

Focus on Freshmen!

There is an odd looking bicycle on Turku University Campus. Laughter can be heard from the direction of Jyväskylä, since a stand-up comedian is present. People are running up and down the streets of Helsinki; they say that they are going to hang out. And at Tampere everyone is sitting by a fire at a nature park. What's going on?

This all happened at fall 2007 when Agape Finland decided to reach out to new students. The goal of the outreach was to focus on new students, help them find their place in their new home town and invite them to join a community of Christian students. A vital part of all of this was tutoring, which exists to help the newcomers become a part of the group.

This task was handled differently in different cities. In Helsinki a wide variety of activities were called "the Spiritual Hang-Out Happening", which was then advertised all around. The happening included a garden party and a tour of Helsinki, amongst other things. The Christian students of Turku used their creativity in advertisement: A bicycle and a suitcase got a lot of attention at the local campus, while also including an invitation to an Agape meeting.

The tutors at Tampere organised a trip to a local nature park as a part of their fall program. About 20 students participated in the daylong trip. A Freshmen Evening at Jyväskylä gathered 80 students to listen to the award-winning Christian stand-up comedian Mikko Vaismaa.

The key to all of this is that the students themselves go out to reach their peers. Most of the outreach activities at fall 2007 were planned and organised by the Christian students. A staff member has the role of an advisor, mentor and source of encouragement. When the message comes in a familiar package, we see the best results! In Finland, we are looking forward to the coming fall and are excited to focus on the freshmen this year as well.