

The Hot Jalapenos are Traveling to Cuba

by Joyce Wilton



They call themselves the Hot Jalapenos. They are seven youth and two leaders and they are the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) Year Three group. A small group by our usual standards, some people would think that would put them at a disadvantage, but instead they have put their size to good use.

During their first YLTP residential session in March of 2008, they began to discuss the Year Three project and what the possibilities could be. Every YLTP participant, either individually or in a team,

creates and implements a leadership project to fulfill the requirements of completing the program. Some keep it simple and close to home, others think outside the usual project box and outside of their typical communities and then there was this group! Given that there are only 7 participants and 2 leaders, why couldn't they do something that no YLTP group has ever done before.....why couldn't they go on a mission trip somewhere, all together and make that their Year Three group project.

Well luckily for this group, their leaders happen to be Archdeacon Lynne Corfield and Beth Kerley O.N. Both love travel, helping others and a good adventure, so they were up for the challenge. Also as luck would have it Beth's husband, Dr. Brian Kerley is a St. Catharines family physician and he too was keen to offer his leadership to this experience. Early on the idea of travelling to Cuba, our partner diocese, became a focus of their mission and so they began to dream and plan and along with that came the name "The Hot Jalapenos". They made t-shirts and hats and began to tell others of their dreams of an adventure in Cuba.

The next challenge was to convince their parents that this was not only possible but a great idea. Once we had the parents on board, we needed to raise funds and find a community and project that needed us and excited us as well. So after lots of much thought and prayer, this group is headed to Cardenas, Cuba just west of Varadero. They will be working with the Christian Centre for Reflection and Dialogue which currently is focusing its program on sustainable food and energy production.

Once we had a destination and a project, it was time to create a plan for raising the funds to make it happen. Well we soon realized that this area was foreign to many of us, but we have put our heads together and come up with a variety of events to raise the awareness about our project and the necessary money to make it possible. In the Spring, many of the participants hosted Bake Sales or Rummage Sales in their home parishes. Most recently St. John's Niagara Falls hosted a "Cuban Dinner and Salsa Dancing Night" and St. John's Thorold welcomed folks for "Octobru-fest". Both were great

successes both in community fun and money raised. October 31st was an exciting night at Cathedral Place as we hosted a "Halloween Dance" for youth from across the diocese with the NYC Band providing the music and a team of volunteers organizing the fun. And still to take place, on November 14th, St. Matthias in Guelph will also be hosting a "Cuban Dinner and Salsa" night and you can call 519-767-2212 for details and ticket information. There are also upcoming plans for community meals in Port Colborne and Caledonia, both communities which participants of this program are residents.

We have also had a generous donation of two tickets to both a Toronto Maple Leafs and Toronto Raptors game in January so we are presently raffling off tickets to find out who the lucky winners will be. The raffle draw isn't until December 6th so you can support this effort by purchasing one ticket for \$5 or 5 tickets for \$20 and can contact Joyce Wilton at 905-527-1316 ext 430 for ticket sale information.

Many other exciting things are planned so if you hear about a fund raising opportunity, we really hope you support our efforts with either your time, talent or financial generosity. In the new year, we will write to you again about our travel plans and how we are progressing with this awesome project. For more information contact myself, Joyce Wilton at the Synod office and I will be pleased to tell you all about it.