

The Good 4:20 Anniversary



Youth from □Salem Lutheran Church, Longville, who are involved in the T-shirt ministry are (from left) Tia Lilyquist, Zak Nornberg, Felicia Murtley and Amber Nornberg. Photo submitted

by **Rebecca Waterhouse**

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Two years ago, a small cluster of Christian youth from Salem Lutheran, Longville, created a racy T-shirt. The shirt is a double-edged sword; it cuts one way when the kids simply wear the shirt out in the world to affirm their unshakable belief in Jesus Christ.

They are truly "wearing" Jesus, with 12 powerful 4:20 verses from the Scriptures covering their backs. But the shirt is edgy in the second place as the neon emblazoned "4:20" on the front stabs not only the eye, but also the curiosity.

How eye-popping you say? "Hello, Miss 4:20!" a salesman greeted me at Macy's in St. Cloud last week. At last year's Twins' game April 19, our church group wore the shirts to a mixed reaction. One man approached me (as many people do when you wear this shirt) with "What's 4:20?" and when I explained, he thought it was the coolest idea ever. Others rolled their eyes at us when they realized we were a "Christian" group.

Everyone who owns a shirt in the Salem church family wore them Feb. 28 to support the visiting Teen Challenge of Brainerd, a promising group of young people who are trying to turn their lives around.

"Are you the 4:20 lady?" they asked me. Translation: they wanted those shirts! Funny, these shirts completely broke down the awkwardness often present when meeting new people. I told them what the 4:20 meant, which propelled one young man to tell me he had just given his life to Christ. Wow! All 50 men waited patiently in line as I teased, smiling, "You have to wear them, or you don't get one!" "Is it possible to get a shirt for my sister, brother?" some asked. God bless them, I understand members from this impressive group are wearing them all over.

People around the country are wearing the 4:20 shirts as well. Thanks to The Lutheran

Magazine, which published the Salem youth shirt ministry story in summer 2008, a modest amount of orders came in from Iowa, Indiana, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Florida and Washington. (The profit from the shirts made it possible to eke out a youth mission trip to Wounded Knee, S.D., where we also donated shirts.)

Finally, some of the gutsiest kids I've ever had the pleasure knowing wear their 4:20 shirts frequently to school and, in fact, are wearing them Tuesday 4/20 at their area high schools.

So what is 4:20? It's the anniversary of Hitler's birthday, the Columbine school shootings and slang for drugs and the drug culture. All bad.

But now that you know, will you support those who are courageously standing up to replace evil with good? Shake their hands, give 'em a high five and smile. They are cutting edge; they are young people who want to change the world.

Rebecca Waterhouse is the Youth and Family Minister at Salem Lutheran Church in Longville.