

When Receiving Means Releasing

 **ON THE
LEVEL**



Welcome Pam Harris

The DVULI staff liaisons welcomed Pam Harris (Kansas City 2008) to the team in September 2015. Pam assumes liaison responsibilities for Detroit and Kansas City.

As a DVULI graduate, Pam has great understanding and appreciation for our training and the follow up process. She acknowledges that she sees at least one of the five core values taught in DVULI being exercised in her life daily.

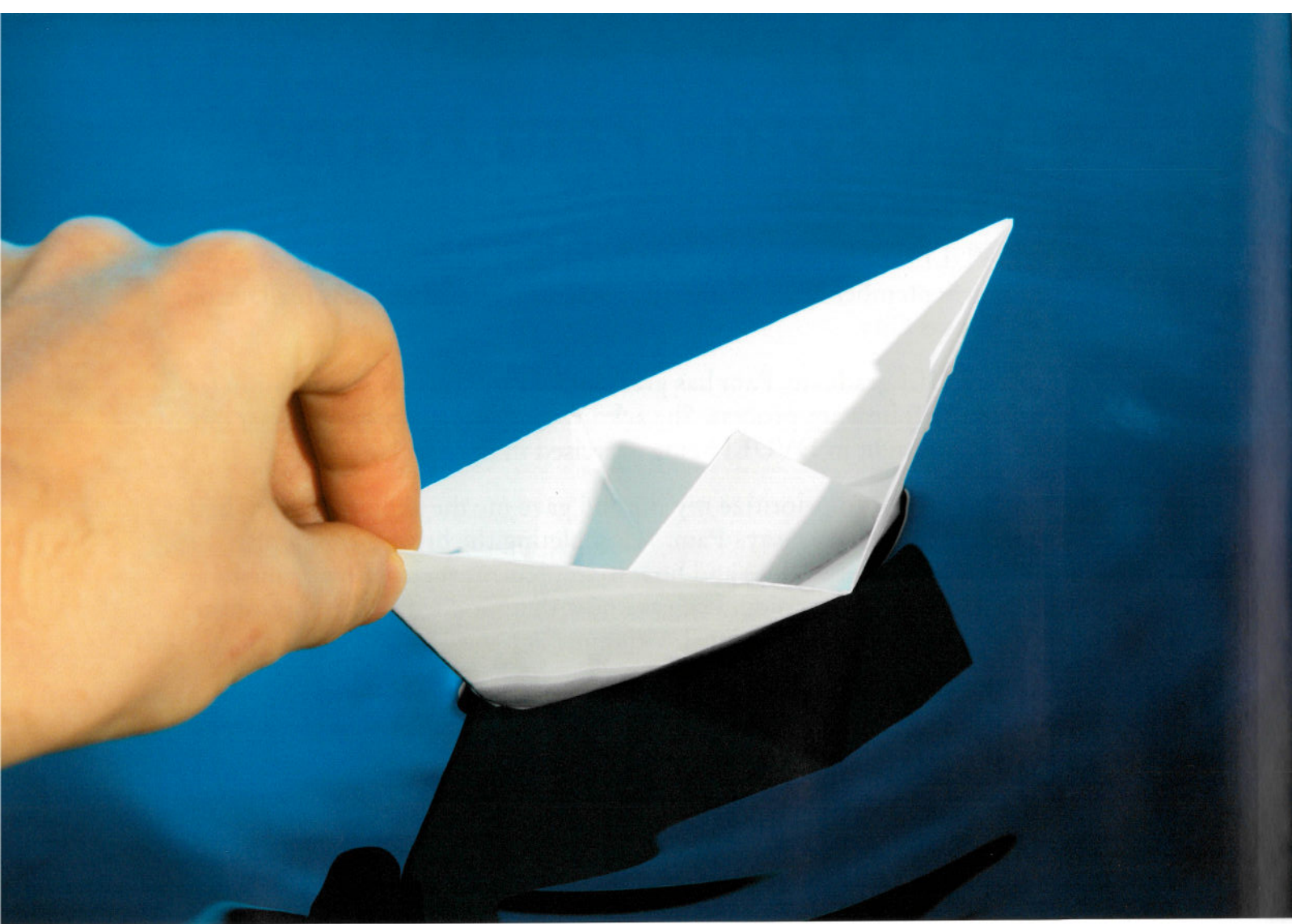
“DVULI taught me how to prioritize my life and gave me the skills needed to better my work and church ministry,” says Pam. “Completing the breakthrough plan and learning [about] the core values and how to implement them, allowed me to go deeper in my level of understanding. I can see now that God led me on this journey to become more intimate and intentional with him.”

