



COLLABORATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL CHILDRENS MINISTRIES

JIM ROSENE

Jim Rosene has been the President of Kids Around the World, a faith-based, non-profit mission organization since it was founded in 1994 with the commitment to reach children worldwide for Jesus. Jim and his wife, Denise, live in Rockford, IL while their son Jeff lives in Southern California and their daughter Jenny lives in Minneapolis.

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BRIAN RHODES

Brian Rhodes has served Awana in various capacities the past 25 years. As the current vice president & chief ministry officer, with responsibility over both the U.S. and international side of the ministry. By combining efforts and moving to a more global focus, Awana is positioned to reach and influence more children and youth for Christ. Awana currently serves two million children and youth each week. Brian looks forward to celebrating the ten million milestone by 2020!

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After the great catch of fish, we read that the fishermen came ashore and left everything and followed Jesus... have you ever wondered what they actually left? Was it just the fish, nets, boats, their occupation... or did they leave behind those things that make it difficult to truly follow Jesus? Things like their pride, their programs, their materials, and their manuals—those things we often bring with us as we attempt to follow Him. I know that all of us who lead ministries, however big or small they are, often have things that make up who we are as an organization... I know they are important to us, but are there times we must leave them behind to follow Jesus?

Several years ago Brian Rhodes, the International Director of Awana, and Jim Rosene, President of Kids Around the World, met to see how they could work together as organizations. Being close personal friends, it was easy to meet; but how can organizations truly partner together to impact the lives of more children with the love, message and transformational hope of Jesus? At first the meeting was more of what each group does—in other words, the strengths: how many clubs, how many leaders, how many playgrounds. etc. But when they decided to ask the probing question (what is your weakness?) the tone of the meeting changed. We usually know the strengths of a ministry because our websites and marketing material will reveal that, but the weakness—this is only admitted in a closed environment and even then not necessarily with another organization. However it was during this discussion, when we were willing to be open and honest with each other, that God began to speak.

It became obvious to us that our weaknesses were the strengths of the other organizations, so instead of starting another program within our own ministries, we decided to strengthen our strengths and give our weaknesses to the other group. Awana clubs have been known around the world for their fun games, discipleship programs and commitment to the Word of God. Kids Around the World is known for impacting communities with playgrounds and emergency food relief as well as an oral strategy of Bible storying for children. Together they can accomplish so much more for the Kingdom.

A little over a year ago Kids Around the World was invited to share at a conference in the DRC by Reach Africa, a partner of Reach Global (the missions arm of EFCA). KIDS realized this was an opportunity to bring the strengths of Awana and Kids Around the World together to benefit the children of the DRC. After sharing at a conference this past year, a formal invitation was extended. Now the two organizations will be partnering with many different denominations and children's ministries in the DRC and guiding them in basic principles of working with children. The outcome will be the national churches developing their own programs to work with children that will include fun, a strong oral Bible foundation and a discipleship component—African style! It will not be Awana; it will not be Kids Around the World; it will be what the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo feel will help them to impact the lives of millions of children in their country.

Partner together to impact the lives of children with God's transforming hope! 