

RUNNING

AMOK

**ARTS
MINISTRY
OUTREACH
FOR THE
KINGDOM**

BY DAVE WEISS



Running **A.M.O.K.**

Arts Ministry Outreach for the Kingdom
Creatively creating creators for the Creator

By Dave Weiss
Copyright 2001 David C. Weiss/A.M.O.K.

All rights reserved.



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Foreword

Introduction

Outreach

 What is it?

 Why do it?

Financing A.M.O.K.

Recruiting Leadership

Getting the kids involved

Visual Arts

Music

Drama

Dance

Video/Film

Multimedia

The Big Event

A.M.O.K. Resources

The A.M.O.K. Travel Team

Running A.M.O.K.

*Creatively Creating Creators for the Creator
(and helping them to become new creations)*

Introduction

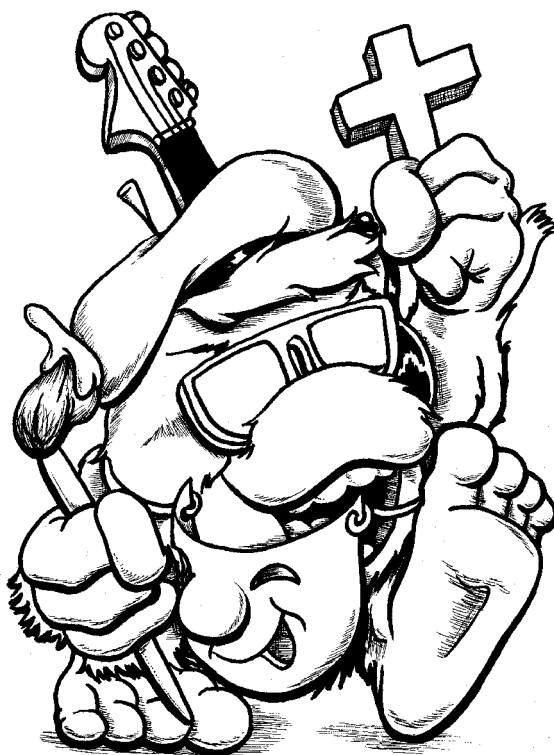
The arts are a wonderful blessing. They make the world a more beautiful place. They give color to our lives and they can be a wonderful diversion from the mundane existence of every day life. Used properly, they can be a real source of joy. Often they communicate better in a moment that a thousand words spoken by a thousand orators.

There have been at times when the arts community and the church have been at odds. Sometimes this has been because the church has had low opinions of artists and the arts but more often it has been because we artists have become so interested in pushing the envelope. We have sometimes ignored the boundaries of morality and good taste. We become more concerned with style than with substance. We also need to face the fact that the enemy of our souls has gotten a grip on the arts. We see it in the decadent lifestyles of many of our artistic brethren. We see it on MTV (as well as BET, VH1 and yes even on the various country networks). We see it on regular TV, in the theaters, in the concert halls, in the galleries and everywhere else. We see it in the messages of mayhem, destruction, sex and senseless violence that pervade the arts today.

Clearly the enemy realizes something that the church has let slip from its grasp. The arts touch people's hearts. The arts hit people where they live. The arts are a powerful tool to reach deep into a person's soul. It is inexcusable that the children of the ultimate creative force in the universe would sit idly by and allow creativity to become a tool of the enemy. And let's face it, when the church has embraced the arts often times they have allowed mediocrity to reign,

stating that, "well it's the church what do you expect?" I, for one, expect the church, the children of the Creator, to do it better than the world and not just in the church, but in the world where the world can see it and give glory to our Father in Heaven. Church it is time to take the arts back! It's time to use the arts to gain ground. It's time to use the arts to reach the lost. It is high time we took media that has become a tool of the devil in too many cases and use it to stick it to him and win people to Christ! In short it is time to run A.M.O.K!

In the process of writing this book, my goal is to help several groups to start A.M.O.K. ministries. My hope is that in reading this book that you will be inspired to start an A.M.O.K. ministry of your own. My vision is that there would be A.M.O.K. chapters all over the world using the arts to share the Gospel of Christ with a hurting world.



What is A.M.O.K.?

A.M.O.K. is an acronym for Arts Ministry Outreach for the Kingdom.

