

What's Brewing | SPEC 2024 Recap

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SPEAKERS

Shandra Newcom, Blake Smith

Blake Smith 00:28

Welcome to What's Brewing, a Project Zion Podcast series where we ask the questions, "What is mission, and why does it matter?" I'm your host, Blake Smith, and I am here with an absolutely dear friend of mine, Apostle Shandra Newcomb, and I am very excited to have her. Welcome Shandra!

Shandra Newcom 00:46

Thanks, Blake, good to see you.

Blake Smith 00:47

I'm going to start with allowing you to tell a little bit about yourself. I could tell stories, but we would be here all day. So can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Let our listeners get to know you.

Shandra Newcom 00:58

Well. I mean, I think the most important thing in this moment is that they know that you and I served in Campus Ministries at Graceland University, so that's how we know each other, and our families were lucky enough to be friends at that time and stay connected. I just recently moved to Independence, Missouri from outside of Sacramento, California. I did that in March. I have a son who is in the Graceland University seminary, and he also works at Graceland as the campus ministries intern, and loves that, loves working with Mike Hoffman. So, to know me, you need to know that I have my son, Andrew. I have worked... and I counted this up for this time, Blake for 20 years for Community of Christ. So, starting with campus ministries, now I have moved into a time where I'm just finishing serving as Mission Center President for Sierra Pacific Mission Center, Rocky Mountain Mission Center, before that, and now I serve Community of Christ in the office of apostle. I'm a member of the Council of Twelve apostles, and for this conversation, maybe most importantly, I serve as the SPECTacular apostle for SPEC.

Blake Smith 02:26

And you are indeed a SPECTacular apostle.

Shandra Newcom 02:30

Why? Thank you. Thank you very much.

Blake Smith 02:33

So yeah, we're going to be talking about SPEC 2024 today, and though we spent most of our time together and got to know each other, of course, really well when we got to share in ministry at Graceland, in campus ministries. By the way, let me say with regards to Andrew, because I'm, I am lovingly, affectionately called fake uncle, one of his fake uncles. But Andrew got to spend a lot of his formative first months in campus ministries, and a lot of those in my arms. I'm lucky to say so...

Shandra Newcom 03:07

It is true. Some of my favorite memories of when he was a baby are walking by your office and seeing you holding him with one hand, kind of against your chest, and typing whatever it was you were working on with the other and those moments are really precious for me.

Blake Smith 03:24

Yeah, and it's very exciting for me to hear him come full circle and be in that role. So very exciting. But as I was started to say, was that I think we initially met on the worship team for SPEC.

Shandra Newcom 03:39

We did, I actually remember, I don't know if you do, the moment I kind of formally met you. I was in the Swarm In talking to somebody, and you breezed in, just like all of you ready to lead singing SPEC. And you were so excited. And we met then, and we started leading music together in the gym for the morning worship at SPEC. And those were great memories, too. You ran around the gym more than I did. I tended to stay in one place when we were leading songs and you were kind of a little more energetic. But I think we made a good pair.

Blake Smith 04:18

I agree with that, I think we have always made a good pair. And so this is this has been a growing friendship for a number of years, and I want to hear more about your time at SPEC, because you say you've been working for the church for 20 years, but your history at SPEC spans even more so. Tell us a little bit about your life in SPEC.

Shandra Newcom 04:45

It does span a lot longer of a time. I only attended as a camper one year, and that was the summer after I graduated. I just knew it as Sports Spectacular, which some of your listeners will, people recognize that it was called that at the beginning, and so I didn't play sports, so I didn't go. And finally, when they convinced me, I went. I don't think I had a pair of tennis shoes. And I, you know, you kind of have to play a sport when you're there, you're expected to try something. And I played volleyball. Luckily, you don't have to be good to play a sport, and in fact, they encourage everybody, no matter their level, to try a sport. So, I tried volleyball. I was a good server, but couldn't hit it other than that, but I had a good enough experience with the community that I started back as staff, and at that time you could come back at staff right after your, you know, your freshman year of college, or your first year outside of high school, whatever that looked like. And I have, since 1987 been to all but four SPECS. So, one you and I took a break for a year. You'll remember that two I broke my hand, and then the two years that we didn't meet in person during covid. So other than that, SPEC has been home and community and support of our youth for a very long time for me.

