



START-UP BOOK

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WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Welcome to the Life Teen family and the exciting world of middle school ministry!

We are honored that you have subscribed to Edge Support and pray that it will be a blessing as you strive to bring the youth of your parish into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

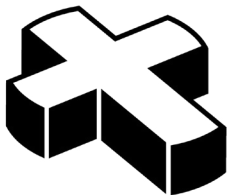
Middle school ministry is not an easy task. That is why we have worked so hard to create fun and engaging materials to help you teach young people about Jesus and the Catholic faith. Our goal is to serve your needs as a youth minister so you can serve the needs of your middle school youth. Our support materials are 100% Catholic, and over our three-year cycle, you will be provided with enough content to cover the fullness of the faith in a fun and relevant way.

When you sign up for Edge Support, you are not only getting the shipment of materials, but you are also getting a whole army of support to back you up in your ministry efforts. From our Catechesis Team, you will find answers for your specific questions about the materials you were sent. From our Parish Support Team, you have access to Regional Directors, who are available to pray with you, pray for you, and assist you in all aspects of your ministry. We will connect you with Area Contacts, veteran youth ministers on the ground in your area who are available to serve and help you. You will receive full online access to CatholicYouthMinistry.com where you can access hundreds of materials including training videos. And most importantly, you will be in the prayers of all of us here at Life Teen.

We could not be more excited for you to start up your Edge ministry. We pray that this process will be smooth and successful. If you have any questions, concerns, or need prayers, we are here to serve you. If you need support, you can email us or call us at 1-800-809-3902. Thank you for saying yes to evangelize the young people in your parish. May God bless you and your ministry.

Peace of Christ,

Amanda Grubbs
Edge Support Coordinator
agrubbs@lifeteen.com



GETTING STARTED WITH EDGE

Beginning a new ministry at your parish can be a very exciting time, especially when that ministry involves leading young people to Christ. While it can be tempting to put your head down and get to it, you need to get your bearings first. It is essential to put together a plan to setup the ministry for success.

When it comes to starting your Edge ministry, there are definite steps to take, but there is no magic formula. Every parish is different, and, therefore, every Edge ministry will look different. It is up to the youth minister to navigate the individual situations of your parish. Here are some basic steps to consider.

PRAY - Prayer is the first step to building an Edge ministry at your parish. It may sound cliché, but it is the truth. Without prayer, the Edge ministry will be more about you than about Christ.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS - You are not in this alone, even if you are the only one working in youth ministry on your parish staff. Meet with your Pastor, DRE, parish secretary, ministry heads, and anyone who will take the time. Get to know the young people and parents you will serve, and keep an eye out for potential Core Members. Share your passion and enthusiasm for this new ministry with anyone who will listen. You never know the impact your excitement can have on those you meet.

PROMOTE YOUR MINISTRY - As you meet people and build up excitement, you'll want to develop a specific plan to promote your ministry. If your budget allows, find some promotional items incorporating the Edge logo (e.g. pens, magnets). Hand them out to parents and middle school youth when you meet them. If possible, you may also want to hang some Edge banners around your parish campus. Also, consider working with your Pastor on a plan to promote the Edge at all weekend masses where you have a large captive audience. Be creative with your promotion, and have fun with it.

RECRUIT CORE TEAM MEMBERS - As you begin promoting Edge to the youth and their parents, this is also a key time build up a Core Team. While this can be a tough job, it is vital. You can't rely on potential Core Team Members to fall out of the sky. You must be proactive. Talk with your Pastor, DRE, parents, and pastoral ministers about names of potential Core Members. Be willing to walk up to people before and after Mass to ask them to consider being on the Core Team. Meet with any potential Core Member individually, no matter how highly recommended a person is. Chat about the vision of youth ministry, how that person can be involved, and what it means to be a Core Member in this meeting. Ask each person to pray about the call to this ministry and follow-up a few days later. This allows you to pray about your time with that person as well, the feel you got from them, and how they might best fit in with youth ministry. Recruit high school teens. High school students can be a huge part of an Edge Core Team. Just make sure they are the right teens. Each high school teen who serves as a Core Member for Edge should be well prepared, well trained, and regularly receiving faith formation on their level.

GET TO KNOW PARENTS - Most middle school youth are still very influenced by their parents, especially their schedules, and parents want to know they can trust you. Get to know them in a variety of ways. Try going to Moms' groups, Knights of Columbus meetings, parent meetings at school, and any other type of meeting where parents of middle school youth might be gathered. Presenting this exciting new ministry for their children at these meetings can provide a great start to getting them involved.

INVITE PARENTS TO GET INVOLVED - Parents need to know that you are on their team. One of your key roles as youth minister is to empower them to be the primary catechists for their children. Encourage them to get involved in the ministry in some way. Parents can be Core Members, logistical helpers, event planners, fundraisers, prayer team members, and so much more. Once the ministry kicks off, be sure to communicate with parents about what you are doing at Edge meetings and empower them to chat with their children about it. Some parishes email this information to parents during the Edge Night so they can discuss it with their child on the way home. Check out the “To the Parents” section of your Edge Night Planning Guide for a quick and easy outline of what to send to the parents.

GET TO KNOW THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH - In case, we haven’t been clear, relationships are vital to this ministry. You need to get to know the middle school youth. Attend their sports games, plays, concerts, or recitals. Show them that you care about them outside the walls of the church. This type of outreach is better known as relational ministry. Outside of prayer, spend more time on relational ministry than anything else. This will set a great foundation for you and your program.

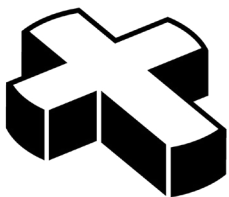
PLAN YOUR FIRST SEMESTER - In order to invite students to your parish’s new Edge ministry, you need to actually have something for them to come to. This begins with having a good semester plan. Check out the “Planning an Edge Semester” article in this Startup Kit or our videos on annual and semester planning. Each Semester Planning Guide also contains a sample semester outline, and as always, you can contact your Regional Director to help get you started.

PLAN YOUR KICKOFF NIGHT - Your first Edge night should be full of energy and joy. This is game time, and you only get one chance to make a first impression. Don’t rush into this! Plan out your kickoff night a few months in advance. Work with your new Core Team to be as creative as you can with this night. A big focus for this kickoff needs to be relational ministry. Get to know the youth, learn names, have a lot of fun, and build excitement. Be prepared before the youth walk in and keep your focus on them.

REGISTRATION - If Edge is the faith formation for your parish, then you definitely want a registration process. Even if Edge is not the religious education for the parish, having a registration form is a good idea since it gives you important information in case of emergency. For those youth who join the ministry part way through the year, give them a form at their first meeting, and ask them to bring it back the next time they come.

LEAD THEM TO CHRIST - Above all else, keep things simple. It’s easy to worry about covering all the bases, but you can’t plan for everything. Be enthusiastic, joyful, and energetic, but at the same time, be willing to challenge the young people to go deeper in their faith. Remember, your most important role is to bring the youth to Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your willingness, energy, and commitment to this great ministry. Continue to say yes to Christ, trust in His call, and love those middle school youth. Be assured of the prayers of all of the Life Teen staff. You can do this, and we are here to support you.



STARTING EDGE CHECK LIST

PRAY

Pray continually throughout this process, your ministry, and your life.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

- Meet with everyone and anyone at your parish – Pastor, Principal, Faith Formation Director, maintenance and scheduling folks, interested adults, heads of ministries, catechists, etc.

PROMOTE YOUR MINISTRY

- Create promotional items with the Edge logo, hang banners around the parish campus, and promote Edge at all weekend masses.

RECRUIT CORE TEAM MEMBERS

- Pray.
- Get ideas from the Pastor and other adults you have met with.
- Be willing to talk to people you do not know before and after mass.
- When you have an interested adult, schedule an interview or meeting, ask and answer questions, then prayerfully consider if they will be a good fit.

RECRUIT HIGH SCHOOL TEENS

- Pray.
- Decide if you want high school teens as part of your Core Team. o Decide age and other requirements.
- Make the commitment clear, and properly train the teens to set them up for success.

GET TO KNOW PARENTS

- Meet parents at various events and meetings, including before and after Edge Nights.
- Middle school youth are part of a family. Bring each family along for the ride by loving them all, especially the parents.

INVITE PARENTS TO GET INVOLVED

- Get the parents involved in your ministry.
- Communicate with parents on a weekly basis about your Edge Nights.