The idea behind it is simple. Christian Artists reaching out to people outside the kingdom of God through the arts, using our creative gifts to bring glory to the Creator.

This is accomplished in several ways:

- Opening opportunities to people to participate in the arts and then sharing the Gospel with them
- Discipling the ones God leads into this ministry.
- Working with the A.M.O.K. group to create community exhibitions/performances where the Gospel is presented.
- Existing youth groups going into community centers and doing A.M.O.K. arts activities with younger kids and sharing the Gospel with them. (A.M.O.K.II coming soon!)
- A.M.O.K. groups working in the community and letting their lights shine!
- Bringing the A.M.O.K. travel team in for a series of evangelistic meetings. (coming soon)
- You can be a part of what will surely be a mighty tool in the hand of God.

Why should we start an A.M.O.K. ministry?

First Peter 4:10 tells us that "each one should use whatever gifts He has received to serve others." For too long, the arts in ministry have been devoted to the talented few within our walls as special parts of worship used sparsely (with the exception of music), here and there. But imagine for a moment that we took the arts a step further. Imagine that we went out to all those kids that would never think to enter the walls of our churches. Imagine we reach out to kids with the opportunity to form a rock band and write and record their own songs. Do you think they would come to you? Imagine we gave those kids the opportunity to paint murals, and

sculpt and draw magnificent creations? What if we allowed them to create dramas and musicals and write and publish their own books to make videos and build web sites? What if we let them create to the limits of their imaginations? Do you think they would come to that kind of ministry? My contention is that not only would they come, but also you would have to force them to go home!

Now imagine that all these things that they are creating would be built around God's Word. Imagine that as they were creating they had to look to God's Word to solve their creative problems. Imagine working side by side with a kid who is struggling in another area of his life. He is working on a project that is making him question his priorities and because you care enough to give him this creative outlet he feels he can open up to you and you can share Christ with him. He is already opening up to the Gospel because part of this really cool project is based on the Bible which up 'til now he really just thought of as some dumb old book, but now he's starting to see the light. You tell me, would that be worth your efforts?

But A.M.O.K. goes even one step further than that. Not only do you allow them to create; you also give them the ability to display their talents. At least once a year, an A.M.O.K. ministry has a big performance. In this performance, the writers write the script; the musicians provide the music; the artists design and paint the sets; the actors act it out; the video people create clips to be run in between acts or as part of the show and so on. Now imagine that the focus of the performance is evangelistic and the kids that you are helping to meet the Lord are leading people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

So what do I need to start an A.M.O.K. Ministry?

Three main things: a love for Jesus and his lost sheep; an open, accepting heart; and the

desire to spread the Gospel. Talent and ability in one or more of the arts would also be beneficial, but if God is calling you to do this He will open doors and bring you the help you need. Materials and funding are also important, as well as a place to do the ministry but we will discuss these things in depth in another chapter. Once again we need to trust that if God is calling us to do this, He will make these things available if we are willing to put forth the effort.

Do I need to do all the arts?

Well, no, use the gifts that God has provided you with. As you start, I believe people with other talents will be drawn to help you and add to the ministry. You may even want to recruit other artists who have a heart for kids and for the Lord to help you. The more art forms you can offer the greater the size and scope of your outreach. Start where you are, with what you have and trust God to provide the increase.

The more art forms you can get going in you're A.M.O.K. ministry, the better. Think about what is involved in just putting together the average play. You need actors, needless to say but you will also need writers to write the script (unless you rent/buy one of course), visual artists to create sets and/or publicity materials, musicians for music, and lots of behind the scenes folks for stage crew lighting and sound. If you are doing musical theater, you should also have dancers. Special effects and video clips can be added to enhance the performance. Do you need all of those elements? No not really but the more you have the greater your potential and the more impressive your final performance.

On the other end of the creative spectrum, look at a good web site. You need multi-media people/programmers to put it together. You need writers to write content and visual artists to create the graphics to make it look interesting enough to stand out past the clutter. You may also want to add musical elements and video to the mix.

Lastly, your typical A.M.O.K. worship/evangelistic service would combine elements from all the arts. Power point or some other visual presentation, would combine visual artists and multimedia people as well as possibly video. Musicians are of course a necessity for the purposes of worship music. Drama teams help to drive the point home, but they require actors, as well as possibly artists and writers. You also need behind the scenes people to keep it all flowing smoothly. Again, you can have a mighty worship service without all of these elements but they enhance the service and touch people on a variety of different levels. Of course worship is for an audience of One and I believe that the Father is pleased when His children use their talents (the ones He gave them) to worship Him!