Blake Smith 06:18

That's wonderful. And I know last year when Robin Linkhart did the 2023 recap with the directors, Jamie, Doug, and Jenn, Jenn mentioned how excited they were to have someone that was a member of the Council of Twelve that would be their advocate who had such a deep history In Spectacular and kind of understood the journey that Spectacular had been on and the things that they were trying to accomplish. So how are you liking being on that side of the Spectacular journey?

Shandra Newcom 06:54

I will say that since I was ordained in April of 2023, so I've served as SPEC apostle formerly for two years, and even though I have been a part of all of the different aspects of SPEC, except for maybe sports, as a staff person, delegation staff, where I, you know, stayed in the residence halls, worship team, as we've mentioned, morning celebration team, talent show that you and I worked on together, I've been the performing arts coordinator most recently. All of those things have just been beautiful parts of my life, and I've been so grateful. But wow, being SPEC Apostle and moving into what we're trying to create to be a sort of a camp pastor role has transformed my ministry. When I met, so in 2023 my first time there as SPEC apostle, when we met with the staff and the directors, as you've mentioned, Jamie, Doug and Jenn, Doug introduced me in my new role, and said something that actually transformed my ministry, which was, you know, "okay, old people, Shandra is here to be with our youth, to listen to them, to spend time with them. She really isn't here to talk about the church in a broad way with staff or counselors, yes, with campers, no with staff or counselors. That's not her job here, or her role." And I had never thought of saying it. And what I said to them was, "I do want to talk to you about those things, staff and counselors, but not this week. Reach out to me after. We'll have conversation. I want to focus on our youth." Not one staff counselor, committee member stopped to talk to me about things that, yes, are very important, but were not important to our youth. At that time, I just hung out with the youth for a week, and it was transformative for me, because I really got to see what it means to build very deep relationships. Just focused on being together. It is now how I show up to reunions and retreats, all of those things I do in person. I now say, "Let's just be together in relationship. The rest can happen after this." And it's really been great. It's been great.

Blake Smith 09:29

Incredible. That's incredible and good to hear that the staff kind of understood that and respected that. Yep, so you've talked a little bit about your time, starting back in 1987 when it was called Sports Spectacular, and we know now that it is has changed significantly over the years. What ways have you seen it change? And how do you think that, what are some of the more recent changes?

Shandra Newcom 09:59

You know, so Spectacular changes with leadership, for one thing. And as I've looked back, my friend Todd Davison and I, and if you attended SPEC in the past 30 years and you were in the musical or the show, Todd was the director. So there's some context. If you have done that yourself,

Blake Smith 10:17

He was the guy in the red tennis shoes.