GET TO KNOW THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH (RELATIONAL MINISTRY)

- Get out of your office!
- Go to school lunches, basketball games and practices, school plays, and concerts.

PLAN YOUR FIRST SEMESTER

- Find the right topic for you, or build an introductory semester.
- Utilize the three Intro Nights that accompany this startup kit.
- Mix Social Nights and Issue Nights in with Catechetical Nights.
- Contact the Parish Outreach Team, or utilize the various planning articles and tools available if you need more help.

PLAN YOUR KICKOFF NIGHT

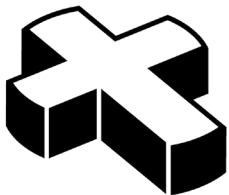
- Plan with your Core Team. Putting your minds together will bring about more creativity.
- Have the details sorted ahead of time, and make sure the Core
- Team knows their roles and responsibilities for the night.
- Use the kickoff as a chance to meet and get to know the youth.

REGISTRATION

- Decide upon the registration process.
- Create a registration form.
- Use the weeks leading up to the Edge kickoff for registration, and make it available at kickoff as well.

LEAD THEM TO CHRIST

- Stay rooted in prayer.
- Be authentic and joyful.
- Do not be afraid to challenge and evangelize the youth.
- Be an example for your youth of a true Catholic, sold out for Christ.



PLANNING AN EDGE SEMESTER

I remember when I started in youth ministry, I had no idea how or where to get started. Having a computer in my office meant I was one of the most technologically advanced youth ministers around – but of course, we had dial up. I had inherited all sorts of random resources from my predecessor, but she left me no information about teens or adults who were previously involved. I walked in my office, set-up my answering machine (yes, answering machine – not voicemail), and wondered what to do next.

I actually looked forward to our parish staff meetings – it was the only thing that was firmly on my calendar every week. At those meetings, the more, ahem, experienced staff members helped me understand the importance of putting a ministry plan to paper. (I was a stubborn, slow learner.) If nothing else, it gives a starting point to advertise along with helping to form the focus of the ministry.

Edge nights, lock-ins, retreats, social events, parent meetings, core meetings... the list could go on and on. There are so many components that could be included in a semester plan for Edge that it's easy to get overwhelmed.

Let's start with the basics of the Edge Semester plan – Edge Nights. This weekly gathering of the middle school youth is the heartbeat of the Edge ministry, and so putting a good plan together for a semester is important, otherwise, you're just throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what sticks. If you prayerfully approach your plan, you can have realistic and hopeful goals for the semester.

A few reminders up front:

- You probably want to kick off the semester with a social. You want to build some good momentum, have some relational ministry time, and have this fun starting point to focus some marketing efforts on.
- Possibly, you could invite parents to an Edge night towards the beginning of the semester. Getting parents on board, inviting them into the mission, and helping them to see the goals and plans of the ministry bears many fruits.
- Likely, you'll want to pick one catechetical topic to focus on for the semester – but this is the choice of your parish.
- Keep in mind the suggested monthly plan of two catechetical nights, one issue night, and one social night.

Ok, that's probably enough theory about the planning – let's work through a semester plan so you can see it all come together. We'll use the **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide** that came out in the November 2015 Edge Support Shipment, along with the accompanying **Amplify** – and we'll mix and match some issue and social nights available on CatholicYouthMinistry.com to flesh it out.

Being a youth minister for a long time in the northeastern part of the country, I am used to school starting shortly after Labor Day. Normally, our semester kick-offs were 2 weeks later. So we'll run Edge on Wednesdays, and start with September 13, 2014 and we'll end shortly before Christmas.

- September 14 – Kick-off night – *Do-Si-Do* – from **Amplify**, Volume 10
- September 21 – Parent Night – *Inspire[d]* – from **Amplify**, Volume 6 (During the small group break, the YM stays with the parents to discuss Edge goals and plans, and to answer questions)
- September 28 – Catechetical #1 – *A New Creation* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**

- October 5 – Catechetical #2 – *Gifts and Fruits* - from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- October 12 – Issue Night – *Wild Things* – from **Amplify**, Volume 11
- October 19 – Catechetical #3 – *Lead Me* - from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- October 26 – Social Night – *All Hallows Eve* – from **Amplify**, Volume 9
- November 2 – Catechetical #4 – *Washed Clean* - from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- November 9 – Catechetical #5 – *Marry Me* - from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- November 16 – Catechetical #6 – *Following Our Leaders* - from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- November 30 – Issue Night – *It’s a Boy* – from **Amplify**, Volume 8
- December 7 – Catechetical #7 – *Pick Up Your Mat* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- December 14 – Catechetical #8 – *Represent* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- December 21 – Christmas Social Night – *“You’ll Shoot Your Eye Out, Kid!”* – from **Edge Social Nights** on www.CatholicYouthMinistry.com

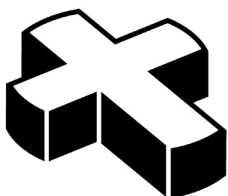
This is simply an example of how one semester can come together. In using the many resources available online, you can mix and match different issue and social nights – and you can also create your own social nights using the opportunities of your parish and the gifts of parishioners that may want help out in building community among the middle school students.

It is vital to good ministry to plan out a semester – it helps you visualize what will happen, it keeps you honest in terms of mixing up the various types of nights, and it allows you to have longer term plans.

Since it is our call and our goal to lead our youth closer to Christ, we need to be willing to cover all the different topics that are offered – even ones that may be more uncomfortable or “boring” – but that just demands that we pour even more of ourselves into the planning of both the Edge semester and each individual Edge night.

If you’re still struggling with how to plan a semester, or how it can all come together, give our staff a call. Our Parish Support Team is here specifically to help you in ministry this way – and it is honestly the best part of our role here.

Thank you for your desire and willing to lead our youth closer to Christ – it is an honor to work with such inspiring people all over the world on this enormous and incredibly blessed mission. Let Christ be the leader of the ministry – and keep the goals of leading youth closer to Him in your heart and mind constantly. Know that we are praying for you!



EDGE NIGHTS: WELCOMING, ENGAGING, STRUCTURED & DYNAMIC

Most middle school youth are trying to figure out if they are a kid or a “young adult.” Homework takes up more time, friends form cliques, and parents become a little more stern. Through all this and more, middle school youth are simply trying to figure out where they fit in.

When it comes to your Edge Nights, imagine that you are in middle school. Walk through your entire Edge Night from the moment you get out of your parents’ car, to the moment you get back in. As you do this, ask yourself: Is this Edge Night welcoming, engaging, structured, and dynamic?

WELCOMING

Imagine that you are a youth coming to the Edge for the first time. As you get out of your mom’s car, do you know what building to go in? Perhaps you know the right building, but do you know the right door? Sometimes, church campuses are like labyrinths with endless possibilities. Choose the wrong door, and you could be walking the school hallway for days. In this hypothetical situation, did anyone greet you outside, make you feel welcome, and point you in the right direction?

ENGAGING

Even after you find the right building and the right door, do you know where to go once you get inside? There could be a few meetings going on around the parish grounds. Does the Edge meeting location stick out for middle school youth? Is it obvious from the moment they arrive? Are they automatically engaged in what is going on? All of this starts off the night on the right foot. Be welcoming and engaging up front. This does not happen by accident. It is intentional, and it means the entire Core Team has to work together to welcome and engage the middle school students from the moment they arrive.

STRUCTURED

A strong sense of structure at Edge Nights is essential. The four main components that make up the backbone of every Edge Night are: Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send.

GATHER - The Gather welcomes the youth and introduces the night. Games or icebreakers help the youth disengage from anything going on at home or school while allowing them to focus for the Edge Night. They can also break down barriers between the youth, help to get out some of their energy, or get them thinking by doing an activity directly related to the topic.

PROCLAIM - The Proclaim is the teaching portion of the night. While it may be tempting to think that this means the youth minister talks from the front of the room for 15 minutes, this is not the case. There are numerous ways to present information such as a panel discussion, a teen witness, audio and video clips, or rotating sessions. It is also good to get a variety of faces up front to do teachings, including Core Members, priests, deacons, or other members of your parish community. Above all, keep teachings short and simple, and engage the youth in as many ways as possible by making it relevant to their lives. As a Core Team, constantly work on ways to present creatively so the young people will want to grasp, remember, and apply the teaching.