But where will I get the ideas to get started?

Well first off there will be several ideas within the pages of this book to help you get started. We will also be publishing a series of Bible based jump starts for projects as well as fundraising plans (as well as ways to make your fundraisers into outreaches) and complete creativity based Bible Studies. We will also recommend other resources that will fit in well with the A.M.O.K. method (see the Resources Chapter at the end of the book. There will definitely be enough ideas to get you started. Plus we are forming an A.M.O.K. traveling team you can bring in to help you get your leadership team going in the right direction as well. This team will come in and work with your leadership during the day and then in the evening put on a series of evangelistic meetings using A.M.O.K. techniques. Invite the community to these events and they will see something great that they want to be a part of. (For more information on bringing the A.M.O.K. team to your area, see our web site at rain.prohosting.com/amokarts). We will also be hosting an idea exchange on our web site so that the chapters can exchange ideas as wells as questions and prayer requests via a list serve. If this isn't enough, think of all the

ideas the kids will bring in, ideas should not be a problem.

Inreach

While the basic emphasis of A.M.O.K. is outreach, we cannot forget the importance of "inreach." We will look at outreach a little more in the upcoming section. For now let's explore the concept of "inreach." Every church has them. I'd be willing to bet you do too. They are the fringe kids. They show up in church because their parents make them but they avoid anything outside the church like the plague. As soon as they graduate from High School, you feel very confident that you will never see them again. They are easy to disregard because they never participate in anything and you're pretty sure that if they did show up at your regular youth meeting that they would be so disruptive you'd never get anything done. My question for you is do you think that Jesus would disregard them? I think we already know the answer. If you are in youth ministry and that kid is in your church, that kid is part of your mission field. A.M.O.K. is a great way to reach him. Give him something that interests him, something that he can take ownership in and slowly and patiently introduce him to the Gospel.

That's the beauty of A.M.O.K. As in the parable of the talents, you take the gifts the Master has endowed you with and invest them in kids and (through the work of the Holy Spirit) bring Him an increase. Make no mistake about it, if God puts you in a ministry, He wants you to reach the ones He has put before you. If you are willing to put forth every effort and use all the gifts and abilities He has placed within you, do you honestly believe that He will not bless your efforts? Does this mean you will automatically see efforts? No, some plant the seeds some water and some harvest. God only asks that you give 100 percent. In a society where we are "graduating" kids from church as we graduate them from High School (in record numbers I might add, nearly 75%) "inreach" is a necessity.

Outreach

While it is true that all the ideas in this book would make great activities for an existing youth group, A.M.O.K. is really designed for outreach. If you desire to use these ideas with an existing youth group full of fired up kids who are excited about Jesus, more power to you. But I would encourage you to think beyond the walls of your church. Think about all the kids in your community that desperately need to know Jesus. Think about all the kids trying to fill the void in their lives with things that will bring them despair and destruction. In most cases, they won't come to you. If you don't take the Gospel to them, who will? It is time for the youth leaders to go beyond the church and say to the Lord, "Here I am, send me!" A.M.O.K. provides a unique opportunity. It uses something that they are already interested in to lead them to something that right now they have no interest in. But that something, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is really what they have been seeking all along.

What is Outreach?

This seems like an easy concept, right? Outreach, to reach out, duh! It's easier said than done. This may be a tough concept for us within the church to comprehend, but many of the kids in your community may be as many as three or four generations removed from the church. They don't see any need for church, because their parents, grandparents and, in some cases even great-grandparents have never really been impacted by the church. The only real knowledge they have of the church is what they see on secular television. They carry a lot of baggage about the church. They are generally turned off by the church or at the very least find it irrelevant. They are crying out for Jesus, but they don't know who He is. They want the answers He offers but they don't know where to look. They have a void in their lives that only He can fill, but their parents and grandparents and even great-grandparents can't (or won't) help them find Him so they struggle to fill that void on

their own on the streets with what the world has to offer.

