

2025 *in* REVIEW

UPWARD BOUND *youth*



INTRODUCTION

letter from the founders



Dear Friends of UBY,

It is truly humbling to be writing to you all as we close out 2025, our 28th year of ministry. It has been another year of change, twists and turns, and new adventures. If you missed our 2024 in Review Newsletter, I'd encourage you to go back and read that, or scan the QR code above to access it if you did not receive it, as it gives context as to why Upward Bound Youth has experienced so much change and growth in the last few years. Our goal has never been to grow for the sake of growth. But instead, we've desired to see how God can use us and where God is at work locally, around Ohio, nationally, and globally, and then to see if there was a way working together could further the work of the Kingdom. Friends, God. is. at. work!

Locally, UBY has been blessed to see God's hand in building an incredible team. Because of the increase in staff, we've been able to expand and strengthen our two main programs: Youth Nights and Legacy Bible Institute. Later in this newsletter, you'll read stories about how individual lives are being impacted by the many hours our staff and volunteers mentor, teach, and engage the youth, pouring out God's love day after day. We've also been able to expand our UBY-run events. We hosted a community event in March with 600 people attending. The Potter's Mark, our first ever weekend women's conference, was such a success that women were asking for next year's dates before leaving. It's been such a privilege to see God moving through all of these efforts.

We've also continued to build strong partnerships with other like-minded ministries and organizations throughout our county and surrounding counties. We received a text recently that stated, **"There are so many exciting things happening in our community, and you and your team at Upward Bound Youth seem to be leading much of that momentum."** We've poured financial resources and hours of conversation into these

organizations, believing that we can learn from each other and work together. Youth mentoring, pregnancy care centers, Christian education, foster kids, survivors of human trafficking, people with disabilities and their caregivers... are just some of the causes UBY is privileged to help support locally, nationally and globally.

This year, we've been working hard to become the excellent and transparent organization that this level of resources deserves. Our leadership team and team of directors have discussed for hours upon hours things like organizational values and a strategic plan to keep our mission at the forefront of everything we do. We are so excited to be moving forward with more regular updates (our goal is quarterly!) because we do want our partners and supporters to know about all of this growth and change, inviting you into the work that God has called us to. We would be so honored if you would join in praying for us routinely. In addition, please prayerfully consider a one-time or monthly donation to keep the momentum going in our community. Your participation in one, or both of these, would be something we would appreciate immensely.

2026 looks like another exciting year for us. We relocated our headquarters to a new building with room to grow. Our staff is earnestly seeking the Lord for how our ministry can continue and increasingly meet the needs of the community with the gospel message. Thank you so much for being along the journey with us. We praise God for you!

Love in Christ,

RICHARD & MARGIE JANKOV



YEAR AT A GLANCE

20

youth nights

900

event attendees

6

new staff

4

Bible Institute graduates

250

hours of mentoring



42

organizations supported

42 unique organizations received donations through our **proactive, mission-aligned funding model**. These include a blend of local impact partners, national ministries, and global outreach efforts. *Note:* Some organizations received multiple gifts throughout the year, including event support, project-based giving, and matching funds. Focus Areas Included: Pregnancy & Family Support, Christian Education & Discipleship, Church & Community Development, Global Missions & Humanitarian Aid, Anti-Trafficking & Restoration Ministries, Leadership & Faith-Based Entrepreneurship, Camp & Youth Programs, Policy, Advocacy & Legal Defense which supports youth and family issues, religious freedom, and other Christian ministries.