BREAK - The Break is where the rubber hits the road. The youth have heard about a truth of our faith or how to deal with an issue in our world. Now, they have the opportunity to break it open on their level. This will take many forms over the course of a year: small group discussion,

reflection sheets, personal prayer time, discussion with a partner, skit creation, poster board creation, and many more dynamic activities to help the youth understand what they learned. Most importantly, the Break is where the young people have a chance to hear from each other and express their own feelings and understandings. This is not a time for the small group leader to correct something from the Proclaim, to finish a teaching, or to give a speech of their own. Rather, the role of the small group leader is to facilitate the discussion and any other activities.

SEND - While the Send may begin by presenting a poster board or skit from small groups, it is ultimately a crucial opportunity for the youth to be led into a time of prayer. Take time to carefully plan the Send while leaving room for the Holy Spirit to move in their hearts. Do not sell the youth short. Help them experience the depth of prayer our Church has to offer, and do not rush this part of the night. Once the prayer experience concludes, the youth minister should challenge the young people to do something daily to remember what they learned at Edge. After this, wrap up the Edge Night with any announcements, and invite them to return next week.

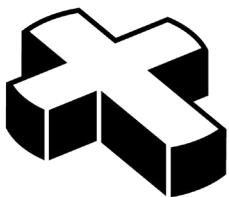
Middle school youth need structure so be attentive to different ways you can help them feel more comfortable even outside the four main parts of the night. For example, many parishes will break the room into sections based on grade level. Then, in each of those sections, there is a designated space for each small group to gather and check in when they arrive. The youth may run around until the night gets started, but once it starts, they know exactly where to go. This structure creates a sense of comfort and routine while providing a quick way to start the night and gain control of the room.

DYNAMIC

Once you've established a sense of welcome, engagement, and structure, now you have the fun task of making your ministry dynamic. Use the gifts of your Core Team to think "outside the box" and plan with the realities of your parish's time, space, and resources in mind. Keep your standards high and give the young people your very best!

As you go forward as a Core Team, continually walk through each Edge night as a middle school youth, from the moment you get out of your parents' car until the moment you get back in. Ask yourself if every component is welcoming, engaging, structured, and dynamic? If it's not, what can you do to improve?

God has called you and your team to this awesome ministry, and all of us here at Life Teen want to thank you for your yes. As a movement, we want to support you in your quest to lead teens closer to Christ and are honored to be working with you in this vital ministry. Know that you are not alone. We are here to pray with you, pray for you, or support you in any other way. Call, email, or reach out to us at any time. Together, we can ensure that each middle school youth encounters Jesus Christ.



RECRUITING AND TRAINING ADULT AND TEEN CORE MEMBERS

One of the greatest perks of being involved with youth ministry at a parish is the community of the Core Team. Being able to journey with, pray with, and work with a group of people who are all striving to bring youth closer to Christ is a true blessing. That being said, recruiting the right people to be a part of this community can be one of the hardest jobs for a youth minister.

When it comes to recruiting both adult's and high school teens to be a part of your Core Team here are a few steps to follow.

1. Begin in prayer and ask God to lead you to the people who will be best for your youth and your Edge program.
2. Talk to your people around your parish, the priest, the DRE, the deacon, about people who would be well suited to be on an Edge Core Team.
3. Meet with any potential Core Member face to face.
4. Make sure that you have a clear idea of the direction and vision for your Edge Program so that when you meet with potential Core Members you can share this vision with them and see if they would fit in.
5. Share with the potential Core Members the basic information about Edge and the expectations for Core Members (See **Edge Nights: Welcoming, Engaging, Structured, and Dynamic** and **Core Member Expectations and Responsibilities**).
6. Spend time in prayer to discern if this specific person is called to be a part of your Edge Core Team.

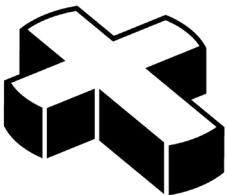
When it comes to recruiting high school youth to be a part of your Edge Core Team there are a few extra things to look out for in addition to walking through the above process. Here are a few tips when it comes to recruiting high school teens:

1. Be aware of any of their other extra curricular activities, they may have good intentions but not enough time.
2. Make sure that they are active in the Life Teen program; they need to be fed spiritually before they can minister to the middle school youth.
3. Pick teens that are leaders and do not just want to be on Core only because their friends are doing it.

Once you have your Core Team assembled that is not the end of your job. If you want to be effective in reaching out to your youth, you have to equip your Core Team. Here are a few steps that can get you started in your training process:

1. Make sure that all of your Core Members are up to date with any of your diocesan Safe Environment regulations and training.
2. Before your Edge semester starts have a Core Training day and walk your Core Team through an Edge Night and explain their potential roles (See **Small Group Facilitation** and the **Edge Core Handbook** available at store.lifeteen.com).
3. Make sure that your Core Team understands the basics and importance of relational ministry (See **Edge Core Handbook**).
4. Go and visit other parishes that have been doing Edge for a while for the Core Team to get an idea of what a well run Edge Night looks like.
5. Continually pray as individuals and as a Core Team for your ministry and all the youth that you will serve.

Having a good Core Team that you can trust to do their jobs well will be a huge blessing to your Edge program. It is a difficult job to recruit and train, but if you stick with it you will bear much fruit in your ministry. If you have any further questions about Core Team recruiting and training contact your regions Parish Support Team Member.



CORE MEMBER EXPECTATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Why would high school students and adults across the world give their time and energy to hang out with middle school youth every week? Because as they watch this remarkable age group build a relationship with Christ and journey along with them through their trials and joys, they realize the reward is greater than their effort.

Edge Core Members are the heart and soul of the middle school youth ministry experience. One of the main tasks of Core Members is to lead small groups. In teams of two or three, Edge Core members facilitate small group discussions and activities during Edge Nights. Session plans should be distributed to Core Members in advance so that they can review and prepare each session for their small group. Edge Core Members typically remain with the same group of middle school youth throughout the entire year. This allows Core Members and middle school youth the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships. Other tasks for Core Members may include helping out with opening and closing prayers, performing skits, or giving witness/catechetical talks to the large group.

As much as you want people to join the Core Team, it is essential to be clear and honest up front with potential and new Core Members. Glossing over certain responsibilities just so people will say yes can lead to scrambling later in the year when they walk away from a commitment they never intended to make. Your parish will need to create the specific ministry description and set of expectations and requirements for the Core Members. Here are some examples of what may be included.

Basic Edge Ministry Requirements:

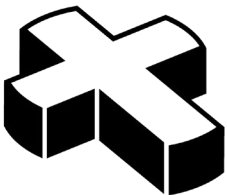
- A love for Christ and middle school youth.
- A desire to minister to middle school youth on a weekly basis.
- A willingness to serve as a Christian role model.
- A weekly commitment to Sunday liturgy.

Edge Core Member Commitments:

- Commit to Edge ministry and middle school youth for one year.
- Attend annual Core Team retreat day and necessary Core Team meetings during the year.
- Participate in the Core Team Training/Team Building session on (insert information).
- Attend Edge Nights consistently. Relationships are built by spending time together. Your consistent attendance models a commitment to your faith.
- Commit to your parish's weekly Edge night agenda. Here is what that time may look like:
 - 6:40-6:50 - Quick Core meeting to review night's plan.
 - 6:50-7:00 - Welcome, greet, and talk to youth.
 - 7:00-8:30 - Focus on roles for the night and ministering to the youth.
 - 8:30-8:40 - Say goodbye, get to know youth waiting for their parents, and greet parents picking up their son or daughter.
 - 8:40-8:50 - Review the night. Distribute and discuss next week's Edge Night.
- Work with a partner to run small groups, which may include small group discussions, simple projects, and other small group activities. To lead a successful small group, you should:

- Know the names of the youth in your small group.
 - Establish a relationship with the youth in your group. Adults are very influential at this age and can have a profound impact in a middle school youth's spiritual and emotional development.
 - Listen to the stories of your small group members, and be willing to share your own.
 - Challenge the middle school youth to develop a deeper relationship and commitment to Jesus and the Catholic Church.
 - Get to know the parents of the youth in your small group.
 - Find Christ in the youth, and share that awareness with others.
 - Be willing to discipline, remain positive, and find the youth minister for help if needed.
 - Follow your diocesan rules for Safe Environment at all times.
-
- Come to Edge prepared by reading through the Edge Night in advance so you can successfully lead your group through the night's activities.
 - Attend the annual Edge retreat.
 - Follow the parish's discipline policy, and work with youth ministers if discipline issues arise.
 - Be open to new experiences, and try things you have never tried before. Be willing to lead prayer, present to the large group, and perform in skits.
 - Be risky, silly, and goofy for the Gospel, but at the same time, remain the adult in the group.