Shandra Newcom 10:19

Correct! He's in the red tennis shoes. Still wears the red tennis shoes, but I think he has more than one pair, which makes me very happy, because it's been decades. We were sort of laughing together and cringing a little bit as we looked back over how things used to be handled at SPEC. They weren't always camper forward. We've always been there for the campers, but at some points in our journey, it has been about sort of staff and being up front and doing those things to create community. But that's different than how we are now, which is camper forward. And so, any opportunity we have to have a camper in front sort of their peers, leading in worship, in leadership, whatever that looks like, we try to do that is our primary goal, is the thriving of our campers, so that they feel like they belong. So, while I would say a call and a desire to provide a belonging space to campers is how it's always been, it's been done differently, and Jamie, Doug, and Jenn and this committee, because for those of you who don't know, SPEC is not just three directors in leadership, it is a committee that helps plan. We each have our own piece. So, I've done performing arts in the past, and then there are SPEC staff who come, and I'll talk about Spectators in a minute, but all sorts of staff, from coaches, refs, Spectators, and then there's delegation staff. So, I want to put a little plug when I'm talking about change. One thing that hasn't changed is the leadership. So, this year, for example, we had 500 campers... 200 staff made up of all those different types of staff, committee members, etc. I thought about change and how Spectacular has changed. And the way I would describe it is that with every leadership team, we find ourselves in a season, and things are done, you know, inspired by the hearts of those in leadership. And so, for example, for a while we would bring in a guest minister or two, or a band, all sorts of folks to come in and to maybe speak in morning worship, lead music. We don't really do that anymore. We rely on, I call it local talent, which isn't the best way to say it, but people in Community of Christ who have something to share. We call on musicians. Jenn Killpack, for example, spoke on communion on the communion evening service this year. And so we were able to invite Jenn, one of the directors, to do that, and what she shared was lovely. So we don't really bring in guests anymore. That's one of the changes. I would say. I wrote down two other of my favorite changes. One is, if you've been to Graceland, we used to do morning celebration in the gym, and so we would have the bleachers on either side, and we would pack the bleachers, and there was an air conditioning with all of us facing each other, which was fun when you and I led songs, I am going to say that actually was a blast. But we've now moved outside to the amphitheater that faces Shaw center, and I love that. For us, we're now not split, you know, we're not two different groups facing each other. We are one community sitting together. So I love that. And then I mentioned Spectators, and they're my second change that I love. You know, back in the day, when you and I were there, we knew that youth needed support. Just because you come to a camp, it doesn't mean you leave yourself behind. You come as a camper with everything that's going on in your life. And now we really are aware of how social media is affecting, like bullying, for example, or how we talk about each other mental health and the crisis that we're in with that. So, we always had a counselor, I believe, one or two people. And at some point in the past 10 years or so, we realized that really we need spiritual, loving support for campers, readily available people who will listen, people who will attend to the games, to the group that they are connected to. People who will just sort of journey through the week with their campers. If needed, they will be there, whatever that looks like. So, Spectators are sort of a spiritual guide, I would say. And we still also do, to be very clear, have at least one professional counselor on staff, and I also am a trained social worker, and have done a little social work in relationship with some of our campers who've needed that, and worked with our counselor Kara, and she works diligently with me, with the directors with Spectators,

and we're all a team of support, a web of support for the people that are there. So, I love those changes.

Blake Smith 15:49

Those are great things to have. I know, as a former youth minister a few years ago that that was always an issue at camps that, like you said, the youth bring their full selves to camp, and our camp staffs often aren't qualified to deal with some of the things that come up. And this being a premier youth event for the church, I think that's wonderful to have those resources available. So, what about the programming? I, like you, am a person who went to SPEC. My years would have finished... my last year would have been 1982 as a student, participant in SPEC. And, I also am not an athlete and did play some sports. Thank goodness for the blue group, so that I didn't have to be good. But now it is so much more inclusive. You've mentioned Performing Arts. What are some of the other things that are available to really capture the giftedness of all of our youth.

Shandra Newcom 17:03

Yeah, it's so exciting to be a part of this experience. In addition to sports, which are still very important to our campers who come, we are a camp that looks at leadership, and we work with emerging leaders, both in Community of Christ, and who come with their members, their friends, and who are a part of maybe a church camp for the first time. How can they be empowered to be leaders? We spend time with worship so we have a worship team and that group of staff bring in as many campers who are willing to participate, and those campers then lead our worship experiences. And so, in addition to morning celebration and morning worship, most of the days, we have a couple of evening worships and the communion worship, I am hoping we'll get a chance to talk about in a minute. But that's anyway, worships. Worships a part of that we have the performing arts. We have visual arts. And so really, the best thing about those two pieces for me, campers come and they get to try something, if they're willing, in either performance, or in rock carving, or pottery, or all sorts of visual arts, wood burning, I mean all great things that are classes that are offered so campers might come and be encouraged to try something that they've never done before. I feel like, oh, community. I would say community is, is one of the offerings, in a weird way, that we have throughout the week, different spaces of community building. So, for example, on Sunday at camp, we have a couple people who do something with the whole camp that has a lot of energy that helps them build community. We invite campers into community with devotions, with their delegations, which is a group of people that comes from the same area. We have times of community where we are preparing for a sports game and we stand together and pray, you know, all sorts of worship, community, spiritual community, leadership, community. So I see that as a part of the programming of SPEC. I would also say that belonging to me is a part of how we look at what we would call SPEC programming, but how we create the community that is Spectacular. I talked a lot in my role as camp pastor with our campers about belonging and not just fitting in. You know, Rene Brown talks about how fitting in is changing yourself to be a part of something, and belonging is showing up as who you are and being a part of it just because you're there. And one of my favorite things about Spectacular and I'm now, I'm moving from programming, because this is the way my brain's working. But one of my favorite things is that a camper belongs no matter who they are, when they show up, even if they have a hard time, even if they don't consider themselves spiritual, even if leadership doesn't really call to them, or they can't play sports, or they're not quite sure why they're there, they belong. And I would say the Staff, Committee, all the things, the

