance to give of ourselves in performing community service followed by a festival and workshops. The 3 parts allow for greater participation on different levels and we're all looking forward to doing our part to build a more united world.



Brazil – July 2024

Links

Faith Journey – Kevin Silva

Website - www.ycna.focolare.us

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/ycna_official/

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/youthcenter.na/>

Linktree - <https://linktr.ee/ycna>

LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ycna-youth-center-for-north-america/>

We don't want finances to get in the way of a meaningful experience!

Time ~ Talent ~ Treasure



Leadership Workshop