These are only a few of the suggested requirements and commitments you can make for your Core Team. Be sure to adapt it to your specific parish needs and vision for your Edge program. For further help with Core Training, check out the Edge Core Handbook available online in the Life Teen store at store.lifeteen.com.



EDGE CORE MEMBER APPLICATION

WHAT THE TEENS NEED FROM YOUTH MINISTRY

Changing the youth world happens one teen at a time. Teens do not connect to programs; they connect to people. The most effective way to influence teens is through relationships. Our goal is to develop leaders who will walk the journey to Christ with teens.

TEENS NEED ADULTS WHO WILL:

- Love God
- Remember their names
- Be interested in their lives
- Pray for them
- Be authentic
- Encourage and challenge them
- Believe in them
- Laugh
- Share God's love through personal experience
- Be reliable through the ministry
- Be patient
- Enjoy life
- Strive to live the seven Core values (Love, Evangelization, Joy, Vocation, Affirmation, Authenticity, Eucharistic Spirituality)

THE THREE COMMITMENTS OF CORE MEMBERS:

CHRIST. Your first and foremost "Yes!" is to Jesus Christ, and living out your faith in Him through the teachings of our Catholic Church. This yes is what has drawn you to the parish, to the community of the Core Team, to youth ministry, and ultimately, to the teens you are committing to drawing closer to Him.

YOUTH. Not just the youth that walk in for Edge nights, but all youth - no matter where you encounter them. In your yes to being on Core, you are saying yes to advocating for youth in any circumstance, to believing in the good in them, and believing in what Christ has in store for them. You are also committed in a special way to the youth that are participating in the Edge ministry, to being reliably present through Edge and beyond.

THE YOUTH MINISTRY. Notice that doesn't say "Youth Minister?" You are committed to all the other Core Members, to the Pastor, to the parents, and to the youth. When you give your yes as a Core Member, you are committing to more than a program, more than a person (the youth minister), and more than a handful of youth that you might have in small group weekly. It is all of that and so much more.

SEVEN CORE VALUES OF LIFE TEEN

LOVE

“We love because He first loved us” – 1 John 4:19. We must strive in all moments and circumstances to love others as Christ loved. This foundation, simple in premise and command, serves as the basis for our ministry.

EVANGELIZATION

We speak truth to God’s people, inviting them to know Him more deeply. Driven by a desire for all to know the mercy and love of God the Father.

JOY

We live by an unrelenting belief in the goodness of God, and in His desire not for our momentary happiness, but our everlasting life. The spirit of our Youth and Worship ministries is one of pure joy, keeping life in perspective and allowing the peace of God to reign in our hearts, regardless of what the world might bring at any given moment.

VOCATION

We maintain openness to the call of God in our lives and a willingness to discern, respond and prioritize our lives according to that call. Whether designed for the religious, married, or single life, we not only embrace the vocation we were designed for, but insure that it remains primary, not allowing God’s work in ministry to overtake God’s call to holiness.

AFFIRMATION

We refuse to be overwhelmed by the negativity pervading our culture. Words and actions are designed by the Creator to bring life to creation, not death. We make every effort and take every opportunity to build up the Kingdom on Earth, rather than tear it down.

AUTHENTICITY

We live authentically, not denying our human weakness or shying away from the need for personal improvement, but working toward holiness, with resolve. The world needs quality examples of Catholic men and women who live out their faith. As leaders in ministry, we live our faith authentically, providing the living example of a Christian and giving hope that others, too, can follow Christ.

A EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

We seek to become one with Christ in all ways. Through a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother, we develop a more profound understanding of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Scriptures, we grow in sanctity through the Incarnate Word. Through openness to the Charisms of the Holy Spirit, we allow God’s love to permeate this world. Through adherence to the Church that our Lord established, we act in obedience and humility. Through our frequenting of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist in Most Holy Communion, we become one with the living God. These intimate experiences with Christ are unmistakable signs of His love.

CORE MEMBER APPLICATION

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

Current Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Cellphone _____

Alternate Phone _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____

EDUCATION

Presently, I am in college. _____ (College & year)

I graduated from college. _____ (College)

I graduated from high school in _____ (year).

INVOLVEMENT

I have been a member of _____ parish for _____ years/months.

I have worked or volunteered at _____ parish.

I have...

taught or assisted in a religious education program in _____ parish.

assisted in a youth ministry/ Life Teen program in my post high school years.

served as a lector, Eucharistic minister, alter server, and/or choir member at a parish.

served in a parish or diocese in other capacities (i.e. coordinated or assisted with the parish festival, assisted in the parish or diocesan office, etc.)

What are some areas you can see yourself in?

Environment

Resource Coordinator

Development

Food Ministry

Web Development

AV/Tech

Retreat Staff

Prayer Ministry

Publicity

Small Group Leadership

Large Group Presentation

Other: _____

(Please answer the following on a separate sheet and attach. This will work as a starting point for when we get together sometime soon to discuss where you may fit with serving as a part of youth ministry at the parish.)

- Write a little bit about how you have come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- How would you describe your spiritual journey right now?
- What do you do when you have a conflict with someone? How do you handle confrontation?
- Are there any special issues or concerns happening in your life right now that would have an impact on your commitment and involvement in the youth ministry? (e.g., relationships, other commitments, etc.)
- Why do you want to be involved in the Youth Ministry?
- What are some of your expectations of the Youth Ministry, the Life Teen staff, and the parish staff?

This form is for the use of the parish youth ministry staff. It will also be necessary for you to complete the diocesan volunteer application, along with all forms and protocols necessary for background checks and participate in the required diocesan safe environment training. All forms and class times will be provided for you.

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I, the undersigned, give my authorization to release any and all records or information relating to working with minors. Life Teen Ministries may contact my references and appropriate government agencies as deemed necessary in order to verify my suitability as a minister to the youth. I understand that the personal information in this application will be held confidential by the professional parish staff.

Signature _____ Date _____

CODE OF CONDUCT

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Volunteer's Code of Conduct.

As a volunteer I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at parish activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor.
- Report suspected abuse to the pastor, or appropriate supervisor and the local Child Protection Services agency or other civil authorities.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

As a volunteer, I will not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations)
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

I understand that as a volunteer working with children and/or youth, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take any action as outlined in this Code of Conduct may result in my being asked to no longer volunteer in my parish.

Print Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

“COFFEE TALK” WITH A POTENTIAL CORE MEMBER

I advocate for having a one on one discussion with all potential Core Members, even if you know them outside of the ministry. Having a focused discussion about the ministry is an important in the discernment process – both for you as Youth Minister and the potential Core Member.

The Core Team is a community on it's own. It is a community with the mission of leading teens closer to Christ at the heart of it, but fostering and creating this community aspect is an important component of that. How a potential Core member fits into that team is something to keep in mind.

After someone has expressed interest in being part of the Core Team, and has filled out the Core Member Application, invite them for coffee or lunch.

The following are a few discussion points and questions. Approach this as more of a directed conversation, and less of an interview. Remember, you are not interrogating someone; you are having a conversation with them about helping to lead youth closer to Christ!

Here are some discussion points to potentially hit upon in your conversation:

- Open your time together with prayer.
- Begin by thanking them for their desire and willingness to be a part of this exciting ministry!
- Share with them a glory story or two from over the past year – this will give a glimpse into what they might be walking into.
- Share with them what youth ministry looks like right now in the parish.
- If you are in a building phase, let them know what you hope the ministry will look like in a year.
- Make it clear what the expectations are for Core members – and do not sugarcoat this to make it seem like less. Be authentic about what the whole commitment is.
- Hearing all of that, I want to just hear your reactions and thoughts to what we have going on, and what the big picture looks like...
- Why do you want to serve on the Edge Core Team?
- What are some of the biggest strengths you'd be bringing to Edge?
- There is bound to be conflict arising with youth, other Core, or myself. Can you give me an example of conflict you've been in and how you've handled it?
- Tell me about your family – growing up, and how it looks today.
- If a young person asked you, “Why should I care about Jesus or the Catholic Church?” how would you respond?
- Describe your prayer life as it is now.
- Thank them again for their time, their desire to answer the call Christ has placed on their heart, and their willingness to join the Edge ministry!