A.M.O.K. is a program. It is not a universal cure all. It will not replace a move of the Spirit. It is vitally important that anyone wanting to start an A.M.O.K. ministry be in constant prayer that the Spirit of God would be moving throughout their community and opening the hearts of the people we want to reach. Jesus called us to be "fishers of men," A.M.O.K. is the bait. A.M.O.K. offers people, especially youth (though I see no reason why it could not be modified for adults) the opportunity to participate in something they have a God-given talent for and offers the church an open door to share the life changing Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Can A.M.O.K. be integrated into my current youth ministry?

Well, yes and no. I highly recommend that you're A.M.O.K. ministry be separate from an existing youth ministry for several reasons. The first reason is that the arts part of A.M.O.K. takes a substantial amount of time, leaving not as much time for Bible study as you would have in a conventional youth meeting. I can see the red flags going up from here even as I write. Let me explain. In A.M.O.K. we are doing outreach. We are reaching the people by giving them something they are interested in. This period of working on the projects, (which as you remember are all Bible based) is one on one relational time, where strong Christian leaders model a life lived in faith and listen to the kids and share. The study time in the meeting, since you are dealing with people who in many cases are far removed from the church, is spent on the basics. This is stuff that many of your "churched" kids learned years ago. It may be too slow for your existing kids and they may get bored. They may even become a bad example to the kids you are trying to reach. This is why I recommend that A.M.O.K happen at a different time than your existing youth ministry.

The next question is, "Can my existing group participate in A.M.O.K.?" Yes, so long as they are prepared in advance to be good examples. The witness of a young person may even be more effective than yours or mine. The most urgent necessity is that they be prepared to accept people where they are and that they be strong enough to lift others up and not be brought down. Basically your existing kids would be in a leadership role in an A.M.O.K. ministry and should be prepared accordingly. I would also highly recommend that you insist that students from your existing group continue to participate in the existing youth ministry so that they continue to be fed and challenged to grow in their faith.

There is another opportunity for your existing group coming soon. This opportunity is called A.M.O.K. II. The basic principal is that the kids in your group have been disciplined to the point where they are ready to do some serious outreach. A.M.O.K. II will allow your kids to use their abilities in the arts to reach younger kids for Christ. Through a combination of entertainment, story telling and arts participation, your kids can share their faith and help younger students to learn to walk with the Lord. For more information on A.M.O.K. II keep watching the web-site members.christhost.com/amok.

Another question is: "How do I integrate my A.M.O.K. kids into the existing ministry and more importantly the church as they grow?" I'm glad you asked. Because the A.M.O.K. ministry is so heavily based in the arts, it is a natural to be integrated into the existing worship service. Invite the A.M.O.K. team to participate in the existing service. Not only will they come to show what they have learned, they might even invite their parents, multiplying the outreach. I also recommend that you begin a monthly (or more) evening youth service where you combine the A.M.O.K. group with the existing group. Allow them to do the majority of the service and make sure to include a time of fellowship at the end of the evening where the two groups can get

to know each other and possibly invite each other into their ministries.

A.M.O.K. is a win-win situation for a church. They get a powerful outreach into the community and they get to expand their talent pool increasing the variety and scope of worship opportunities.

So What Does an A.M.O.K. Meeting Look Like?

Imagine the scenario. A kid who has no interest in the church whatsoever sees a flyer or hears about a place where he can go and paint and draw, or maybe act in a play, or play in a rock band or, well you get the picture. When he gets there, he sees a non-threatening environment where he can create. There are all kinds of materials he can use that he couldn't get a hold of on his own. All around him people are creating stuff, cool stuff.

There's an older person walking around (well older than him anyway), helping everyone out, giving tips and advice or maybe just sharing a story or most importantly just listening. This guy is pretty cool and very helpful. They talk for a few minutes about what is going on and then the leader helps the kid find something to work on, from a box full of ideas on the shelf.

After an hour, the leader gathers everybody together in a circle and starts to hand out some Bibles. The kid thinks, "I knew there was a catch," but because everything has been so cool so far he decided to stick it out at least for a little while. This is different from anything he has seen before. They watch a video as a lead in or maybe act out a skit or just have a long talk. "Hey this ties in with what that group over there is working on!" When they open the Bible and start to read, this stuff makes sense. Maybe there is something to this Jesus guy!

