

## **Kids Games 2009**

Many free resources [www.kidsgames.com](http://www.kidsgames.com) .

Kids Games is a multi-sports and games Bible based initiative aimed at sharing faith with young people through the mediums they understand and engage in. It's not solely sports based as there are also opportunities to use creative arts, drama, multi-media. You're only restricted by the imagination and facilities available – 'all things are possible with God!'

Kids Games is one of the programmes developed and run under the banner of the International Sports Coalition, [www.sportsoutreach.org](http://www.sportsoutreach.org). They have a broad range of resources free for use, themed around sports and major sporting events.

Kids Games was launched in Cairo in 2000 with 10,000 young people. Since then it's spread across 170 countries and connected with over 5,000,000 youngsters. The idea works around the concept of partnerships between churches, agencies and the local community all uniting with the aim of communicating Christ's love through the programme of Kids Games. With the coming decade already being dubbed the 'decade of sport' across the UK it's absolutely essential that the 'Christian Community' engage with the possibilities that are offered through the medium of sport.

Kids Games has other partner ideas which run along with it, Teen Games, Edge Games, Family Games etc. The idea is to run a programme in a number of communities simultaneously and bring all of them together both at the beginning for an opening ceremony and the end of the week for a closing ceremony. The shape and construction of these depends on facilities and imagination.

Richard Morrison and Helen Jones are the Youth Development Workers for the Church of Scotland in Annandale and Eskdale, a huge rural area. Richard covers the southern area and Helen the north. They are 18 months into a seven year contract and have taken the Kids Games concept as a key part of the development of their ministry through until 2014, when their contracts end and when the Commonwealth Games are in Glasgow – a joyful 'coincidence'!

The four communities were Lockerbie, Langholm, Canonbie, (and Newcastleton, Each community had posters/banners and flyers distributed to promote the week. 'Waxy' the international mascot paid a visit to the schools before summer to promote the week and a website was set up  
<http://www.mykidsgames.com/default.aspx?games=kidsgames&event=annandale&page=%20via>

The [www.kidsgames.com](http://www.kidsgames.com) website offers many programmes and an in depth detailed guide as to how to run the programme, all the way through from the first prep meeting to the follow up, very impressive.

After discussion we decided to use the Joseph programme – The Kids Games material is aimed at those 6 – 14 yrs and is to be interactive, fun and challenging the youngsters to think about issues around faith. As we discovered the concept of using a programme called 'kids' created a challenge in this culture. Whilst across the world the word 'kids' may be acceptable and may not impede those 12-14 from attending we found that with a very odd exception most of those attending in the morning were 6-11 yrs. Conscious in pre-planning that the name and title may create a challenge we specifically aimed the afternoon sports programme was aimed at 8 – 15yrs. The afternoon sports were generally hitting 8 – 12yrs, again possibly an advertising problem – maybe we should have called the afternoon Teen Games, we'll be reviewing this.

Our Opening Extravaganza was held at Langholm Rugby Club – reckoned to be the best and most accessible venue. As we were starting from scratch this proved to be a challenge and there were only 30+ there, a frustration but praise God for dry, sunny weather. We played a number of 'daft' games and everyone of all ages had a great time, got a free burger and heard what we were all about.

As you'll have noticed the communities are small, as at 2001 census, and with the exception of Newcastleton there is no history of a 'holiday club' programme and the Sunday Schools would be very low in number if there at all.

Each venue had a mix of local people and ‘incomers’ to run the morning programme. The afternoon was sports only and delivered by the qualified coaches in Football, Basketball, Tennis and Rugby. We had two coaches per discipline. Each of the coaches helped out in their ‘home venue during the morning and then coached their own sport in their ‘home’ venue on the first afternoon. After that they were transported on a rotation across each community during the two hour ‘lunch-break’. This enabled each community to have the opportunity to enjoy all the sports across the week. As well as coaching, the coaches delivered a 5 minute ‘water-break’ talk along the daily theme as per the morning programme. This meant that even for those who weren’t around for the more ‘intense’ morning teaching they had a taster/seed planted.

One of the key elements across the Kids Games world is the care/compassion project. An opportunity to show Christ’s love in action, it’s called the million hours project on the site. We added 54 hours with singing at a day care centre in Langholm, shifting gravel at a tourist venue near Canonbie, making biscuits to take around old peoples houses in Newcastleton and ‘free’ bag-packing at Tesco in Lockerbie. The response from the community to each of these was incredible, they were overwhelmed. The free bag-packing was received with gratitude and many questions and a great opportunity for a clear gospel talk to the staff at a coffee break.

The week ended with a closing extravaganza at Langholm Rugby Club on Saturday 8 August. This had 80+ in attendance with a number of random games and sports enjoyed by all. There was also the opportunity to compete in the World Water Bucket Challenge and the 12x10metre relay. Both of these have international rules and results. It’s a great way for people across the world to compete against the rest of the world and gives it its international feel. The gospel was shared at the end and everyone got a free burger.

The response from the local communities is very strong, Richard and Helen continue to get very positive feedback and we look forward to see what happens in the intervening period before Kids Games 2010.

It will be a while before we’ll be able to tell the impact of this first ‘Games’ not this side of the Kingdom but initial impressions are very good.

I hope this gives an idea of Kids Games and the potential that this initiative has to offer.