Photo courtesy of Briana Krites Photography

Upward Bound Youth was honored to receive the prestigious Friend for Life award from the Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County at their annual banquet in October. Praise God for the opportunity to bring light and life where He sees fit locally and globally!

announcement:
**A NEW CHAPTER
IN SMITHVILLE**





As Richard & Margie shared in their letter, 2025 has been full of new adventures. One of the main adventures was the relocation of UBY Headquarters this past August. We have transitioned from operating primarily in Wooster to running our events and programs out of a beautiful new property in Smithville, Ohio. Throughout the process of purchasing the new property and dreaming for what the future holds for this venture, God had His hand upon us in a powerful way. He guided our leadership team to make wise decisions and opened the door for future impact through this new property. Our team is humbled and excited to be able to steward our new building, and we pray it will be a blessing to everyone who walks through our doors.

The move in August, affectionately dubbed “The Big Barn Bounce,” as we moved from one barn to another, was also an opportunity for our entire staff to bond and grow as we continue to encounter newness and change. They have all taken it in stride, and we thank the Holy Spirit for giving us gracious attitudes and hopeful outlooks throughout this transition. See the photo below for the aftermath of moving from our previous headquarters!

Stop by and see us sometime at **887 West Main Street, Smithville OH**, in the same complex as The Barn Restaurant. We can’t wait to see you at hopefully many future events on this property.





Richard Jankov
*Founder & Executive
 Director*



Margie Jankov
Founder



Stephanie McCoy
Assistant Executive Director



Stacie Shoemaker
Executive Assistant



Sam Stone
Program Director



Ryan Pool
*Middle School
 Coordinator*



Alyssa Pool
*Elementary School
 Coordinator*



Hannah Green
Childcare Coordinator



Krista Stone
*Director of Operations
 & Human Resources*



Dobber Gottschling
Digital Media Coordinator



Aliyah Gonzales
Creative Coordinator



Abigail Schmitt
Intern



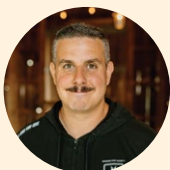
Judah Weinhardt
Director of Education



Dan Rickett
Bible Teacher



Stephen Weinhardt
*Student Life & Alumni
 Coordinator*



Adam Kusicki
Facilities Director



Alex Murray
Facilities Technician



Ryan Colon
Facilities Assistant

MEET OUR TEAM



Some highlights from 2025 for our team as follows:
 Top left: our Family Youth Night, the first one in the new property!
 Top right: some of the UBY team at the PCC of Wayne County annual banquet.
 Middle (both): staff and volunteers at The Potter's Mark women's conference.
 Bottom: our annual Manners Dinner in our new property.

YOUTH NIGHTS

This year we've really focused on making sure our students are grounded in God's Word. Our Youth Nights are about more than just having fun; we want everything we do to center around the gospel. We want our students to know not only what Scripture says, but how deeply God loves them, and we seek to show that love through every interaction.

A major milestone this year was the publication of our 15-week Summer Devotional, written and compiled by our entire staff team. The devotional guided students through the Bible, helping them see how every story points to Jesus. It was a true team effort, with each staff member contributing and investing in the spiritual growth of our students.

One of the most memorable moments of the year came with our Youth Night production of "Jesus' Last Days," a live walkthrough experience of the events leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection. This event required months of preparation. Our team spent time writing the script, designing scenes, and even creating costumes for each character. On the day of the event, the radar showed rain arriving right when the outdoor event was scheduled to begin. During our 5 p.m. prayer meeting, which we hold each week to pray that the hearts of our students would be ready to receive the Truth, we specifically asked the Lord to hold back the rain. After the meeting, we checked the radar again and saw that the storm had shifted! We were able to move forward as planned. It was a beautiful reminder that even the weather is in God's hands, and He delights in making a way for His Word to go forth.