OK, that may be over-simplified, and it may not work that fast, but A.M.O.K. is about

meeting people where they are and leading them to Jesus. There is no set format for an A.M.O.K. meeting, because all the arts function differently. The following is a suggested format for the evening: Start off with a period of creativity then go into worship/study and then go back to creativity, before adjourning for the evening. It is important to let the Spirit of God move among the kids. If when you go into worship, the kids are really worshipping, don't cut it short to stay on schedule. Likewise if the kids are really getting into the Word. Remember our purpose here. There is another, somewhat less noble reason for not sticking to a specific schedule. If you start worship/study at the same time every night, some of the kids will find excuses to have to leave before it starts. If, on the other hand, they know that they can pick up their project again on the other end of worship/study they will be more likely to stay and at least hear you out. Remember, we are meeting them where they are, not where we want them to be. The Word of God does not come back void. Be faithful in presenting the Word and trust the Lord to work on hearts.

Bringing the Bible Into It

There are a couple of important factors to consider in running an A.M.O.K. ministry. The first and most important is remember why you're there. The purpose of A.M.O.K. is to lead people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. I know it may sound like I'm harping on this, but there will be a temptation to just turn it into the art club. It is vital that this ministry is grounded in the Word. Bible study must be a part of the sessions and a Gospel presentation must be part of every performance. Oh certainly there are going to be times where it is going to be crunch time before an exhibition or performance. In those situations add a work session or two to finish. Don't make it seem that the Bible study part of the session is an inconvenience. Make it known that this is crucial to the ministry. The other important factor is that you are meeting people where they are. Don't make the mistake of programming to your Bible study to

where you want people to be. In most cases, in outreach, you will need to go back to the very basics and start from square one. Sometimes we have the tendency to want to rush the Spirit or to push people into a decision. Jesus accepted people where they were and took them to new heights. He will do the same with the people He entrusts into your care but He works on His own time frame. Be patient, be loving and be ready when the Spirit opens the door. The reality of this is that in the beginning, the people may not be there to study the Bible and learn about Jesus. They are there to draw, paint, act, dance and sing. We have to work hard and pray for the Spirit to move.

Go through your language and simplify it. Strike all "Christianese" from your speech. Think to yourself, does a person know where the "Narthex" is or could you just say "lobby" or "foyer?" Does a person who's never been in church before know what you mean when you say, "saved?" If not, you have some explaining to do. The point of this is we cannot afford to go over people's heads. The people may not know how to pray. They may not know how to act in church or how to dress for church (if that concerns your congregation.) It is up to us to make them feel comfortable, and lead gently. You can't assume they know what the doxology is, or the creeds or anything else. Work from the same version of the Bible, if possible, so that you can direct them to a page number, rather than having them get frustrated trying to find their way around the Bible. Eventually they will find their way but for now you need to help them.

Keep the studies Biblical, relevant and short. It is vital that the Bible be presented as part of every study. It is easy to turn this section of the meeting into a social issues forum, or a "rap session" but we must give the Word it's due. The Bible is relevant and we must show it as such. Remember, in outreach some of the people will see the Bible as nothing but a collection of nice stories and fairy tales. This is not where you would like them to be but it is where they

are and we are meeting people where they are. Show them how the Word applies to what they deal with in life and you will be well on your way to touching their hearts. Lastly, keep it short. The impulse is to cram a lot into a session. Don't "do" sensory overload. Find a few crucial points and drive them home, as clearly as you possibly can with God's help. The Spirit will move and keep the discussion going when He is ready.

In your discussions, be real. "Holier than thou" doesn't work. Which would you rather hear from someone who has all the answers and appears to be perfect, or someone who has a few "war wounds?" Would you rather hear from someone who has read about it or someone who has been there? If you haven't been there, be sympathetic and listen. A wise man once wrote, "be quick to listen and slow to speak." These are words to live by. It is also extremely important that you "practice what you preach." While sharing our struggles is very important, it is also important for people to see that you are working toward righteousness.

In your discussions, be flexible. Part of this is to spend a lot of time in the Word and in prayer. You may have an entire lesson planned and someone comes in with questions or maybe even a crisis. This is a golden opportunity to show the relevance of the Word. Dig in, find the answers, work it through together. Remember we are being real here. If you don't know the answer, tell them you don't know the answer, and find it together.