I wouldn't conclude asking them for an answer on whether or not they would join the Core Team. I'd ask them to pray about it, and talk with some important people in their life about it, (giving me time to pray about it also) and that I would reach out to them in about a week to talk more about it and see where their heart is. After that week, give them a call, ask how their discernment has gone, and where they believe Christ is calling them.

If they are saying yes – praise God first! – and then be sure to clarify when they can fill out the diocesan volunteer application, get their background check taken care of, and get them set-up for safe environment training. Also, be sure to communicate upcoming Core meetings, planning times, etc.

SMALL GROUP FACILITATION

Small groups are a key part of every Edge Night. It is during this time that the youth are given an opportunity to discuss what they learned during the Proclaim. With the guidance of the small group leader, they are able to take the message of the teaching and apply it to their own lives.

It is important during small groups to create an atmosphere where the youth feel free and open to discuss their thoughts. They will only articulate their feelings of how the teaching challenges them, upsets them, pushes them, affects them, or convicts them if they feel comfortable. In order to create this type of an environment, keep the following things in mind.

It is imperative with Edge youth that the transition from the Proclaim to the Break is smooth and swift. If they are unsure of where to go, or if it takes them a while to get into their small groups, they may lose focus and thus you lose momentum for the discussion.

To continue with this smooth transition, it is key that the Core Members are prepared to lead the small group discussions. Make sure that the Core Members are not only familiar with the topic that was just taught during the Proclaim, but also that they have looked over the small group questions ahead of time. Also, if there is any sort of small group activity, make sure to have all the needed supplies before the small group time starts.

Starting in prayer is a great way to not only invite God into the discussions, but to also set the tone for the small groups. Choosing who starts in prayer is up to the discretion of the small group leader. It is a good idea to have a Core Member start the prayer for the first few Edge Nights until you get a feeling for the youth in your particular group. If you decide to have a middle school youth open in prayer it is usually best to not put them on the spot. Ask them the week before if they would like to lead prayer next week, or just ask if any youth wants to open in prayer.

One small thing that can make a huge difference is how you sit in your small groups. It is best to all be on the same level, including the small group leader. That means if one person is sitting in a chair, everyone should be sitting on a chair. Essentially it will help with the small group discussion if everyone is at the same eye level and feels comfortable.

All of these little things as you enter into your time in small groups can really help to set the tone and set up the small group time for success.

Small groups is not a time for the leader to finish the teaching or to talk about their own opinions about the teaching. It is also not a time for a question and answer directed at the small group leader. It is **a time for the youth to respond and reflect the small group leader is only there to help guide and facilitate the discussion and activities.** If you are struggling with the behavior of certain youth in your group there are a few simple things to do. You can sit in between two youth if they are being disruptive, if you have only one youth responding tell them that their opinion is important but that you want to hear from other youth. If you are having a hard time getting a response at all, give the youth a few minutes to think of an answer to the question and then go around in a circle and have each youth respond. Do not be afraid to send a youth to the youth minister if they are being disrespectful or are too much to handle.

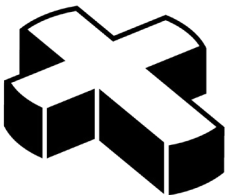
It is always important during the small group discussions and activities to keep relational ministry in mind. This time is just as much about building relationship with the middle school youth as it is helping them grasp the main ideas from the Proclaim. Encourage the small group leaders to learn the names of the youth in their group and to pray for them and their intentions throughout every week – it is also good to tell the youth that they have been praying for them so that they know how much they matter and that they are remembered.

Small groups is a time of sharing our faith, our hearts, and our experiences – thus small groups should always be a place free of judgment where the youth feel safe sharing their thoughts. Make sure that the youth have common respect for each other and know that it is not okay to turn what someone shared in small groups into gossip around school or the youth group.

Once you have mastered these basics of small groups and have a handle on your groups behavior and participation, it is time to take it to the next level. It is important to **continually challenge you small group by taking them deeper into their discussion**. Ask them to share more than one word answers and to really explain what they are thinking. A lot of times too youth know what you want to hear and will share that rather than what they really think, as you build relationships if you suspect this continue to encourage the to share their own unique thoughts.

Also **do not be afraid of silence**, while it may feel awkward at times the youth may just need some extra time to formulate their thoughts. The more you can foster in them confidence in their thinking the more they will continue to open up as you challenge them.

As you continue on and continue to grow as a small group and in confidence as a small group leader, remember that not every small group time has to bring about conversion or incredible discussion. There may be times that you have horrible small group experiences or really challenging youth. It is in these times that we must not be discouraged or give up and realize that each youth that has been put in our paths is there for a reason and we are called to lead them to Christ. Remember to be patient with them and to continue to do the best to your ability and know that if you stick with it and work with them in patience and love you will allow God to do what He needs to in their lives and their hearts.



THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF FACILITATING SMALL GROUPS

THE DO'S

- Start small group time in prayer.
- Remind everyone that what is said is not to be repeated outside of the small group.
- Use fun opening questions to help the youth get to know each other more.
- Use small group questions to help facilitate discussion and conversation.
- Include everyone in the conversation.
- Hold back some of the stronger personalities through positive acknowledgement, and stating a desire to hear what others have to share.
- Try different strategies to help shier youth participate such as going around in the circle to let everyone share an answer.
- Always be attentive and listen to what the youth have to say.
- Affirm and thank the youth for sharing.
- Do not be afraid to allow times of silence.
- Read through the small group discussion and activity plans before the Edge Night.
- Have all the necessary materials for small group activities before small groups start.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead the discussion, and if you get off topic gently guide the youth back to some of the small group questions.

THE DON'TS

- Do not give another teaching or finish the teaching with what you think should have been said.
- Do not dominate the conversation; this is not a time to share all your opinions and advice but to let the youth respond.
- Do not just power through the small group questions, or feel pressured to make it through the whole list.
- Do not just let one youth respond or a few dominate the whole small group time, be sure to hear at least once from every youth.
- Do not allow or permit taunting or bullying of any kind.
- Do not be unprepared, the youth will know.

BEHAVIOR STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

It is important to let the middle school youth know what the expectations and behavior standards are for them at Edge. When we set expectations high, youth often exceed them; but if we do not give clear give expectations and standards, then we have nothing to hold them accountable to. It is important to be clear from the very beginning as to what acceptable behavior is at Edge in general, in their small groups, and that there are consequences for misbehaving.

At every Edge Night it is important for the youth, and the Core Members to be attentive, focused, and respectful. Disruptive behavior, or conduct that distracts from or interrupts any part of the Edge Night, cannot be tolerated. Here are some basic guidelines for some positive expectations to set up for the youth:

1. Respect Others
 - a. Listen while others are speaking or giving directions.
 - b. Do what the youth minister and Core Members ask of you.
 - c. Use positive words and speaking tone when talking to others.
 - d. Treat others like you want to be treated.
2. Stay On Task
 - a. Go where you are asked to go in a timely manner.
 - b. Participate fully in all the activities and discussions.
 - c. Do not sit by anyone who will distract you during teachings or small groups.
3. Know Your Boundaries
 - a. Respect personal boundaries of others.
 - b. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
 - c. During small group activities take turns, share, and be courteous to your group members.

It is important when teaching and promoting good behavior among the youth that there are not only clear expectations, but also clear consequences to bad behavior. It is always easier to have this set in place from the beginning so that you can remind the youth that they were told of the consequences and that they would be held to them.

Here are some basic consequence examples you may want to consider implementing in your own program.

Verbal Warnings:

In general verbal warnings should be enough for a middle school youth to be reminded of the behavior that is expected of them. A Core Member, as a first step in discipline can give this warning; it is useful at all stages of the Edge Night and especially during small groups.

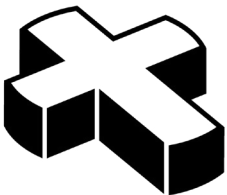
Separation:

If bad behavior continues and a verbal warning is not enough, the Core Member can proceed to separate the youth. This can be done in a few ways, during large group activities, the Proclaim, or small group time a Core Member can either sit between or next to youth who are misbehaving and separate them from each other or ask one of them to move. If this still is not enough, separate the youth from the large group and have him or her go and talk with the youth minister or another adult designated to deal with behavior issues.