Pam is currently the Director of Parent and Family Engagement with the Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS), where she continuously works to bridge the gap between parent liaisons, schools, principals, the community and KCPS’ stakeholders. Her efforts intently focus on providing parents and families the resources needed to engage in the education of their children.

In her added role as DVULI liaison, Pam will provide direction for proposed follow up efforts, have annual contact with alumni and coordinate new cohorts when appropriate. When notified about the appointment Pam reacted with a big Wow! “I am both grateful and thankful but the true feeling is *avored*. I don’t take opportunities like these for granted, so I am truly blessed and honored to have been chosen to work with the DVULI staff, family members and most importantly the current class and alumni,” articulated Pam. “I hope to be an encourager, motivator, accountability partner and an *out of box* thinker to help fuel the work that DVULI is currently doing.”

Already putting her passions into action, Pam has a message for the 900 plus DVULI alumni. She says it’s time to RISE.

- Reconnect with our DVULI family
- Inspire one another to be our best for God
- Support one another in our personal life and ministry
- Engage with one another to continue the journey



Letting Go

by Pete Contreras (San Diego 2008)

I am about to release the leadership baton to a young man age 27 who will launch an extension campus of our ministry. I have been mentoring him in a number of areas such as; shepherding, counseling, budgeting and even managing his own marriage and family. Letting him go is hard for me because it will mean giving away a valuable person who has our ministry's DNA. We have watched him grow into a gifted leader who cares about people and one who prays and consults with God on everything.

In parenting, we have heard it said, "More is caught than taught." And the same can be true in leadership development. My primary teaching method before releasing the baton is modeling ministry before the receiver. I have witnessed this young man pick up on what's been modeled by me and other leaders in our ministry. He understands the importance of applying core values, equipping others for ministry and consistent communication.