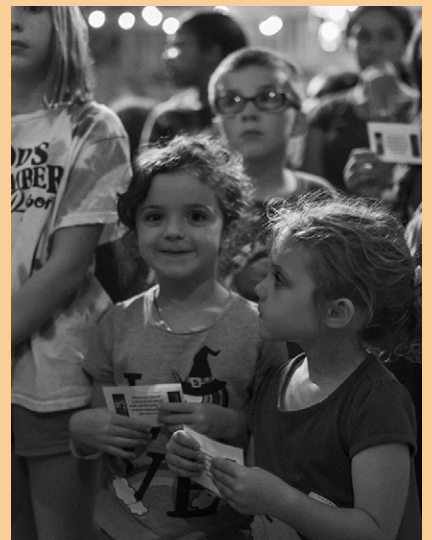


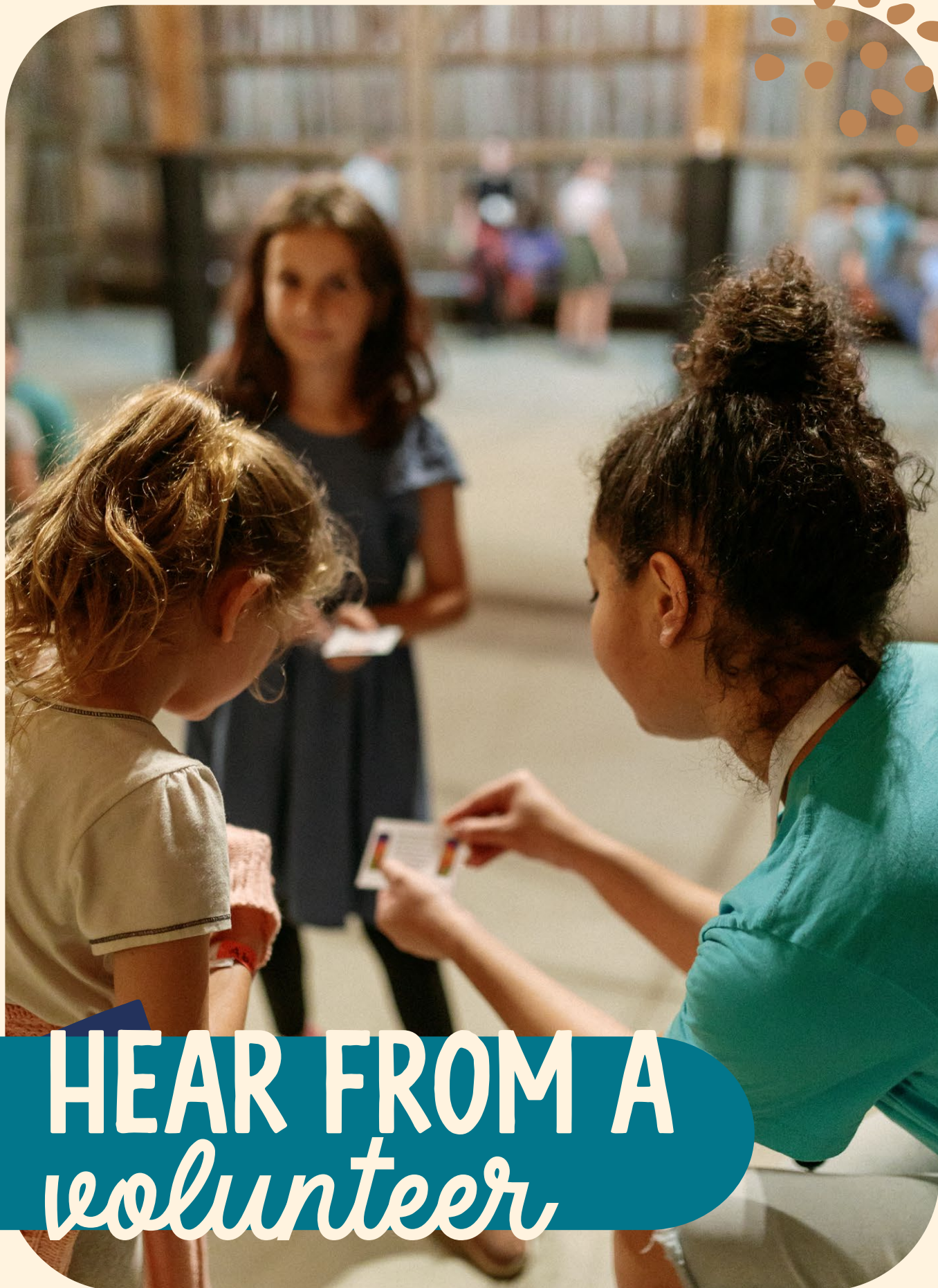


Later in the year, we hosted “The Exodus,” another immersive walkthrough experience that took students through the story of God’s deliverance of His people from Egypt. Through storytelling, visuals, and hands-on elements, students encountered the power of God’s redemption in a fresh and memorable way. We also held our first-ever Family Night, an intentional effort to involve the parents and families of our youth. While attendance was smaller than we hoped, it marked an exciting step toward expanding our reach beyond Friday nights and into the homes of the students we serve.



Looking ahead, our goal for 2026 is to continue growing our program by expanding our outreach in the Wooster and Smithville communities. One way we hope to do this is by launching a High School Program, which we plan to have up and running by fall 2026. Several of our current students will be entering high school next year, and we want to continue building into their lives for as long as we can.

We would love for you to join us in prayer as we look to the future. Please pray for unity and servant hearts among our staff and volunteers. It takes a village to run our Friday Youth Nights, and we’ve been abundantly blessed with people who want to serve and serve well. Pray also for our students, many of whom come from difficult home lives and are in deep need of the love and grace of Jesus. Above all, we continue to pray weekly that each of our students would come to know Jesus as their Savior. Please join us as we cover this program in prayer and trust God for even greater things in the year ahead.





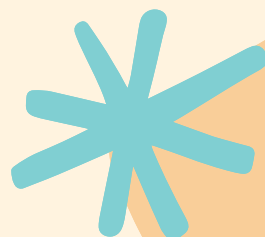
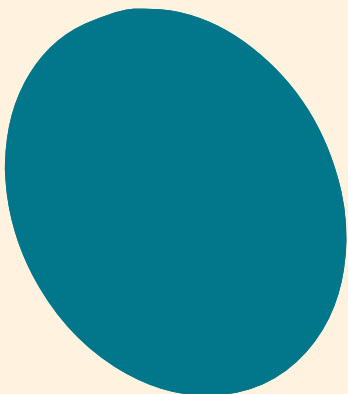
HEAR FROM A *volunteer*