Parents Contacted:

If the inappropriate behavior continues and all of the above strategies have been utilized, the next step can be to contact the youth's parents. This can be done after the Edge Night, or if the behavior continues. What the Teens Need from Youth Ministry

Changing the youth world happens one teen at a time. Teens do not connect to programs; they connect to people. The most effective way to influence teens is through relationships. Our goal is to develop leaders who will walk the journey to Christ with teens.



WELCOME TO EDGE BEACH BASH

AN EDGE MINISTRY KICKOFF

SCRIPTURE

John 10:10

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Hawaiian leis
- Camera
- Hula hoops
- Beach ball
- Hula Skirt

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

- Song: "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole (*Alone in IZ World*, Mountain Apple Company)
- Song: "Hawaiian Rollercoaster Ride" by Kamehameha Schools Children (*Lilo & Stitch*, Walt Disney Records)
- Song: "He Mele No Lilo" by Kamehameha Schools Children (*Lilo & Stitch*, Walt Disney Records)

EDGE NIGHT GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is to kickoff the Edge ministry by having fun and building community. This night will build excitement for the youth and get them interested in the new Edge ministry. This is a great night to do some relational ministry and to start getting to know all the youth.

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

This Edge Night is packed full of fun Hawaiian Luau games for the youth. This is a kickoff night so it is meant to build community and momentum for your Edge ministry. This is a time for the youth minister and the Core Team to start getting to

know the youth and get them excited about coming to Edge.

This night is all about fun, so do not be afraid to go all out with the decorations and games! The night starts by introducing the Core Team and youth minister, followed by some fun large group games. There is a brief Proclaim, allowing the youth minister to explain that Edge is a great opportunity for the youth to grow in their faith, make new friends, and, of course, have fun! The night will end with a time of large group prayer and announcements about the next Edge Night.

ENVIRONMENT

Create a beach feel with some fun Hawaiian Luau decorations. Check out your local party store; they usually have really cheap decorations. Consider getting leis for each of the youth as they walk in, and have the Core Team and youth minister wear their best Hawaiian shirts. Play fun and upbeat music as the youth walk in, and create a very welcoming and friendly environment.

CORE TEAM FORMATION

This is the first Edge Night, and first impressions count. Make sure that the Core Team is ready to do some relational ministry. Check out a few of the online training videos on relational ministry to get some ideas on how to strike up conversations with youth. Remember that relational ministry is simply showing youth that you care by talking to them and learning their names.

Challenge your Core Team to meet at least 10 youth and remember half of those names. Next week welcome those youth by name. This night is all about having fun and getting the youth excited

about coming to Edge. Remember that the Core Team should be participating in all of the games and activities.

TO THE PARENTS

Tonight is our first ever Edge Night. This dynamic youth ministry is designed just for your middle school child and brings the faith to them in a fun and relevant way. Tonight was our kickoff, and we focused mainly on having fun and building community. We want the youth to be excited to come and learn about their faith while making great friends.

Please join us for our next Edge Night on _____. During this night, we will explain to your child more about what Edge will look like, and they will meet their Core Members and small groups. This will also be a time for you as a parent to get familiar with the way an Edge Night runs. We will have a short informational meeting for you during the night while the youth do team building activities.

GATHER

LUAU WELCOME AND PICTURES

(5 min)

Go all out as the youth walk in. Have fun music playing, and make sure the Core Team is meeting the youth. If possible give each young person a lei as they walk in.

This is also a great time to take pictures of the youth to help you start learning their names and faces. As they walk in and sign in, direct them to get their picture taken. They can wear their lei, and consider having a fun Hawaiian background up for the pictures. As they get their pictures taken, make sure that a Core Member is keeping track of which name goes with which photo. After this night, make either a book or banner with each of the pictures and names of the youth. Put it somewhere that the youth minister and Core Team can see to start learning their names.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

(10 min)

Gather all the youth together in a large group. Have the youth minister introduce him or herself by sharing a few fun and random facts. Give a brief introduction to the Edge ministry, and get the youth excited about their new youth group. Make sure that you emphasize that Edge is a great way for the youth to not only learn more about their faith but to meet new friends who can journey with them through middle school and on to high school.

At this time, introduce the Core Team. Have some fun music playing, and announce each Core Member with fun facts about him or her. Be as creative and goofy as you want. Remember the more fun you have and the more willing you are to be silly, the more the youth will open up and participate throughout the night.

HAWAIIAN HULA HOOP PASS

(10 min)

Supplies:

- Hula hoops
- Hawaiian prizes
- Hawaiian music

Have the youth line up in a few lines. Depending on how many youth you have, make lines of 15-25 youth. You can have them break up randomly or make it a competition between the different grades.

For this game, instruct the youth to stand in a straight line, facing the same direction shoulder-to-shoulder, and holding hands. Then give each youth at one end of the line a hula hoop, and instruct the youth to pass it to the other end of the line without letting go of each other's hands. Essentially they will have to figure out how to step their bodies through the hula hoop to get it to the next person. While they pass the hula hoop, play some fun Hawaiian music.

The first line to get it from one end of the line and back is the winner. Have a fun prize for the winning team.

BEACH BALL HOT POTATO

(10 min)

Supplies:

- Beach balls
- Hawaiian music

Break up the youth into groups again. Make sure they are different from the Hula Hoop Pass so that they can start to get to know new people. Instruct them to sit in a circle. This game is just like hot potato, but the youth will pass a beach ball around the circle.

Play Hawaiian music as they pass the beach ball, and when the music stops, whoever is holding the beach ball must stand up and introduce him or herself. Have the youth say his or her name, what grade he or she is in, and their favorite (fruit, movie, ice cream, cereal...). If the beach ball lands on the same youth more than once, have him or her pass the ball to the person to his or her right. Play this game for as much time as you can or until all the youth have introduced themselves.

KUMA HULA SAYS

(10 min)

Supplies:

- Hula dancer outfit

In this rendition of "Simon Says," have a Core Member come to the front to be the Kuma Hula (hula teacher). The Core Member should be dressed like a hula dancer to make the game more entertaining, but keep it modest.

The game will proceed in the same fashion as "Simon Says," but the youth must only do the action that "Kuma Hula" says. Any youth who does not follow what "Kuma Hula" says is out. Play until there is one youth left, and have a prize for that youth.

HAWAIIAN LIMBO CONTEST

(10 min)

Supplies:

- Limbo stick

Gather all of the youth together and have them make one long line. Have two of the Core Members holding the limbo stick and challenge the youth to see how low they can go.

Start off holding the limbo stick fairly high off the ground and each time after all the youth have gone under the stick, lower it closer to the ground. The youth must pass under the limbo stick with out touching the stick or touching the ground with anything but their feet.

If a youth touches the stick, falls to the ground, or places their hands on the ground, they are out. Play this game until there is one youth as a winner.

PROCLAIM

“WELCOME TO EDGE” TEACHING

(10 min)

In the Gospel of John, Christ tells us that He came so that we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). How many of you want to have a happy life? How many of you want to have fun? How many of you want to make new amazing friends? How many of you want to keep coming and hanging out with your awesome Core Team? How many of you want to learn more about your faith? How many of you want to learn more about Jesus?

That is what Edge is all about. This youth group is just for you, and we are all here just for you. We are here because we want you to know how much God loves you and to teach you about this wonderful Catholic faith. Tonight has been a lot of fun and games, and while there will be more fun and games to come, Edge will also be an opportunity for you to learn more about Jesus, have opportunities to pray, and build new friendships.

We want you here, and we want you to bring your friends because we are going to have an incredible time together this year and for the years to come. So I challenge you to not only make a commitment to coming to Edge, but to also invite your friends. We have incredible things in store for you that you and all of your friends will want to be a part of!

SEND

CLOSING PRAYER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(10 min)

Lead the youth in a closing prayer. You can pray spontaneously or pray a traditional Catholic prayer. Also allow time for the youth to raise their hands and ask for specific prayers, whether it is for family, friends, school, etc.

End the night with any announcements for the youth, and be sure to invite them back to the next Edge Night. This is also a good time to hand out semester calendars for the youth to bring home (but be sure that you send one home or email one to parents as well). Finally, remind them to bring their parents to the next Edge Night.

As the youth leave, make sure that the Core Members are mingling with them, saying goodbye, and inviting them back to the next Edge Night, preferably by name.