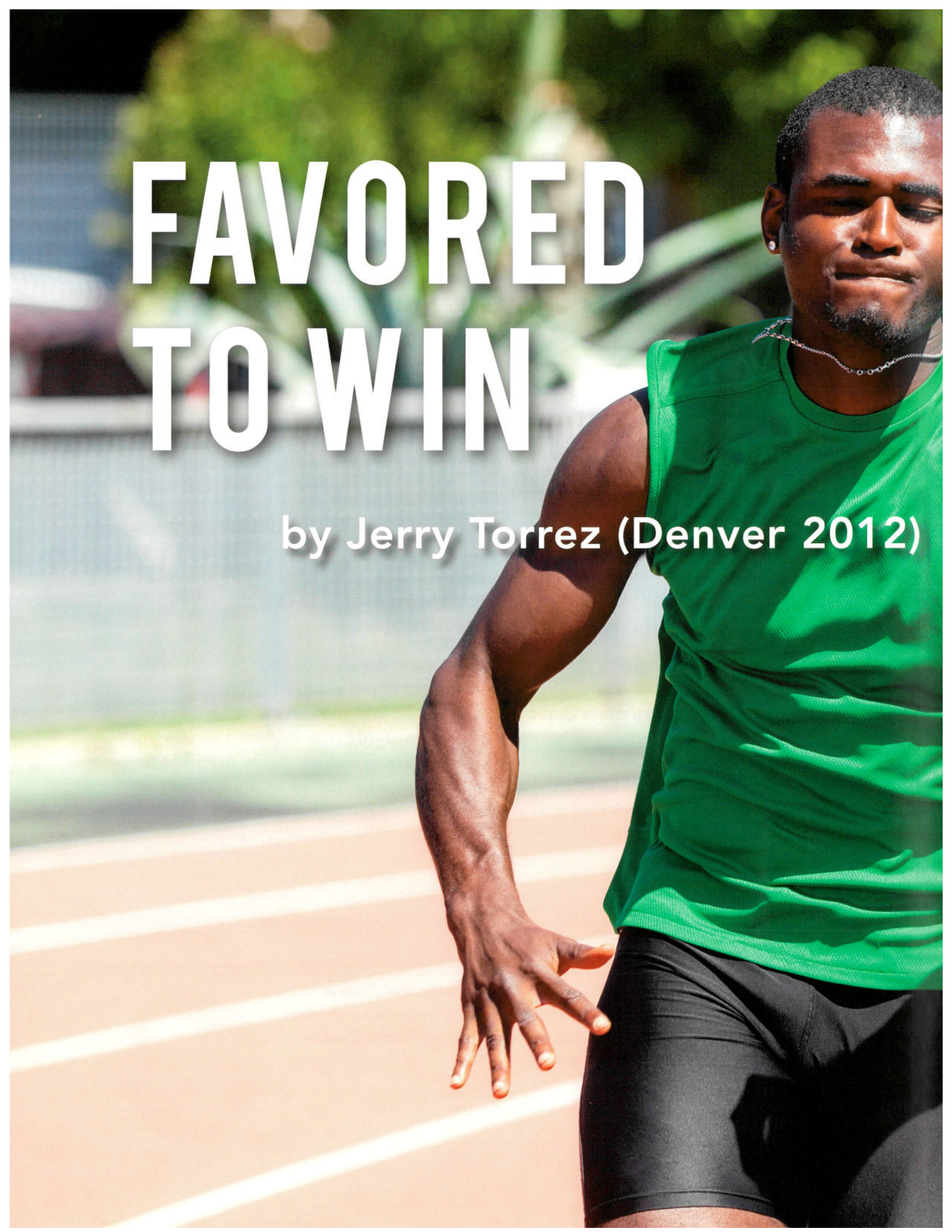
I believe that Jesus practiced modeling after he called the disciples to follow him. They watched Jesus as he served and taught the people. His miracles were to affirm who he was (Acts 2:22) and his Sermon on the Mount was a teaching time for the disciples on kingdom leadership (Matthew 5-7). Christ clearly modeled ministry for his disciples.

As the Apostle John said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth" (3 John 1:4). Moses had Joshua, Elijah had Elisha, and Jesus had an inner circle of Peter, James, and John. As a baton carrying pastor, I embrace the responsibility of identifying new leaders, investing in leaders, and empowering them to lead others. It's an awesome privilege to share the truth of God's Word and experience the joy of seeing it lived out. And while I accept that it's for the benefit of God's kingdom, it is still a challenge to let go.



Peter Contreras (San Diego 2008) is the Lead Pastor at New Vision Christian Fellowship. His passion is to develop ministries and empower others to serve. Peter is a member of the DVULI 2015 Think Tank.



A male athlete with dark skin and short hair is captured in a dynamic running pose on a reddish-brown track. He is wearing a bright green sleeveless athletic jersey and black shorts. His right arm is extended forward, and his left arm is bent at the elbow. He has a focused expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green trees and a fence. The title 'FAVORED TO WIN' is overlaid in large white letters on the left side of the image.

FAVORED TO WIN

by Jerry Torrez (Denver 2012)



A relay race is meaningless unless the baton is successfully passed from one runner to the next. A runner without a baton is running in vain. (Bob Kauflin, 2010)

I've had the privilege of working under the same Pastor for over 20 years. In that time he gave me the opportunity to serve in every ministry area you can think of in a church. This helped me to find my calling and gifting for youth ministry! My heart was called to build and equip healthy youth workers to effectively reach youth in the urban communities surrounding their local church.

Over the years I have noticed a high turnover of young leaders who said they were called to serve under our Pastor, but didn't finish the race well. Many came in saying "we are here to fix the problems of this church" but did not understand the context and history of leading in a large congregation. In all honesty, I understood where they were coming from. Being a young, energetic, and fast-paced leader myself, I'm guilty of rushing into decisions without fully thinking them through only to find there were consequences that could have been avoided had I tapped into the wisdom of my leader(s).