I love volunteering for Youth Nights with UBY because it gives me a chance to give back to the Kingdom of God, and it also reminds me what is important in this life. Jesus loved the little children and spoke on how “if we do not receive the kingdom of God like a child then we will never enter its gates.” He also said, “Let the children come to me and do not hinder them because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

Working with the youth at UBY reminds me to leave my callous, adult heart at Jesus’ feet daily. It reminds me to have faith, love, and freedom, just like the kids at Youth Nights do. They teach us every week how we should go to God. I will be eternally grateful for that. **I also believe that this ministry is a light on a hill in a very dark world for the future generation,** and I see God’s hand moving in this ministry week after week, not only in the children, but in every person who comes into contact with Youth Nights. I only hope and pray that God may use me in some small way to show the true nature of Jesus when I am representing the ministry as a volunteer.

JAYSON CARNAHAN, UBY VOLUNTEER



CONFERENCES & EVENTS



Championing the Disabled

Upward Bound Youth was honored to host an event in collaboration with Nick Vujicic (NickV Ministries) to equip churches and communities to Champion the Disabled. The March 2025 event had around 600 attendees and had both educational and evangelistic impact. It was an amazing opportunity to impact hundreds of individuals with the gospel and to share the heart of God for those who are often looked down upon by the world. Nick Vujicic was also able to speak to the children at one of our Youth Nights. It's difficult to express how humbling and beautiful it is to have a voice like Nick's speaking into our spheres of influence. We'd like to thank our donors and supporters for the ways they prayed, supported, volunteered, gave, and spread the word, all of which contributed to making this event and others like it a success.





