

When Howard Payne students show love to child, it leads Muslim family to church

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By Kalie Lowrie

Howard Payne University

Howard Payne
University
students (right
to left in the
foreground)
Lindsay
Brimer, Kristen
Griffin, and
team leader
Amy Perkins
help serve
lunch to the
homeless in
Harlem
through the
Salvation Army.
(Photo/provided
by Amy
Perkins)

NEW YORK—Adam, a little boy in Queens, brought his devoutly Muslim family to Sunday school at a Christian church. They never had been interested in Christianity before, but after Adam spent the week with nine Christian students from Brownwood, they were ready to see what it was all about.

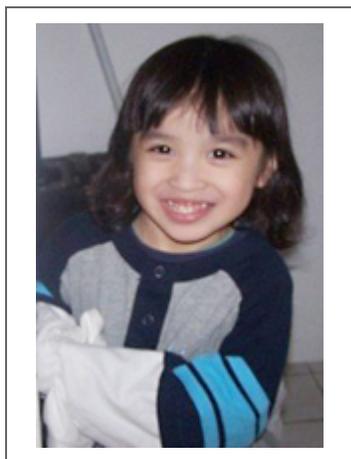
Those nine students from [Howard Payne University](#)—along with 40 of their peers—traveled to New York City for spring break to minister to people in the Big Apple.

Senior Brittany Longoria led the group that worked with Adam and other children at an Indonesian church in Queens. Throughout the week, Adam

was quiet and withdrawn, she recalled. It was not until the last 10 minutes of every day that he would open up and smile. The girls in Longoria's group worried about his behavior, but they kept showing him love.

At the end of the week, Adam's grandmother told Longoria about Adam's family—Muslims who had a bad view of Christianity. No Christians ever had reached out to them before, but now, because of the love they had demonstrated, the entire family was going to be in Bible study the next Sunday.

Andy Dennis, Baptist Student Ministry director, planned the five spring break mission trips for HPU this year, all in New York City. He wanted to allow students to experience different aspects of ministry in the same place. In a city of 8 million people, it was not hard for Dennis to find places for the students to serve.



Adam, a Muslim boy from Queens, spent the week playing with a team from Howard Payne University. Because of this team's impact on his life, his whole family attended Sunday school at an Indonesian church the following Sunday. (Photo/Brittany Longoria)

Each morning, the students divided into five groups, led by seniors Amy Perkins, Phillip Scott, Andy O'Quinn, Longoria and Ashley Hayes. Each team had a different focus, but all had the same goal in mind—sharing the gospel of Jesus.

Focused on primary needs-based ministry, Perkins led her group through the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan as they worked with the homeless and after-school kids' clubs. They worked with the Salvation Army, the New York City Rescue Mission and New York City Relief.

“Throughout the week, I was able to see the ways in which God changed our hearts to see people through his eyes and not our own,” Perkins said. “I was constantly amazed by the ways in which he broke down so many barriers to allow us to connect with people that I personally never would have thought I'd be able to connect with.

“One thing I really got out of the trip was simply realizing how different my view of New York City was after my first contact with the community—by serving and hanging out with the people who are considered to be at the very bottom of society. It made me think about my future and how differently I would view the needs of new communities I encounter if I began by serving and building relationships with the people at the ‘bottom.’”

Scott led another team in a construction project at the Park Slope Community Church in Brooklyn. They painted the balcony and sanctuary of the church, disassembled an industrial refrigerator and repaired a water-damaged plaster wall.

“Construction projects typically face setbacks due to unexpected complications,” Scott said. “But everything we set our hands to resulted in success. God demonstrated his provision, allowing us to accomplish more than we thought possible. We learned that God is ever-present, even in seemingly unspiritual tasks, such as construction work.”

Additional projects included prayer walking around university campuses and ministering to internationals in Queens.

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