As I reflect over the last 20 years of watching my Pastor intentionally pour into the lives of leaders in our church, three nuggets of wisdom stand out to me:

1. Embrace the wisdom of the prior generation
2. Submit to the overall vision
3. Build trust over time



Embrace The Wisdom

"Go slow and not owe, or go fast and not last" was advice I received from my Pastor a few years ago after our church made a budgeting mistake within our youth ministry. Our heart was invested in seeing lives changed at whatever cost. Seeing growth in youth numbers as a measure of success, we had over registered 3 kids to camp and that translated into an excessive cost of \$2100. We also rushed into a weekly youth night partnership with another ministry without fully defining the commitments from each party. "But we were excited to see over a hundred youth coming each week! God is moving! We need to move and capitalize on momentum," we all said. Looking back, we laughed as we remembered the wisdom of my Pastor who cited Luke 14:28. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?" Embracing the wisdom of the prior generation in this case could have saved us from budgetary issues had we only listened.

Submit To The Overall Vision

In 2007, God challenged me to step out in faith. I didn't have a clear picture of what I was stepping into, but I knew He wanted me to step away from my place of security, stability, and safety. Chasing after security was my insecurity. As clear as day I heard God speak that truth to me. I saw a huge need to strengthen the ministries within our church through identifying, training, equipping, empowering, and releasing leaders to launch and lead new and existing ministries. I asked my Pastor to share what he would like me to do and it was as if he was reading my proposal.

In the next two years I continued to build and strengthen our church's ministries. I was content and knew I was where God wanted me to be. However, there were times when I felt my heart's passion for youth and launching a nonprofit were stored away on a shelf. While helping with the construction of our new children's theater, one of our church staff members heard my vision for a youth program

called Action Youth. I didn't realize he had a 501(c)3 that was dormant. He asked if I wanted to step in and reactivate that organization. After talking with my Pastor, he agreed to support my efforts and compensate me part-time while I rebuilt the nonprofit. Since the launch of Action Youth, my church has been its biggest supporter and partner. Through this experience I learned that supporting my pastor and helping build the church, where he dedicated over half of his life, enabled me to see the formation of my own vision.

Build Trust Over Time

When you look at people who are successful, you will find that they aren't the people who are motivated, but have consistency in their motivation. (Arsene Wenger, n.d.)

I'm not saying everything has been perfect over the years. There have been many times I've been in my Pastor's office to address disagreements, conflict and trust issues. The temptation with visionary leaders is to leave when others don't see things the way we do but we must choose to operate from a different paradigm - be committed to each other, bear one another's burdens, trust each other, and most importantly trust that God will help us through conflicts and disagreements.

I'm saddened by how surprised people are when I tell them I've been at my church for over 20 years. There is still work to do, people to save, disciples to make, and relationships to establish. Of course, this only works if you truly know that the leadership loves God with all of their hearts, seeks Him consistently with a vibrant prayer life and teaches straight from the Word. No ministry is perfect, and conflict exists everywhere. Don't mistake conflict for an unhealthy environment!

The Apostle Paul talked to Timothy about the importance of pouring out his life and finishing the race. It takes discipline to stick to what God has called us to before moving on to a new assignment. I teach my youth to start strong, but finish stronger. This is tough when I consider that I grew up with very little accountability and engaged in years of bad habits. I believe consistency over time is what helped me earn the trust and support needed from my Pastor to develop my own ministry endeavors. Until there is clarity that God is calling you somewhere else, live fully in your present calling regardless of the opportunities that come.

I hope and pray this helps young leaders who are eager to receive the baton to realize our youthfulness can at times

blind us with ambition. Don't dismiss the wisdom of prior generations as traditional, old fashioned or out of date. I like to imagine church as a family barbeque where the whole family is present. When I can sit at the table with diverse experience and wisdom; I ask questions, listen and run with the wisdom that is being handed off to me.


Jerry Torrez (Denver 2012) is the Director of Children and Youth Ministry at Praise Center Church in Denver, CO. He is passionate about ministering to youth and that is why he launched a new nonprofit called Action Youth. Jerry is also a member of the 2015 DVULI Think Tank.