directors, all the people I've had the honor of working with since 1987, our goal has been to make that a space of belonging for our youth. And this year, we really heard from some adult staff who were campers, you know, in their time, saying the reason they're connected to Community of Christ, to a spiritual community, to being leaders in their community, is because of Spectacular and how they knew that they belonged. So, I think when we plan Spectacular, yeah, we'll float, we'll have a like, inflatable slide, or we'll, you know, we'll have fireworks, or we'll have some really fun things that senior high youth can grab onto and say, "This was so much fun!", but I think even deeper than that is this programming of empowering our youth to be their true selves, learn and belong to a community. And for some reason it works. We're not perfect, but it works every year. Somehow.

Blake Smith 21:45

It's certainly a point to continue growing in, but that's so essential. I love hearing that. You mentioned just a little bit ago about wanting to say more about communion, and I think that that too kind of plays into the community piece.

Shandra Newcom 22:02

Yes, I want to share two, two experiences I had at Spectacular that really do connect to community. And the first is, it's an experience I had, and I hope when I share it, it means something to people, maybe who haven't been there, but I'm going to go for it. Every Thursday night for as long as I can remember at Spectacular, we do a communion service. And you know, we've done it, if you've been to Graceland on the lawn of the library, we now do it sitting at the amphitheater. And there have been challenges with that service, and one of the primary challenges has been the serving of communion itself, and everything from how do you serve communion to 500 kids sitting on the ground, you know, to how do we let kids who've never experienced communion or the sacraments of Community of Christ. How do we invite them to participate? I really saw that. It's challenging. One year when Rocky's delegation had some kids who'd never been to a church camp before, never been to church, and when the prayer was offered on the emblems, they the Amen, they thought the service was done, and so they stood up to leave, and it was really awkward for them to realize that, no, we were getting ready to go into this time of sacrament. And I have them in my head thinking about, how do we make sure that doesn't happen? You know, how do we make sure that everybody who's there belongs in every moment and understands. So this year, we tried something different, which was, rather than serving in rows, because there really aren't rows when you're sitting on the ground, our servers, who of our priesthood staff stood behind us, so we're facing a building and they're behind. And, the decision was, when the worship is over, I will do the call to communion, and that will be the end of the formal service up on the stage at the amphitheater, and everyone can get up to leave and on their way through get communion. So that was wow, yeah. So we were sure it would work, and in the end, it did, actually. But what happened for me as the person who was able, as the pastor, to call people into communion. I explained exactly what was going to happen, and after talking about kneeling and that we would sit back down and then get up to take communion, I said to them, "you have a choice right now. You have a choice to be focused and a part of this sacramental experience. And what that would look like is you not talking, you know, not like jostling around or forcing people to stand up if they're not ready." Like, basically not, not just kind of bringing some of what I think might be uncomfortableness, that's not quite right, but to an experience "so you have a choice to participate fully. This is what that looks like. Let us kneel and pray." And, 700 people facing me, because I was on the stage, knelt, and the only sound was

