

BUZZING ABOUT THE BEEHIVE

HOW VISION BRINGS SWEET RESULTS

BY GINA WAHLEN

At first glance nothing seemed unusual about the small group of students sitting comfortably in one of the residence hall lounges at Bowie State University (Maryland). Conversation topics ranged from upcoming class assignments and sleep deprivation to complaints about the “miserable cafeteria food.” The tone changed, however, when Steven, the group’s leader for the night, asked about how “the challenge” was going. Smiling, the group members began sharing how the Daniel Challenge was already starting to make a difference in their lives.

One student, known as the “Swine King” among his friends, confessed that he was enjoying his newfound vegetarian diet and was surprised that he was already feeling stronger and healthier.

“The Daniel Challenge gives you the chance to take care of what God has given you,” said another. “The food in the cafeteria . . . how can they expect people to study after eating *that*?”

Whether the motivation was a desire for more strength, better grades, losing weight, sleeping better, having more energy, or simply earning points to win a free iPad, this group of young people signed on for an intense 10-week challenge that has the potential to change their lives forever.

The Daniel Challenge

Based on the experience of the biblical Daniel and his 10-day challenge to the Babylonian court (see Dan. 1:12), the Daniel Challenge is an innovative package offering university students keys to health, happiness, and success, as well as a basic understanding of biblical principles and prophecy.

Developed by Rico Hill, a Seventh-day Adventist who once was a former executive director of product and development for Nickelodeon Animation and later a vice president for programming at the *Cartoon Network*, along with Jared Thurmon, an entrepreneur with a heart for mission, the Daniel Challenge is geared for the secular mind and includes principles of physical, mental, and spiritual health. Guided by attractive slide presentations, student leaders show how practical living and biblical concepts blend together to form a whole package.

Practical Topics/Biblical Applications

“What does pride have to do with our health?” Steven asked the group as he introduced the evening’s topic.

“It can cause you to do a lot of stupid things,” answered one student. “Pride impairs you like a drug,” said another. “It clouds the mind so you don’t listen to others.” The lively discussion continued as the group examined the effects of pride on mind, body, and soul. The study included looking at the story of a king (as recorded in Daniel 4) who allowed pride to nearly destroy him.

Following the main study, participants received handouts giving the progressive challenges for the week—exercise outdoors at least 45 minutes a day, be in bed by 11:15 p.m., no meat eating, drink eight glasses of water daily, stay away from soda and all caffeinated drinks, spend four hours of personal quiet study time each week (not easy when you have a noisy roommate, joked one participant).

The group was also encouraged to invest time in others—taking time to listen or run an errand, doing something helpful for someone in need.

Each week the group is given new progressive challenges to fulfill, as well as continuing the program’s basic challenges such as “trust more, stress less; enjoy sunshine; educate yourself; etc.” Points are given for participating in each challenge, and the student who accumulates the most points at the end of the 10-week challenge wins a free iPad—along with better health.

An Integrated Approach

The Daniel Challenge is more than just meeting physical goals, says developer Rico Hill. “It’s a new form of public evangelism—a perfect way to combine the gospel with the unique book of Daniel that has so many key elements of our Adventist faith presented in a balanced way.”



Study Time: Students at Kennesaw State University enjoy studying the Daniel Challenge principles each week. First piloted on the campus of Arizona State University in January 2010, the Daniel Challenge has quickly spread to other university campuses, including Kennesaw State University in Georgia, Tufts University and Berklee College of Music in Massachusetts, Bowie State University in Maryland, as well as the University of South Africa in Pretoria. In addition, four more universities in South Africa have expressed a strong interest in hosting a Daniel Challenge program on campus.

“The DC [Daniel Challenge] is not only a medical ministry, but it also has such a major social component to it. People make friends here,” says Nomhle Nhlapho, student coordinator in South Africa.

Darlye Innocent, coordinator at Arizona State University, observes that “many students want to know what a healthy lifestyle entails, are wondering how to achieve balance in their hectic lives, and they want to excel academically. Many are also searching for answers to life’s perplexing questions about purpose and God. The Daniel Challenge introduces them to a God who created them, loves them, and has a purpose for their lives.”

Min Kim, a student organizer from Kennesaw State University, enjoys watching the participants’ reactions “when you present scientific studies showing one principle and then showing how that principle was either written in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy.”

Effective Advertising

Daniel Challenge organizers at Tufts University used a unique (and effective) advertising method for their upcoming program—offering free 15-minute massages to students. “As we massaged them,” says organizer Marsha Huggan, “we told them that [we were part of] a Christian group on campus that believes in the health of the whole person, and that we would be hosting the Daniel Challenge in order to help make Tufts a healthier community. We also told them of the wonderful benefits they could experience if they accepted the challenge, and that they could win a free iPad!”