"Don't mistake conflict for an unhealthy environment!"



CCDA NATIONAL CONFERENCE ILLUMINATE



DeVos alumni from across the country reconnected with DVULI staff and alumni in November at the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) National Conference in Memphis, TN. The DVULI booth attracted a steady flow of alumni, trainers, supporters, passersby and friends. Some cool gifts were given to alumni as an expression of our ongoing support of their work as urban practitioners. We were so thankful for all who came to see and hug us! In addition, it was great to receive names of possible participants for the class of 2016.



SWITCH: How to Change Things When Change is Hard

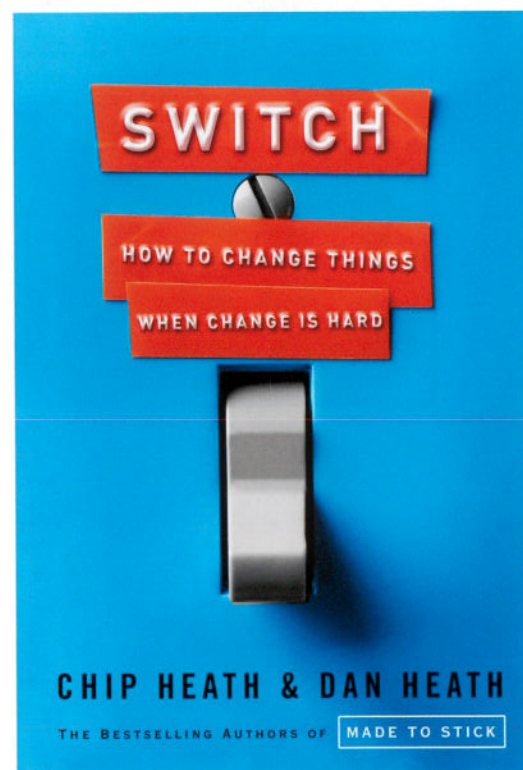
The question on the table is, “Why is it so hard to make lasting changes in our [ministries], in our communities, and in our own lives?”

The answer to this question may be discovered in Chip Heath and Dan Heath’s book, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* (2010).

I remember when going through the DeVos Initiative we dealt with making healthy change at the First National Conference. I knew this was going to challenge me as a leader both personally and organizationally. In my attempt to stay informed about healthy and lasting change, I found *Switch* to be exactly what I needed when forecasting a future baton passing transition.

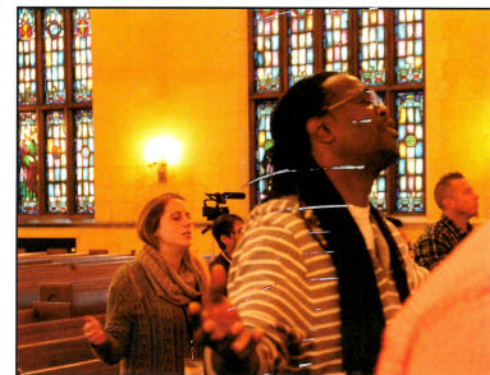
As described by the book’s publisher “...the Heaths bring together decades of counterintuitive research in psychology, sociology, and other fields to shed new light on how we can effect transformative change. *Switch* shows that successful changes follow a pattern, a pattern you can use to make the changes that matter to you, whether your interest is in changing the world or changing your waistline.”

After finishing reading *Switch* I’ve been reminded that to cause change, I need to influence both the heart and the mind – “the rider and the elephant.”



Reviewed by Denise Fase (Grand Rapids 1998)

2015 Systems Thinking Conference



See more photos on Facebook: <https://goo.gl/8dKg7S>



Participants from Albuquerque, Columbus, Dallas, Kansas City and the San Francisco Bay Area were treated to West Michigan's great October autumn weather during the Systems Thinking National Conference.

Urban leaders from the five cities spent a week being challenged and beginning to see personal and ministry breakthrough possibilities at the Second National Conference. The facilitators were: Peter O'Donnell, Chaná Edmond-Verley (Grand Rapids 1998), Oscar Benavides (Dallas 2010), and members of the DVULI staff.

