

School Superintendent Calls on Churches to Serve Public Schools

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Dr. Donaldo Batiste, superintendent of Waukegan public schools since July 1, 2006, is on a mission. "I want to provide resources so all children can receive all the services they need in order to become full-fledged and productive citizens in our democratic society." He knew he could not rely solely on educational institutions to do that, so he tapped into all available resources in the neighborhoods of the community-including churches.



On May 24, 2007 Dr. Batiste, along with 22 local principals in his district, met at Sign of the Dove Church in Waukegan to brainstorm with over 35 local pastors. Helping Dr. Batiste with the initiative is Lake County-based Catalyst, an organization that is mobilizing churches throughout Lake County for spiritual and community transformation.

The Catalyst "Public School Initiative" idea is for two or three churches to adopt a school together in the Waukegan Public School District. And that starts with building relationships of trust between the schools and the churches.

"What began as a nice idea centered around a project, is developing into what we hope will become long-lasting relationships between the schools, its leaders, and the local church," says Bill Yaccino, Executive Director of Catalyst in Lake County. "These rich relationships of trust will result in more transformation than any one-time project could ever produce."

Christ Church of Lake Forest was a part of this meeting. A partner in the Catalyst network, Christ Church is a well-resourced church that frequently donates to projects in Lake County. In the midst of a capitol campaign to raise one million dollars for a building addition, the church decided to tithe 10% of what comes into the building fund (up to \$100,000) to a local cause-helping the Waukegan public schools.

As part of their ongoing contribution to this initiative, Catalyst will allocate part of their upcoming ShareFest efforts to helping the Waukegan Public Schools. ShareFest puts thousands of volunteers into the community to work on service projects across Lake County.

Lake County pastors and superintendents will meet twice a month at the Sign of the Dove to continue to build relationships and address needs and how they can be met. "I know we can't do this alone," says Dr. Batiste. "There are people out there who are willing to assist us and we have to call out to them." And that's exactly what this public school superintendent is doing.