In addition, the Tufts group hosted a vegetarian taste fest, inviting restaurants near the campus to donate samples of their vegetarian dishes for the students to try. “It was good marketing for the restaurants, and was another opportunity to advertise the Daniel Challenge,” according to Huggan.

Material Support

In addition to attending the weekly Daniel Challenge meetings, students are encouraged to visit the DC Web site at www.thedanielchallenge.com, featuring videos, a blog, testimonials, a new plant-based cookbook, and a variety of other resource material. The Daniel Challenge also has an active Facebook page and can be followed on Twitter.

For those interested in holding a Daniel Challenge on their campus or in their community, a complete kit is available through the Web site, free of charge, featuring PDF files for banners, flyers, postcards, nightly handouts, as well as slide presentations and more.

Not Just for Students

While the Daniel Challenge is growing on university campuses, interest has also been sparked in numerous local churches in Ohio, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and in Nova Scotia, Canada, and Johannesburg, South Africa, according to program developer Jared Thurmon. In addition, Thurmon has been invited to present the Daniel Challenge to a large Fortune 500 company in Atlanta.

“We are also working on packaging the Daniel Challenge so that small business owners in the Adventist Church can hold these presentations in their businesses for their clients,” says Thurmon. “It is an easy entering wedge, it shows people you care, and then you can lead them to our amazing truths.”

Part of a Bigger Plan

The Daniel Challenge is part of a larger organization known as the Beehive—an active supporting ministry and member of ASI (Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries).



In It Together: Bowie State University students stick together during their 10-week Daniel Challenge experience. The concept of the Beehive came when Rico and Jared read about a vision given to Seventh-day Adventist cofounder Ellen White, showing two beehives representing outreach work in the cities of San Francisco and Oakland, California. Regarding the work in San Francisco, she wrote: “Many lines of Christian effort have been carried forward. . . . These included visiting the sick and destitute, finding homes for orphans and work for the unemployed, nursing the sick, and teaching the truth from house to house, distributing literature, and conducting classes on healthful living and the care of the sick. . . . Near the city hall, there were treatment rooms. . . . In the same locality was a health-food store. Nearer the center of the city . . . was a vegetarian café, which was open six days in the week” (*Welfare Ministry*, p. 112).

Believing that the Beehive concept is God’s method for end-time gospel work, the two men launched the ministry. “First, we united the work and workers—connecting with existing ministries (including local churches and conferences) and businesses to create synergy in spreading the gospel.”

Next the new ministry set out to launch centers of influence in various cities—setting up businesses such as thrift stores, restaurants, and health food stores. “The goal is to seamlessly integrate evangelism in the places where people live, shop, eat, and conduct their daily lives,” Hill adds.

One such example is the thrift store located in Dalton, Georgia. Managed by Edward and Xinia Bryan, the couple sees the store as an effective outreach opportunity. “The Dalton community is a mission field,” says Edward. “We have been sharing so many books, such as *The Desire of Ages*, *The Great Controversy*, and *Steps to Christ* in English and Spanish. I think some people come in [to the store] just for the books.”

Many Opportunities for Service

The Beehive (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**) is currently focusing on six projects, ranging from the Daniel Challenge to thrift stores to Christian consulting services (see sidebar). Hoping to reach as many people as possible, nearly all of these services are offered free of charge.

In addition to the six ongoing projects, the ministry is also involved in two international mission projects—the creation of agricultural schools in India and Haiti.

“There is a need around the world to teach people how to grow their own food so that they can survive, as well as thrive economically by being able to sell their produce,” says Scott Thurman, the Beehive’s director of International Development. “We are looking to start a number of these schools around the world.”

Working Together

Seeking to involve as many people as possible in ministry, one of the newest resources offered by the Beehive is “The Hive List” (www.TheHiveList.com)—a kind of Craigslist for mission-minded individuals.

“The Hive List connects those who have something they can offer with those in need,” says Hill. “We believe that nothing should be sitting around collecting dust that could either be used in God’s work or sold to help finance God’s work.” In addition, the list is a place for volunteer mission opportunities to be posted, offering short-term mission opportunities. The list is growing fast, as more individuals connect through the hive.

Seeking to Fulfill the Vision

In looking over the fast-growing ministry of the Beehive, Hill acknowledges there is still much to be done.

“In the twelfth chapter of Daniel we are told that just before Jesus comes knowledge will increase. This is usually interpreted as the increase of innovation in science and technology. But Daniel 12 should also be interpreted to include spiritual advances, relative to innovation in witnessing and the spreading of the gospel,” says Hill. “Building on a vision Ellen White had over 100 years ago, we hope that the Beehive ministries will help fulfill that end-time call.”

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