The training content included: deBono's Six Thinking Hats, Limits to Success, Shared Vision, Arbinger Institute's Choice material, and more on the Initiative's breakthrough skills. Mike Trout (Chicago 2007) and a number of youth who are now serving in key ministry positions reinforced the message by presenting their ministry (YMEN) case study.

The week of activities provided a good balance of learning, worshipping and personal retreat. The conference began with DeVos family members, Doug and Maria DeVos and Cheri DeVos conversing with the group about their work and family values. The week closed with guest speaker and author Jeff Manion and a rousing musical segment by The Voices of Grand Valley State University Gospel Choir.



Merry Christmas



As we reflect on our Savior's birth, the DeVos Urban Leadership staff would like to treat the DVULI family to our favorite holiday recipes. Each of us has a special dish that we crave, cook or covet when we gather this time of year with our families and friends.

Our delicious recipes (along with some sentiments) are **for you and yours to enjoy**. We hope they will make your Christmas memories just as blessed as ours.

Have a peaceful and joyous holiday!

The DVULI Staff

*Being together for the holidays actually starts with a very special breakfast or brunch! It could be egg casseroles, baked blueberry French toast, homemade cinnamon rolls...or all three! I'm sharing my favorite **Caramel Pecan Rolls** recipe, which I got from my sister-in-law shortly after Al and I were married (which is now 44 years ago!)*

— Ginny Vander Hart



*Every year my paternal grandmother makes **Fruitcake** for Christmas -- only one per household. This is one of the few recipes that my great-grandmother took with her when the family fled war-torn Italy in the early 1900s. Grandma insists there are no secrets to it but I still have not been able to completely replicate the recipe with the same flavor. However, this one comes pretty close!*

— Claudia Witte

*One thing I look forward to is my mother's **Sweet Potato Pie**. I eat it every time she bakes it (the pie) because it tastes so so good.*

— Ron Carter



*I have always been a huge lover of holiday sweet potatoes. After I got married my wife's **Sweet Potato Soufflé** took my love for this side dish to a new dimension.*

— Gerald Bell



Happy New Year

I love baking -- and eating -- Christmas Cookies. One of my favorites is this recipe that my mom used to make. The cookies get dipped into chocolate and then dipped into various colors and textures of sprinkles and nuts.

— Eileen Kooreman



Grandpa's Peanut Brittle is incredibly special to me because it was the only thing Grandpa ever did in the kitchen -- he only made it at Christmastime, and only made it for family. When Grandpa pulled out the tin of brittle we could tell by the look in his eyes and smile on his face that this was indeed a special gift of love.

— Katie Van Timmeren



My older sister brought home this recipe when she returned from college at Thanksgiving break one year. The name, Texas Dump Cake, initially threw us off but after one taste it became a family favorite. This recipe holds special meaning because it reminds me of times when the entire family was together. That is what makes the holidays fun!

— Jonathan Wilson



Christmas in Puerto Rico without Tembleque de Coco (coconut custard) is not Christmas. Tembleque is one of those desserts everyone craves during the Christmas season. It's also one my mother would make for me even when it wasn't Christmas.

— Zoraida Velez



See recipes at
dvuli.org/recipes



Alumni Updates

For more visit: facebook.com/dvuli



Dimas Salaberrios (New York, 2010) has just released the book *Street God*



Michelle Cole Reynolds (Orlando 2010) & Jermaine Reynolds (Orlando 2016) welcomed Jermaine Deshawn Reynolds II



Jesus Origel (Pittsburgh 2012) recently assumed the position of Options Representative with Urban Impact Foundation



William Cumby (Houston 2010) and Ebony welcomed Dylan Alexander on October 15, 2015



Ryan VerWys (Los Angeles 2003) accepted the position of President and CEO of Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF)



Matthew Farmer (Kansas City 2015) and Jenna welcomed Jensen Gregory on June 13, 2015



Jin Min Lee (Boston 2006) is now Program Director for the Mission Hub Initiative with the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Sept 14-17, 2016
Pittsburgh, PA
Save the Date

Reunion 2016

FORWARD