



The Singles Network: Joining Forces to Minister to Singles

by Michelle Medlock Adams

WE LIVE in an Internet society. An infinite amount of information is at our fingertips. So, wouldn't it be great if there was a Web site designed specifically for connecting Christian singles? One that featured area activities, resources, conferences, a weekly devotional and Scripture passage, networking and leadership training opportunities and more?

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— Kris Swiatocho, director of The Singles Network



Well, if you live in the Raleigh, N.C., area, you're in luck. Such a site actually exists. It's called The Singles Network Ministries (TSN), and it's making a big impact.

“The Singles Network has helped me grow as a Christian,” says Theresa Waters. “I've been in several Bible studies sponsored by TSN. Through these studies, I've grown in my walk with Christ, met some life-long friends and will have the opportunity to lead a Bible study in the fall. I'm truly thankful for TSN.”

THE 411 ON TSN

TSN began nine years ago as an outreach of Campus Crusade for Christ. Its original goal was to connect singles and single adult leaders. After a couple years, Kris Swiatocho began assisting in the ministry, networking and drawing more singles to the Web site and, ultimately, the events. Then, about two years ago, Kris took on overseeing TSN, developing a new Web site and further fulfilling the ministry's original goal.

Kris has worked in some facet of single adult ministry since 1989, so her database of information has proven quite useful as she's filled her role as director of TSN. But Kris has more than contacts and experience, she has a passion for singles ministry that has only grown through the years.

“I eat, drink and sleep singles ministry,” jokes Kris. “You might say I'm a bit obsessed, but in a good way.”

Her obsession and God's leading have resulted in more than 20 churches and 15 ministries partnering with TSN, actively supplying Bible studies, their upcoming activities and more.

There are currently three mega-churches, averaging up to 800 singles each, who partner with TSN, but most of the churches in the area have less than 100 singles. “The only churches I list on the Web site are those with active singles groups,” Kris explains. “There are many more churches using our site, and the number keeps growing all the time.”

Kris is in the process of visiting each church in order to better serve the network participants and visitors of the Web site. “When someone contacts me and says, for example, ‘I'm a single parent with a Methodist background. In your opinion, what church would be the best place for me to serve?’ I want to be able to answer that person with confidence,” Kris shares. “If I don't visit the churches, meet the leadership and see what they're doing, I won't be as effective in my role.”



Van Langlan leads worship with 21 Jasper City Praise Band.



Kris Swiatocho, who is the present director of The Singles Network, poses with TSN's founder, Gary Justice.



Ralph, Alysen, Carla, Greg, Kris, Dave and Kristen hang out during a cookout at Ralph's.

FILLING A NEED, CREATING A COMMUNITY

TSN is much more than a listing of singles activities in the Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill areas. Kris helps develop and redevelop singles ministries by working one-on-one with singles and leaders, speaking and consulting.

“Our church had never had a singles ministry even though it’s a large traditional church,” shares Vara Bell of White Memorial Presbyterian Church. “I don’t think I could’ve pioneered our singles ministry without Kris and The Singles Network. Kris’ knowledge has been invaluable to me. I know other leaders in other churches must feel the same.”

It’s now the goal of TSN to not only connect with singles in the area, but also to network with singles ministry leaders throughout North Carolina. Every quarter, TSN invites those leaders to gather for a creative powwow. It’s an opportunity for leaders to share about their ministries and learn from one another’s knowledge, resources and experiences.

“Last quarter we discussed what our biggest challenges are in singles ministry,” shares Vara. “It was so helpful and enlightening to learn from each other what does and doesn’t work. It was also encouraging to be reminded that there’s a growing population of single adults looking for Christian community in

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the area, and we have that community to offer them.”

Kris’ vision for TSN is to see the concept spread across the United States so more areas will have a Christian community to provide for their single adults. “I would love the idea of networking churches and singles to be duplicated in others cities throughout the nation,” Kris shares. “Wouldn’t it be great if you could just type in TSN and scroll down to your state and city? Maybe that’s what the future holds. You never know what God has planned. I’m open to whatever He has and however He wants to use me.”

