



ST. AMBROSE YOUTH EXPERIENCE CYC IN 2026

A MIRACLE OF SHARING



Parent, picking up First Time Camper: *"How did you like camp?"*

Camper, entering Grade 4: *"I'm coming back next year!"*

Once again, St. Ambrose has sent youth to Catholic Youth Camp (CYC) in Panora, IA. CYC hosts campers 8-18, who have completed second grade through high school. **Over the summer of 2026, St. Ambrose sent 103 young people** for a week of soaking in God's nature and exuberant joy. Campers found friendship, comfortable cabins, food, canteen treats, swimming, talent shows, music, zip lining, soccer, softball, canoeing, archery, fishing, volleyball, Gaga ball, evening chapel, games, Frisbee, dancing, singing, Slip N Slide, outdoor Stations of the Cross, daily Eucharist, Reconciliation, praise and worship, faith sharing and immersion in the boundless love of God. Smiles of welcome never leave the faces of the counselors. Campers play volleyball with nuns and marvel at fun filled priests who do back flips and play electric guitar.

Of all these events, our campers always report that the sacraments, the Eucharist, and the friendships are what they cherish the most.

This year we sent first time campers of every age along with campers who returned for their sixth year. And, what is the grand prize for our parish? Spreading the legacy of God's unending generosity.

As campers have this experience, they grow in faith. Campers return to St. Ambrose and serve the parish as greeters, ushers, lectors, altar servers, cantors, catechists and outreach servers. They help clean the church. They join the St. Ambrose Youth Choir. They prepare the Hmong Farm for our annual picnic and restore the farm after parishioners return home. They fill and then hide 2,000 plastic eggs for the St. Ambrose Easter Egg Hunt. They have begun Bible study groups and initiated adoration evenings during Lent.

Former campers often return to CYC and volunteer as counselors. Former campers participate in the NCYC event for teens in Indianapolis, attend the annual Youth 2000 weekend in Des Moines and participate in the SEEK experience for young adults. In 2023, St. Ambrose sent 40 young people to Fatima and Lisbon for World Youth Day to join over 3 million other young people encountering the universal Catholic Church and share their zeal with Pope Francis. Former campers have become FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) missionaries in college, sharing their faith both at home and abroad, in Lithuania and Argentina.

Many youth and families have told us that participation in CYC has increased their families' reception of the sacraments and love of God.



From Idea to Reality

All of this started because of one parishioner. Destiny Welsh mentioned several years ago it would be wonderful if our St. Ambrose youth could go to camp. A few people jumped on the idea and began praying and fundraising.

From this small beginning, parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and catechists now regularly join youth to **clean Principal Park Stadium and Mediacom Stadium at Drake**. They help youth **serve concessions during Drake Relays, Junior Olympics and other events**. **Father Nivin is a constant, working presence**. Every cleaning and event ends in group prayer and his blessing of this ministry and the gathered helpers. The cleaning itself has expanded into an additional enterprise of **collecting redeemable aluminum cans, plastic and glass bottles** from the trash at the games. Cans and bottles are sorted, counted, bagged and brought to the Recycling Center for redemption. Several parishioners collect cans and bottles from their work places to bring to St. Ambrose where youth, their families and friends, including Father Nivin, prepare the items for recycling. **All earnings come back to St. Ambrose and are "pooled" to benefit all youth**. Parishioners have watched this astonishing mission of trust in the future and support it through prayer and donations.

None of these activities would be possible without the dedicated support of the Swoboda family. Catherine, our Youth Ministry Director, coordinates CYC registrations, youth activities, cleanings, concessions, and volunteers. Eileen assists in countless ways, from cleanings and concessions to rides and sorting cans and bottles. Rod faithfully collects, sorts, and redeems cans and bottles from parish events, Principal Park, and Drake. Their generous service is a great blessing to our youth and parish. As Rod would say, "CYC = Collect Your Cans!"

This year the St. Ambrose Knights of Columbus will donate raffle funds from the annual picnic to all St. Ambrose Youth Programs. Thank you for your generous support!

God's inestimable generosity shared with one another.



"THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS WERE OF ONE HEART AND ONE MIND. NONE OF THEM EVER CLAIMED ANYTHING AS HIS OWN; RATHER, EVERYTHING WAS HELD IN COMMON." ACTS 4: 32.