A.M.O.K.-The Nuts and Bolts

The A.M.O.K. Facility

One of the big factors is in doing an A.M.O.K. is a facility to do the work. Before I go any further let me say that you will need to be adaptable here. Most ministries will not have the resources to purchase or even rent a building for the purpose of doing this ministry. A room or two in your church or even better a space in a community center will suffice for a lot of this. We will deal with the ideal here for each of the art forms and then discuss a bit on the real.

For visual arts, it would be wonderful to have a room with doors that lock so that you can leave large projects out to dry in between sessions. This would allow works in progress to be completed without having to disturb them and move them. On one of the walls there should be a large frame where a backdrop for a drama could be stretched, since there is a good chance that the visual arts folks will be tapped for such a project. An overhead projector would really be nice for the purposes of projecting large designs as well. This area should have some pretty good windows or a ventilation system since many art materials have fumes to contend with. Easels and tables would be nice to work on as well as some open floor space for sculpture. Shelves would be nice for materials as well and a sink is useful for cleanup. Also it would be great to have a place where it is not going to be a major tragedy if paint is spilled on the floor.

In reality, in most places, the visual arts will share a space with the rest of the arts and the only real necessity is ventilation since those fumes are practically unavoidable, though they can be reduced by using water media wherever possible. Good lighting is also a must.

Writers are a bit easier. All they need is

some desk/table space to work with. While pens and paper would be sufficient, it would be ideal to have some computer equipment and/or word processors along with a supply of floppy discs. One thing to think about is that writers often need quiet to work, so you may want to put them a little bit away from the action.

In reality, most places will not have a computer lab. A good possibility would be to borrow a few laptops. In some cases the kids will have their own. If you are working at a church a Sunday school classroom would be ideal for this. Another thought would be to utilize your writing time for brainstorming ideas and readings of work and allow the students to do the actual writing on their home computers on their own time. A possible source for inexpensive computer equipment is to check with your local school district. They often auction off older equipment to make room for new and you can pick them up for pennies on a dollar. You may also want to consider putting out a call for used equipment at your church, often when people upgrade, they have nothing to do with their old equipment and would be glad to get rid of it.

For musicians it would be ideal to have a room where you could set up the instruments and let them set. This would eliminate a lot of set up time at the beginning of your meeting. A sound proof room would even be better. It would also be great to have some of the larger instruments on hand (drum set, keyboard/piano, amps).

In reality most kids have their own instruments and can bring them have them come in earlier to set up in advance. In most cases they will have to share a room with the other arts, but try to keep them away from flying paint. Instruments are expensive. Many churches are

pretty well equipped in the music area, so you may just want to get permission to use the church's equipment and rehearse in the sanctuary if it is possible.

For multimedia/video, computer and video equipment are crucial. The good news is that you really don't need a huge amount of space for this, unless you have a lot of people in the program.

The reality is that this equipment is expensive in many cases but there are things you can do. You can purchase equipment in the ways mentioned above. For multimedia, at least one computer should be online, so that you can upload to web sites, download free software, find materials on the web, etc. When it comes to video, you may even want to consider moving this part of the ministry off-site. Some communities have Christian or public access TV stations that allow people to do their own shows and video. In many cases, these studios are fairly well equipped with editing equipment. Also many professional videographers have access to this equipment and may be willing to help you out. Your leadership should get to know people in the industry and make contacts that can help your ministry. Many families also own camcorders and while professional equipment is ideal, the reality is that you can do some really nice stuff with simple home equipment. Many home computers are also starting to come with some video editing capabilities. As the technology advances the prices decrease.

Another thing to consider is that most video work is done on location. You may want to utilize a similar philosophy as was mentioned earlier for writers, using your time together for story boarding and brainstorming not to mention collaborating with the writers. This kind of collaboration is extremely valuable. I remember once I was doing some writing for a children's TV program that our local Christian TV station was producing. I had all these great ideas but they would have required Spielberg-esque

budgets to perform. If I wanted to do them I had to find ways around our limitations. Video people can help writers stay grounded in reality, and writers can help video people reach for the stars.

Dance and drama require a space to rehearse and a place to perform. They can be the same place, though for the most part it is not totally necessary. Most rehearsals can occur in a regular room, though you will need a few sessions in the performance space for purposes of blocking. Ideally, the performance space should have a decent sound system, a place for musicians, seating, and a stage with lighting and a place to store scenery and sets and a way to "fly" them.