FURTHER ADAPTATION IDEAS

- If there is one game in particular that the youth are enjoying, spend more time playing it. Do not feel pressured to play all the games suggested.
- During the Beach Ball Hot Potato Game, play a few rounds where the youth who ends up with the beach ball has to do something silly, like stand up and sing a song or run around the circle squawking like a chicken.
- If you have the space to do some of the games outside, consider making this night a BBQ and have hot dogs and hamburgers for the youth. Look into partnering with the Knights of Columbus to help cook.
- If you have a music minister available, have him or her come and play a few praise and worship songs at the end of the night.
- If you have a lot of youth in your program, have a few lines of limbo going at once.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

EDGE STARTUP NIGHT TWO

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Wood platforms
- Forms or calendars for parents

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

- Song: "Hold Us Together" by Matt Maher (*Alive Again*, Provident)
- Song: "Welcome to Life" by Matt Maher (*Welcome to Life*, OCP)

EDGE NIGHT GOAL

The goal of this night is to introduce the youth to a typical Edge Night and allow them to get to know the other youth in their small groups.

This night will also provide a time for the youth minister to get to know the parents and meet with them to answer any questions they may have.

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

The main focus of this night is for the youth to start getting to know each other, especially those who will be in their small group.

The night starts with a fun group game and is followed by a brief Proclaim explaining what a typical Edge Night looks like. The youth will then break into their small groups and have the opportunity to play some fun "getting to know you" games and do a team building activity.

During small groups there is an opportunity for the youth minister to meet with the parents and answer any questions they have. The night will end with some large group sharing and a closing prayer.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment for this night can be very simple. If you have the pictures of the youth from the previous week, put those up or have them playing in a slideshow. You could do the same with any pictures of the youth minister or Core Team. You can also put up an Edge banner and encouraging words about friendship and community.

CORE TEAM FORMATION

This night is all about your small groups. This is a great time to get to know and bond with the youth in your group.

Small groups can be tricky to facilitate at times, especially with all the different personalities of each youth.

If you are struggling or want more information on how to run small groups, ask your youth minister for some resources such as the Edge Core Handbook, articles from Amplify, or articles from the Edge Start Up Kit.

TO THE PARENTS

Your child had the opportunity tonight to get an idea of what a typical Edge Night is like and was able to meet with his or her small group. If you were not able to attend the parent meeting

tonight, be sure to contact the youth minister to get any information you need or ask any questions. Here are a few questions to ask your youth about Edge.

- What are you most excited about for Edge?
- Did you like your small group? Who is one new person you met tonight?
- What was your favorite activity you did with your small group? Why?

GATHER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

(5 min)

Gather all the youth into a large group. Introduce anyone new at Edge and recognize any birthdays. Welcome any parents who have come to the night, and begin in prayer.

“I LOVE MY FRIENDS WHO”

(10 min)

Instruct all the youth to stand in a large circle. Choose one youth or Core Member to stand in the middle of the circle. At this point, the youth in the middle of the circle will say the following phrase “I love my friends who . . .” and add in some defining factor such as, “I love my friends who are wearing jeans” or “I love my friends who play baseball.”

At that point, any youth who falls into the category must leave their spot and run to a different spot in the circle. The youth in the middle also runs to a new open spot in the circle.

The youth who is left with no new spot to stand in will then be the one to stand in the middle. The game continues like this until you are out of time.

PROCLAIM

“GETTING TO KNOW YOU” TEACHING/TESTIMONY

(5 min)

Bring up the youth minister to give a testimony. He or she should share a little about him or herself and how he or she ended up being the Edge youth minister. He or she should emphasize how God has moved in his or her life throughout the years. He or she should also discuss why Edge is so important along with why he or she is here to serve and teach the youth.

If time permits consider bringing up a few Core Members to introduce themselves, tell why they think Edge is important, and share why they are serving.

BREAK

SMALL GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

(10 min)

At this time, have all the Core Members come to the front of the room. Call out the names of all the youth that are in each Core Member’s small group and have them go to a designated area of the room. We recommend that you meet with your small group in the same spot at each Edge Night.

Once all the youth have been assigned to their small groups, let the Core Members proceed with the games and team building activities while the youth minister takes the parents to a different room.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

(10 min)

Begin your small group in prayer. Then go around the circle and have each youth introduce him or herself. They should say their name, what school they go to, and a fun fact about them. Then pose a challenge to see if any youth in the group can go around and correctly name everyone. To make it even more challenging, make all the youth get up

and move to a different spot in the circle to see if any of the youth can name everyone correctly. Then have all the youth get in line alphabetically by their first names. The catch is that they cannot talk. If your youth need more of a challenge have them next get in the correct order by their birthdays (month and day) without talking.

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

(10 min)

For this game, each youth in the small group will have the opportunity to say two things that are true about them and one thing that is a lie. Then all the youth in the group will go around and try to guess which one is a lie. The youth that guesses correctly gets to go next. This continues until all the youth have had a chance to go.

Here is an example: I have four sisters and one brother, I love dogs, and I have been to Ohio. The lie is that I have four sisters and one brother; I actually only have one sister and one brother.

If you have extra time, ask the youth some follow up questions about the truths in their life such as: what is your dog's name, tell us about your trip to Ohio, are you the oldest or youngest, etc.

ALL ABOARD

(10 min)

Supplies:

- Wooden platform

Place a two-foot-by-two-foot wooden platform in the middle of the circle. Instruct the youth that they all must stand on this platform at the same time. They cannot have any part of their body touching the ground.

Give them some time to figure this out; there will probably be some very creative ideas and attempts. The easiest way to do this is for each youth to put one foot on the box and hold hands with the youth across from them while lifting their other foot off the ground. But if your youth come up with other ways to accomplish this task, that's fine too. Be sure to give them plenty of time to figure it out before you interject any comments or suggestions.

PARENTAL INFORMATION MEETING

(35 min)

Have this meeting while the youth are doing their small group team building activities. This is a time for the youth minister to introduce him or herself to the parents and answer any questions they may have. It is a good idea to have copies of the semester calendar available for the parents, as well as information for any activities away from the parish, especially retreats. This is an essential time for you to gain the trust of the parents and their support for the ministry so that they will keep bringing their youth to the program.

During this time you can explain what Edge is in the larger context of the Life Teen movement. If possible you can also play the Life Teen Promo video (see Media Suggestions). This is also a great time to explain the vision for the ministry, why you are starting it at the parish, and what you hope to accomplish through it. Allow some time for the parents to ask any questions they may have, and make sure to lead prayer at the beginning of the meeting and at the end. Pray specifically for their children and their growing relationship with Christ.

SEND

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

(5 min)

Bring all the youth and the parents back into the large group. Ask any youth to share about their time in small groups, someone new they met, and see if any of them can name all the people in their small group. You can also have them share something fun they learned about someone or their favorite activity during small groups.

CLOSING PRAYER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(10 min)

End the night praying the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Ask the youth for any prayer intentions before beginning the prayer. Have the youth minister or a Core Member lead.

Conclude with any announcements for next week, challenge the youth to bring a friend, and thank the parents for attending. Be sure that the youth minister and Core Members are available to mingle with the youth as the leave and possibly meet the parents of the youth in their small groups.

FURTHER ADAPTATION IDEAS

- Find a creative way to split the youth into their small group such as putting their names on different colored balloons that correlate with their groups, writing their names on plastic Easter eggs and hiding them around the room, or giving them all different stickers as they walk in that correspond with their small groups.
- If you are not able to get wooden platforms for the All Aboard activity, make a two-by-two box with tape on the ground that the youth all have to stand in at the same time.

THE REASON FOR IT ALL

EDGE STARTUP NIGHT THREE

SCRIPTURE

John 3:16

CCC

430

599

654

YouCat

70

72

KEY TERMS

Jesus Christ

Tradition

Heaven

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Relay race questions
- Eucharist Adoration supplies

MEDIA

SUGGESTIONS

- Song: "How He Loves" by David Crowder Band (*All This for A King - The Essential Collection*, Sparrow)
- Song: "Christ is Risen" by Matt Maher (*Alive Again*, Provident)
- Song: "Mighty to Save" by Hillsong United (*Mighty to Save*, Hillsong United)

EDGE NIGHT GOAL

The goal of this night is to help the youth understand the importance of knowing Christ, His love for them, and how Edge can help them grow in this relationship.

EDGE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

The Edge Night begins with a fun relay race where the youth will be challenged to answer questions about Jesus Christ. There will then be a teaching about the love of Christ, the importance of knowing and following Him, and how Edge can be a tool to help the youth do that. There is a brief time for small group discussion, and the night ends with Eucharistic Adoration.