the sound of their knees hitting the pavement or the grass in front of them as they knelt to face the emblems at the table. It was silent. 500 Senior High silent, and I read the prayer, and they stood and walked out to get communion and go to their residence halls for the night, silence. And I stood there, first of all, realizing nobody else really heard it like me, because I was the one standing in front of them. So what a blessing that was for me, but all of us who had served communion or led the service, when that last camper walked away, silent, we looked at each other. It was like, what just happened, and I was talking to my friend Daniel, and I said, what happened here? And he said, "You invited them, and they chose the real." They chose what is real in community and in Christ, they chose to be quiet and honor sacrament, and they did, and I don't even know the word to use to explain it, I think other than sacred, and it was a gift. It was a gift to that community. And I think it showed the depth of spiritual connection that our youth are willing to go to, you know, sometimes I think we think youth only sort of skip along the surface of the water of spirituality, like a stone, you know, thrown to skip across the top, and they're there for certain things, and we don't ever give them the chance to sort of deepen into that water of spirituality. And they proved that they are longing for it. One thing for us to learn. The second thing is our friends Andre and Humberto led a two-session class... anybody could come... for campers about Community of Christ. And we had, I think, 40 campers come. And I was there, Carla Long came Bishop Carla Long, and I'll probably leave some other staff out, but anyway, we were there to listen, just to listen. And what I heard from those youth was, we want the church to be inclusive. We want to know that we're safe when we go to church just being who we are. You know that we won't be judged, we won't be asked to leave. We want to know that our friends can be safe too. We want to be on social media. I think 90% we asked, How many of you are subscribed to Community of Christ, social media? I would bet 90% of those campers raised their hand. Blew my mind like, well, there, well, there we go. There's where we need to be. And of course, Jenn and communications, you know, they know that, but it was really exciting to see. So they want to be connected. They want folks in their congregations not to believe that our youth will save the congregation. They don't want to be basically, I'm going to use the word upon and are hoping to save things. You know, youth, that's not their job, and they reflected that back to us. They want to be a part of the community. Heard. And, a number of them shared how they've represented, sort of the theology, mission and beliefs of Community of Christ. Back to their congregation to say, hey, we're connected in this broader way. Let's not forget. And all of that was so exciting. They were so willing to share anyway. It was just a magic time of those kids taking their time, out of out of their Spectacular experience to come let us know what they want us to know. And wow, you know, if you're older than 18 listening to this right now, your youth, both Community of Christ members and those who are connected in some way, they want you to know that they need a place of belonging with you, not just Spectacular once a year, that you're called to create that safe space for them. For anybody else that gets invited into your circle of community.

Blake Smith 30:07

Great, great message for us to hear, and I actually want to step back to your story about the communion experience. First of all, I've always known you to be a gifted storyteller. The way, I hope, I hope, hope, hope that our listeners heard that story at a level more than just, "this is just a recap of something that happened last summer." It reinforces something that I have held to be true for a long time, and that is, I think too often we make assumptions about the youth and what we can expect, and when we lay the opportunity for them, we will often be shocked and surprised and encouraged. I find such great hope in that story. And I think too often, we don't give our young people the credit or the

opportunity to step into that space. So I'm excited to hear that that happened at Spectacular thank you for sharing that story. That's wonderful. So I have a question in my list about what's so special about SPEC, but I think you've been covering that part of the reason I put that in, and I just claim this for myself, my experiences with SPEC have been different even I mean, as a camper, I hear you saying it's a place to belong that, again, also gives me great hope. It was not a place where I felt like I belonged. As a student, I came from a particular area in the US where men are men, and, or were, at least in the 80s, and were very successful at sports and all of that, and I wasn't. And so, it was a very uncomfortable space for me, at Spectacular. I had fun, but it still was an uncomfortable space. So, to hear that that is so part of the core of Spectacular is good to hear and important. And I just so appreciate what you're doing and what our leadership team, Jamie and Doug and Jenn, are doing, and the committee, and all of those who are engaging to make that a priority. That is so important to hear.

Shandra Newcom 32:26

So I want to speak to that, because I am very clear that SPEC is not for everybody, and we can't pretend that it is. And I appreciate you sharing that about your experience. Competition is still a part of SPEC, but it's different, I hope, in that we don't kind of force campers to be to participate in something that they really don't want to do, especially if they're going to feel uncomfortable. We always open opportunity. But, you know, I was forced to be on volleyball when I went to SPEC, and, you know, it sounds like you were put in some experiences, too. And of course, that's always going to happen, always. I, one of the changes that I've seen that I hope helps a bit is, for example, I'm going to say in what we call the talent show. We now call it SPEC's Got Talent, but I'm going to use that as an example. It's a little different than the sports example, but when I started, connected to the talent show, there were auditions. And here's the deal, we maybe don't know better, and then when we know better, so we do better. So that's how I'm going to speak about this. There were auditions, and some people got in and some people did not. And that was what it was, when I was asked to take over as performing arts coordinator so it would free Todd up to really focus on the musical and do that work. The first thing I changed was that, while we still have auditions to see the length of an act and the energy of an act and put it in the right spot, everybody who auditions gets in. Everybody. And so, at that point, we had to add, I think we added two shows during the week, because we had that many kids auditioning. And, you know, at first it was kind of like, Oh, yeah, well, the Wednesday night show is the show of the kids who weren't that good or whatever. You know, people have to categorize in their brain until the change has taken place. That lasted maybe two years. And then at this point, everybody's in the show, just everybody's in the show. And we put it together. We do some karaoke. Now we have a recital, which is for our formal musicians, and that idea of everybody belonging in that space really scared me at first, because I just thought, you know, there are some campers who need a little more learning. Thing, maybe in music or in comedy or whatever it is, they present who are on their journey, and they audition, and everybody gets in. And sometimes I just wonder, you know, if this person will be supported, if they hit a wrong note, or if they're a little out of tune, or if the dance, whatever it is. 100% of the time in the 10 years at least that I've been the coordinator of performing arts and those talent shows, 100% of the time, every camper, no matter their level or performance, has been supported by 100% of the community watching them. It has never been a case where they have fallen. Never. I can't speak to sports, although I know they've tried to get there and not have it be as competitive as you and I experienced. You know, worship is the same, and it's just a matter of us paying attention and doing what lights the spark of the divine in each of those campers. And when you do that as a staff, all the