The good news on drama and dance is that there are plenty of places available free or at a low cost to present them. Many church sanctuaries would fit the bill for larger productions, especially if you create the sets to work with the existing facilities. Public School auditoriums are also very nice for this type of work and most are fully equipped for large productions.

I can almost hear some of you saying, "who says it has to be a large production?" You are 100 percent right. Drama and dance are extremely flexible. You can communicate a great message with a very minimal amount of "pomp." I have even seen street drama that has been extremely effective. Even mime and so-called human video are wonderful because they use now words and so they cross all language barriers and present the Gospel beautifully. Photographers basically only need a dark room and a place to shoot staged shots and still lifes. With the advent of the digital camera, the dark-room can even be replaced with a good computer and some editing software. Most photography is also done on location so you don't need a lot of studio space.

For those using film, there are a great number of facilities that will allow you to de-

velop your own photos, and if you are blessed enough to be able to recruit a photographer to lead your photographers they may even own a facility that can be used.

Financing A.M.O.K.

Could A.M.O.K. get "pricey"? Beyond a doubt that is possible but there are things you can do that will limit your financial outlay as well as many things that will actually help your group to raise money. You are really only limited by your own creativity. The following are a few ways to raise or save money to finance your A.M.O.K. ministry:

- **Donations:** Many people will contribute to fund a ministry like this if you can show them the benefit to the church or community. There are also companies in your community that may be willing to donate much needed supplies to a worthy ministry. There is no harm in asking and if you don't ask you will not receive.
- **Public Performances/Exhibitions:** Take it to the streets. Go to a local banquet hall or park and put on a show. Set up an exhibition in a local mall. Set up a donation jar and trust the Lord to fill it.
- **Church Performances/Exhibitions:** Create a program that your group can do for a love offering and then promote it to the churches in your area. Be sure to create publicity materials so that you can help the churches that bring you in to promote your performance. This is also very easy to do at your home church, which will not only help you to raise funds but also show your church the importance of your ministry.
- **Private Lessons/Public Classes:** You already will have gifted leadership in place, consider using those gifts to serve your ministry financially. Offer individual lessons to the community for a small fee and put the money raised into the ministry. Another great thing to do is

work up curriculum for a few five to eight week courses and offer them to the community for a fee. This is another great way to get some public interest in your ministry.

- **Sell Stuff:** A lot of communities have craft shows. A lot of churches have bazaars. Create a few items and mass-produce them for sale. Check the tax laws in your state to make sure you are in compliance before you sell. It is also a good idea to research before you invest in creating things for sale. Take your group to a few local craft shows and see what is cool and what is selling. Remember this is not art for art's sake this is fundraising. Keep it simple and functional and as inexpensive as possible to produce.

Always price your items. I would recommend a fold over price tag that has a little information on your group or even better yet, a Gospel message. I also highly recommend that you spend the time and money to create a banner for behind your display that tells about your group and why you are raising funds. People will be far more willing to purchase something that is doing something positive for kids.

Keep your work "top quality." Remember that you are representatives of the Kingdom of God here. An item that breaks quickly or falls apart does not bring glory to his name. Also remember to have the kids that man your display acting properly. This ministry is called A.M.O.K., but your customers will not be impressed by kids that are running amok.

Another possibility for raising funds in this way is to do something participatory. Set up a craft that children can make and take home while their parents shop. Sand art, spin art and other simple crafts are possibilities. Face painting is very popular with kids and it would give your visual artists an opportunity to flex their creative muscles. If you decide to do face painting, look into hypo-allergenic

face paints which are available from some costume shops as well as on several sites on the internet. This is a little more expensive, but they last a long time and it will save you the problem of having a child have an allergic reaction to your paint.

- **Charge Admission:** I don't recommend this for outreach events, but for some things it is OK to charge admission. Perhaps instead of charging admission, you can just take a free will offering. Many times this can produce an even higher yield.
- **Dinner Theater:** Consider doing something like a dinner theater presentation, where the people come and have dinner and see a play it's a great night out and a great way to raise some money and show off your ministry. An event like this will also be a great time of fellowship for the patrons, which may help them to get involved in your ministry.