ENVIRONMENT

Put up different pictures of Jesus Christ, or project them on a screen in a slide show. Try to use a variety of photos or paintings that depict different parts of Jesus' life and ministry.

CORE TEAM FORMATION

This night is an introductory night to the basics of the love of Christ and how a personal relationship with Him is at the center of all we do.

While it may seem very basic, it is also a good time for you to reflect on who Christ is in your life and how your Catholic faith has formed you.

Take some time to read and reflect on John 3:16 as well as CCC 430 and 599. Think about the reality of who Christ is not just for these youth but for you personally. Here are some questions to reflect on:

- What is my prayer life like?
- Do I fully live out my Catholic faith?
- Do I truly believe that Jesus died for my sins and loves me?
- Do I truly believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven and that the Catholic Church

was given by Christ to show us this way to heaven?

- Do I participate regularly in the Sacraments, specifically the Eucharist and Reconciliation?
- Is my life a positive example to the youth I am serving?

TO THE PARENTS

Tonight your child learned about the love of Christ and the importance of knowing and following Him. They were also given some concrete tools of how to start living out their faith, including coming to Edge every week to learn more and make good friends.

- Here are some questions to ask your child this week.
- Why did Jesus die for you?
- Why is it important to know Jesus and love Him?
- What are some ways that you can learn more about your faith?

GATHER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

(5 min)

Welcome all the youth to the Edge Night. Introduce anyone present for the first time, and recognize any birthdays. Give a brief introduction to the night, and begin in prayer.

“WHAT DO YOU KNOW?”

RELAY RACE

(15 min)

Break the youth into their small groups. Have them line up at one end of the room while their Core Member stands on the other side of the room across from their group. Instruct the youth that they must run to their Core Member and correctly answer one of the questions.

Once they correctly answer the question, they must then run back to their small group and the next youth will do the same. If the youth cannot answer one question correctly, they may get a chance at a different question.

There are ten questions. (If you have more than ten youth in your small groups you will need to make more.) The following are just suggestions of questions you can ask the youth. Feel free to change them or adapt them in difficulty as you see fit.

1. Who is Jesus' mom? (Mary)
2. Who is Jesus' foster father and Mary's husband? (St. Joseph)
3. Jesus was born and placed in a...? (Manger)
4. How many wise men were at Jesus' birth? (Three)
5. True or False: Jesus is a part of the Trinity? (True)
6. How many disciples did Jesus have? (12)
7. True or False: Jesus walked on water? (True)
8. True or False: Jesus was able to heal people and raise them from the dead? (True)
9. Jesus was nailed to a...? (Cross)
10. True or False: Jesus died for your sins so that you could be with Him forever in heaven? (True)

PROCLAIM

“THE REASON FOR IT ALL” TEACHING

(5 min)

The teaching for this proclaim can be found on pages 40-42.

Here are the summary points:

- All of the things we hear about Jesus are more than just stories. They are very important to our lives in showing us who God is and how much He loves us.
- Knowing Jesus is a big deal. When we follow Him, we live truly happy lives on the path to heaven.

- Edge is a great place for us to learn more about Jesus, to grow in relationship with Him, and to make good friends to journey with us.

BREAK

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

(15 min)

Break the youth into their small groups, begin in prayer, and discuss the following questions.

- What is your favorite story from the life of Jesus? Is there one you heard a lot when you were a kid?
- Do you learn a lot about Jesus at home? At school?
- What are your general feelings about Mass and the other Sacraments? Do you go to them freely or only when your parents make you? Do you think this will ever change?
- Was there anything from the talk that did not make sense? Was there anything you had never heard before?
- What are some ways you are already learning about Jesus and your faith?
- What are you most excited for about Edge?

SEND

ADORATION EXPLANATION

(5 min)

Gather all of the youth back into the large group and briefly explain to them what Adoration is. Explain to them the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and how Adoration is a way for us to spend time with Jesus in prayer. Depending on your youth, they may be very comfortable with this or very confused, so be sure to be very simple yet thorough in your explanation.

ADORATION TESTIMONY

(5 min)

After the brief explanation of Adoration, invite a Core Member to give a brief testimony about an experience with God in Adoration. Make sure to

hear the testimony before the night to ensure it is something the youth will be able to understand.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

(10 min)

Lead the youth into a brief time of Adoration. Encourage them to spread out and not sit next to someone who will distract them. Also make sure that they know what appropriate behavior looks like during Adoration. Have the Core Members sit amongst the youth to be examples. If possible have your music minister present to play some music during Adoration.

SHARING AND CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS

(10 min)

After Adoration, ask a few of the youth to share about something they learned tonight or what their experience was like during Adoration. After a few youth have shared, give any announcements and close the night with a short prayer.

FURTHER ADAPTATIONS

- If you are unable to do Eucharistic Adoration, take your youth into the church or the Adoration chapel for some prayer time.

THE REASON FOR IT ALL

TEACHING

KEY WORD DEFINITIONS

Jesus Christ - The Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered crucifixion and death, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. "Jesus," which means "God saves" in Hebrew; "Christ" is a title which means "anointed".

Tradition - The message of the Gospel handed down in the Church from the Apostles and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Both the living Tradition and the written Scriptures reveal who God is through Jesus Christ.

Heaven - Eternal life with God; communion of life and love with the Trinity and all the blessed. Heaven is the state of supreme and definitive happiness, the goal of the deepest longings of humanity.

MORE THAN STORIES

We all have heard the name Jesus Christ before. For many of us we have spent our whole lives hearing about this man from our parents, our teachers, and at Church. We hear stories of the miraculous things He did during His life such as healing people who were sick, raising people from the dead, and turning water into wine at a wedding.

We have also probably heard many times about His Death and Resurrection. We learn that there was a man, who was also God, who was condemned to death unjustly, who carried a cross up the side of a mountain, and was nailed to that cross and died. Then during Easter we celebrate that Jesus conquered death, rose from the dead, and opened for us the way to heaven.

But my question to you is, do you know this man? Have you ever spoken to Him? Have you realized yet how much He loves you individually? Have you realized that He did all of this for you?

What we hear about Jesus at church or from our parents is so much more than just stories. They show us who God is, and how much He loves us.

KEY WORD
Mark 2:1-12
John 11:38-44
John 2:1-11

Luke 23:13-25
John 19:17
Mark 15:33-39
Luke 24:1-12
KEY WORD

John 3:16

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

You may be thinking, “Why is this guy such a big deal?” or “This Jesus thing is for my parents. I am too young.” But the reality is that you are not too young, and this whole Jesus thing is a big deal!

Allow the youth to raise their hands in response to these questions. How many of you want to be happy? How many of you want to be loved? How many of you do not want to be lonely? How many of you want a best friend? How many of you want to know that no matter what happens in life, everything is going to be okay? How many of you do not want to live life in fear? How many of you want to go to heaven?

It may be hard to believe, but Jesus is the answer to all of these questions. If you get to know Him and follow Him, you will be happier than you could ever imagine. He will be your best friend, never leave your side, and be with you through all the good and bad times in your life. When you have Him with you and you know His love, there is no reason to fear anything. He will set you free from all your fear and fill you with joy.

John 10:10

Jesus gives us everything that we need to live a good and happy life through the Catholic Church. If you get to know and love Jesus and follow what He teaches you through the Church, He promises that you will be truly happy and make it to heaven!

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

Jeremiah 29:11

This whole following Jesus thing may seem a bit far-fetched to you, or it may be something you have heard a lot in your life. But the bottom line is that now is the time to dive into your faith, open your heart to Jesus Christ, and get to know Him more. He has a great adventure and wonderful plans in store for your life.

Key Word

You may be wondering how you are to do this. There are many ways to get to know Christ and learn to follow Him. We learn about Him from our families, through what we learn at church, through the Sacraments, for some of you at school, and we can also get to know Jesus by praying. But another new and exciting way for you to get to know Jesus is by coming to Edge. Each and every week we will learn more and more about Jesus and all the things that He revealed to us through the Scriptures and our Catholic Traditions.

Not only will you learn about your faith at Edge, but you will also make friends to journey with you. God never intended for us to do this journey by ourselves. We are a part of a community and a family. Here at Edge we are a family, and this is a safe place for you to make friends and find people who will help you in your faith.

So as we begin this new step at our parish and this new journey together as an Edge family, I challenge you not to just show up, but to enter into all the activities and prayers we will be doing at Edge. God has incredible things in store for you at Edge and throughout your entire life. Do not be afraid to dive into this new adventure!