The Potter's Mark

In September 2025, Upward Bound Youth hosted its first weekend conference! Held at Beulah Beach in Vermilion, Ohio, The Potter's Mark is for women ages 18+ who want to learn more about God's Word and His definition of womanhood & identity. There were over 100 attendees at the conference, and we saw God move in a powerful way! There were women already asking for the 2026 conference dates before the 2025 conference was even over. It was a privilege to have Dr. Juli Slattery as our keynote speaker for the weekend, bringing the Truth of Scripture to an important conversation on how to be a godly woman. Our staff and volunteers worked together diligently to pray, support, prepare, and bring their best efforts to making this a successful weekend. We are excited to share the dates for The Potter's Mark next year: save the date for **September 25-27, 2026**. More details about the conference to come, but we remain grateful and expectant for the future of this conference.

ACC Youth Choir Update & Reunion

Upward Bound Youth has had the privilege and joy of assisting with the ACC Youth Choir over the past 20+ years. For many years, the Youth Choir was planned, financed, and executed in conjunction with the Domestic Actions Projects (DAP) Committee. UBY has allowed working hours to be spent on the planning and participation of Youth Choir, which has provided invaluable skills in event planning for a ministry that has been in existence for 37 years. After prayerful consideration, UBY has decided to hand the reins completely to the DAP committee, which will allow others to step into the planning process, and will also allow UBY to focus more on its growing ministry.

As one final collaborative event, UBY hosted a Youth Choir Reunion in October to reflect on God's faithfulness to the choir in all the past years and to provide some clarity for its direction going forward. We were happy to see more than 60 familiar faces for our reunion banquet, and we were grateful to praise God with a choir of almost 40 voices that weekend. Our theme for the reunion was "Ebenezer," which is a stone that Samuel sets up in the Bible, saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us." We feel that rings true of how God has helped the ministry of Youth Choir over its past years of serving many fellow believers. UBY thanks God for the ministry of Youth Choir and will continue to encourage our young people to participate in this program.



MISSIONAL IMPACT

Through canceled flights and rescheduled hotel bookings, God maneuvered 12 UBY staff and volunteers arriving from the USA, Canada, Germany, Serbia, and Zambia to meet at the airport in Kitwe, Zambia in support of Lifesong Ministries for Orphans for the third consecutive year. Lifesong Zambia has multiple aspects to its ministry, including trade schools, an intern program for recent high school graduates, and an income-generating farm, lodge, and cafe which provide income for local people and sustainable ministry funding. Our team's primary focus was to support Lifesong Harmony schools (Kawama, Chipata, Garneton, and, new this year, Racecourse) which disciple future leaders through educational excellence and biblical Truth for children from preschool through grade twelve. More specifically, the mission: Vacation Bible School for 1,500+ students, team building activities for the teachers, and supporting the long-term missionaries on the ground. We were welcomed at each school with open arms and excited anticipation. Familiar faces greeted those from last year's team and wasted no time in getting to know the new team members.

With the VBS theme of Philippians 2:4, the students engaged in rotating stations which included a Bible lesson, music, crafts, and games, all focusing on how to "look not only to their own interests but also to the interests of others." In the Bible lesson, students learned how King David cared for Mephibosheth, which was a name that

gave both students and teachers a good laugh as they tried to pronounce it! But beyond the tricky name was a powerful example of kindness: David sought out someone others had forgotten and welcomed him with honor. We also shared the story of four friends who went to great lengths to bring a paralyzed man to Jesus. Both stories helped students see what it looks like to live out Philippians 2:4 by looking to the interests of others. The games focused on team building activities, the music brought new songs and revisited those from previous years, and the craft team made gospel bracelets and bookmarks.