These are just a few methods. There are literally hundreds more. You are only limited by your own imagination (and in some cases tax laws). The important thing is to do your homework. Be certain that you are in compliance with all laws. Be sure to create things of high quality and, most importantly, make sure that your presentation is done as if done unto the Lord. Always strive for quality and do all things to His glory.

Recruiting Leadership

No man is an island and nowhere is that fact more important than in an A.M.O.K. ministry. You will need help. You will need a range of skills and abilities not normally held in one person. As a matter of fact the more one on one interaction you have in an outreach ministry like this, the better. So where do you find people to help you? A couple of ideas come to mind. First of all, check your congregation. Is there anyone there that seems suited to outreach ministry (see below) as well as gifted in the arts? Is there

anyone there with a real heart for kids that needs a ministry. After you have exhaustively searched your home congregation, I recommend, advertising in your local Christian bookstore, as well as sending mailers and flyers to other churches to try and solicit help from the rest of the Christian community. The more leaders in the more different fields, the larger your outreach can be.

What does it take to lead an A.M.O.K. group? Well it may surprise you to learn that arts ability is not the foremost qualification. Sure it's great to have people who are gifted in the arts and that can be really beneficial but really there are three major factors that are much more important: a heart for Jesus, a heart for kids and a high moral character. The moral character speaks for itself. We are trying to lead kids down the right road and that takes character. Next, you are looking for people that are walking with the Lord, people that are spirit filled and ready to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. These need to be people that are perfectly willing to meet people where they are and love them too much to let them stay there. This is definitely not a ministry for a finger pointing Pharisee. This is a ministry for someone, preferably who knows the saving grace of Jesus first hand. If this seems harsh for me to say, I am sorry, but it needs to be said. In outreach, you will meet people involved a lot of different sins. If you become judgmental you will never lead them to where they need to be. A leader must also be strong in his walk with the Lord so that they will not easily be tempted to go the wrong way.

Also the person must have a heart for kids. If the person does not demonstrate an openness to working with and loving youth, he may be a wonderful Christian but he is not A.M.O.K. material. Working with youth is a special calling and it is not for everyone. Kids react differently to situations than adults do. People who are called to work with youth can understand this, comprehend it and live with it. Things that seem small to adults seem devastating to kids. People who are called to work with

kids have got to try to see things as their kids see them. Most importantly, we in youth ministry have to be able to realize that our kids will let us down from time to time, we will accept this and not write them off. If you need a model for this look at yourself versus Jesus. We let him down on a daily basis and yet he continues to care and love us.

If you are successful in finding people with these three highly important characteristics, the next step is to find their gifts. Which arts are they gifted in? What will they find fulfilling? How can they help the kids you want to minister to? Once you have people in place, meet together several times and really get to know one another. It might be a good idea to have everyone look over these materials as well as anything else you can come up with. You will want to look over some project ideas and plan out the first step in the ministry. You may even want to put your heads together and plan an opening program. It is a good idea to meet together a few times and get everyone pulling in the same direction before you do the next step, recruiting the kids.

Getting the kids involved

You've got your leaders and a place to meet. You've selected some initial projects and you are ready to start getting the kids. How do you get them? Well this is outreach, so you're going to have to go to them and meet them where they are. Where do the kids hang out in you're area. Go there and post flyers. Walk up to them and hand them invitations if you are allowed. Have your existing youth group kids invite their friends. You will find that there aren't too many musical kids that are going to turn down the opportunity to form and/or join a rock band. There are not many acting kids that will turn down the opportunity to be in a live drama or a video. There are not too many visual artists that will turn down the opportunity to work on pieces for a public exhibition or to contribute to a mural.

You might also try putting together an arts festival to draw kids into your ministry. Do it in a public place like a park or large indoor facility. Make sure, if you go this route that everything that you do is quality and that there are plenty of interactive things where the kids can participate. Eventually your group will create these kinds of events and thus continue to grow the group. There are many ideas in this book and on the A.M.O.K. web site to coordinate an event like this.

Regardless of how you decide to attract the kids, bathe it in prayer. God will provide increase. A few kids getting involved, learning, growing and having fun will invite their friends and it will grow. Be ready.



An A.M.O.K. Resource

*copyright 2001 David C. Weiss/A.M.O.K.
All rights reserved.*