To learn more about TSN or starting a branch of TSN in conjunction with Kris for your area, visit www.thesinglesnetwork.org. **CS**

START A BELIEVER’S COMMUNITY IN YOUR CITY

IN THE RALEIGH, N.C., AREA, Christian singles of all ages, backgrounds and life situations get together each month through The Singles Network Ministries for Believer’s Community. Set in a coffeehouse atmosphere, singles enjoy great music, wonderful conversation, fabulous food and a relevant message.

In addition to the monthly gathering, the Believer’s Community folks get together for various social and spiritual events such as SWAMP (Singles Without A Meal Plan) and Night on the Town. Believer’s Community provides an opportunity for singles from various churches to connect. This is especially beneficial for singles of smaller and mid-sized churches.

“There are between 200 and 300 Christian single adults who come to our Believer’s Community,” says Kris Swiatocho, director of The Singles Network. She also says that thanks to Bryan Finley, who is the singles pastor of Crossroads Fellowship and the Believer’s Community coordinator, people can come to network with other people and to praise and worship God together.

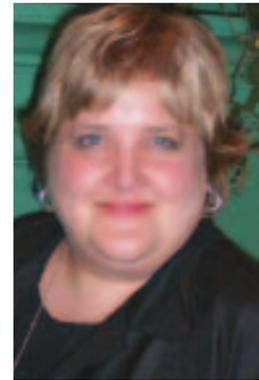
“I enjoy Believer’s Community very much,” says Ralph Kelly, who’s been attending the monthly gatherings for about three years. “I get to meet new people every month and catch up with my other friends. I’m also able to incorporate what I see and hear at Believer’s in my daily walk with Christ.”

If you’d like to start a Believer’s Community in your area, here are some

tips from the Raleigh, N.C., group on what you’ll need.

- A singles pastor or rotating list of pastors who will spearhead the teaching portion of each meeting.
- A dedicated committee of volunteers to organize and oversee the various aspects of the Believer’s Community, such as refreshments, set up and tear down, music, announcements, the social calendar, love offerings, marketing and networking and follow up.
- One person to delegate responsibilities to the various committees.
- A prayer group to undergird the Believer’s Community.
- A central location for the monthly gathering.
- A whole lot of faith and determination.

KRIS SWIATOCHO: Single, Serving God and Satisfied



Even as a child, Kris Swiatocho was a go-getter. Her parents didn’t believe in handing out allowances, so she made her own money. She had her first paper route at age 8, making her the first girl in her small North Carolina town to have one.

And when the Girl Scout cookie sale rolled around each year, Kris was always the top salesperson. You might say she’s been goal-oriented from the beginning.

Today, at age 39, she’s an accomplished graphic designer, a stand-up comedian, an author and the president and director of The Singles Network Ministries — a ministry designed to provide resources, networking and leadership for singles, their leaders and pastors.

“I’m looking forward to my 40s,” says Swiatocho. “I’m in a great place in my life. As a single adult, I have a purpose and calling. I know I’m exactly where God wants me to be right now.”

Kris has been serving in single adult ministry in various capacities for the last 19 years, but it wasn’t until four years ago that she really stepped into her dream — or at least the beginnings of that dream.

In her role with The Singles Network, she’s doing exactly what she loves — ministering to single adults and those who work with single adults. From speaking at singles conferences, to consulting one-on-one with singles, to developing a single adult ministry for individual churches, to helping plan monthly Believer’s Community get-togethers — she’s a busy girl. But, you’ll never hear her complain.

“The greatest joy in the world is knowing you’re at the center of God’s will for your life,” Kris shares. “So many single adults are waiting for God to use them. My advice would be to stop waiting for God to come to you. Go ahead and join Him in His work. He’ll use you. Look at me. I feel like Moses most of the time, asking God, ‘Are you sure you want me?’ I don’t have a seminary degree, still God called me to do this. When you say yes to God, the blessings are wonderful.”



Dusty and Michelle run the booth for Cleveland Community Church at the annual Strawberry Festival.



21 Jasper City Praise Band leads worship regularly at Believer’s Community gatherings.



Matt, Stacy, Ralph and Gregory take time to pose for a fun photo.