In the end, our time in Zambia was a testimony to the power of Christ-centered unity, humility, and love. Through Vacation Bible School, teacher team building, collaboration with local pastors, and even learning a song in Bemba, we witnessed the beauty of God's people working together across cultures and continents. Every moment, whether laughing over a difficult Bible name, crafting Gospel bracelets, or worshiping shoulder to shoulder in song, pointed back to the truth that the body of Christ is stronger when each member brings their gifts in service to one another. We return home deeply grateful, not only for the joy we experienced but for the lasting partnerships being built with our Zambian brothers and sisters, confident that the work will continue to grow for God's glory.



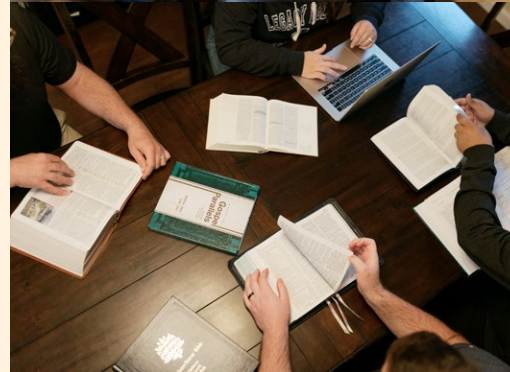


LEGACY BIBLE INSTITUTE

The spring semester was a fitting conclusion to a wonderful 2024-2025 academic year at Legacy Bible Institute, UBY's gap year discipleship program for young adults. By the end of their eight months at Legacy, our students not only read through the entire Bible (Genesis–Revelation), but also through other texts in our various courses (Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, Discipleship, Biblical Peacemaking and more). They are being equipped to study God's Word, faithfully practice it, and effectively communicate it to others (Ezra 7:10). Students were also involved in various ministry activities in both the Wooster community and their local churches, with one student being instrumental in starting up a youth group in the local church he joined during his time here. One highlight of our spring semester continues to be our field trip to Washington, D.C., where students experience the Museum of the Bible and the Holocaust Museum. Our commencement ceremony was held on May 17 and was a joyous celebration of all that God did in and through our 2024-2025 graduates. We were blessed to have Pastor José Gómez deliver our commencement address.

Once again, God provided an outstanding group of students for the 2025-2026 academic year. The start of the new year also brought a change to the location of our Legacy program with UBY's move to Smithville in mid-August. Even with the change, the steady anchor of God's faithfulness remained so clearly evident, even as He enabled us to stay true to our commitment to holistically disciple our students. With the new location has come many new opportunities for the students to grow in their relationships with one another and with the rest of the UBY staff. Our new classroom has provided more space for our growing student body, and the ability to incorporate technology upgrades into the classroom has enhanced the learning process. Outside of the classroom, our students have been getting plugged into local church communities as they explore ways to serve in and around Wooster, not least of which is through their active involvement in UBY's Youth Nights each week. We are so blessed to have such a dedicated group of UBY staff who are mentoring and pouring into our students through weekly life-on-life discipleship.

We are excited for what the future holds for Legacy and all of the ways that God is going to work in and through the program. We encourage you to partner with us in prayer for our students and staff, and to spread the word about Legacy to others!



“Legacy was a milestone in my walk with Christ, where I learned the value of Scripture, prayer, and community. I left feeling supported, transformed, and deeply grateful for the friends and mentors who shaped me there.”

JOSUE ANAYA VARGAS, LEGACY GRADUATE





Give a one-time or recurring gift using the QR code below, or mail in the donation sheet included in this newsletter!

Volunteer at our events in Wayne County! More info can be found at UpwardBoundYouth.org/Volunteer

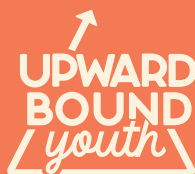
Pray for our initiatives heading into 2026. Pray for our High School Student programming at Youth Nights, pray for our Legacy students, pray for our events, and pray for our team as they continue to dream and seek the Lord for future opportunities.

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make a donation



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