campers look at that, see that it's possible, and want to be a part of it. And so I am. I understand that SPEC is not for everybody, and that people have a bad experience. For the most part, I think that there is that spark, and for those who aren't quite in that space, I hope that we as adults in congregations and mission centers in some way, listen to maybe what they experienced, and provide them support in some other way. You know, I don't think it's just a kid goes to SPEC, they don't like it, and they go home, and that's it was terrible. I think if somebody goes to SPEC, they didn't have a good experience. They go home, you ask them how they were. You ask them what it was like, and you hear, you know, I had to do, I had to play sports, and I didn't like it. And you sit and talk with them a little bit, you know, be in relationship with your kids before, during and after. Be in relationship with them. Learn about them a little bit. I wish somebody would have done that with us, you know, yeah,

Blake Smith 37:17

Yeah. And, I want to be clear, that when I say that it wasn't a positive experience, it had really not much to do with Spectacular as an event. I loved, loved, loved, loved, being in a location with so many young people who shared the tradition, because I also grew up in an area where I felt the need to be very quiet about what church I attended, because a lot of my friends were not part of that, and so being a part of that was incredible, and to see that I wasn't the only one. So that that's great. It wasn't because of Spectacular that I had a bad experience. It's I had my own issues. I was, yeah, it was, you know, I wasn't good at sports, and I was clumsy, and, you know, that kind of thing, and so, but I just love and I think I would give a lot of credit to the leadership over the years that has been willing to be open to that, to see that, to hear it, to feel it, to respond to it. So, a lot of that the environment that you have created with Spectacular again, giving the youth space to be supportive. Because I think sometimes youth are critical, because they hear the adults being critical, and that kind of thing. But the environment that you guys have created, I'm sure, plays a significant role in how they treat one another, and so that does my heart good to hear as well. So thank you to you and to Jamie and Doug and Jenn and all of the people, not only now, but over these years to build this environment.

Shandra Newcom 39:03

Yeah, even though things have changed from what they were before, it doesn't mean that we don't just deeply walk in appreciation with all of those who have gone before. My role has changed so dramatically, and I don't look back and say, I wish I wouldn't have done that. I look back and I'm grateful for the journey. And you know, all of us leaders, have been on that journey together, and we've learned from one another and from the youth who come on campus.

Blake Smith 39:31

Well, Shandra, is there anything that I haven't asked about that you'd like to share? I know that this is near and dear to your heart. Is there anything that I may have missed.

Shandra Newcom 39:41

You know, the only thing I would say is, if you've finished ninth grade all the way through graduating high school or finishing 12th grade in that age, I invite you to come to Spectacular in 2025 there is space for you. Will belong when you walk on campus, and we want to get you there. And so then, to those of you who are older than just having graduated from high school, I have an invitation to you, and I've had a couple in this podcast, but this is the one I really hope people pay attention to youth need to

get to SPEC, and sometimes financially, they can't afford it. And so I invite you, whether you're an individual just listening and paying attention, who cares? A congregation leader, a Mission Center. Mission Center leadership, I invite you to make sure that all who want to go to Spectacular financially are supported and able to go and receive the information about it with enough time that they can plan to go. Our delegation leaders and staff can help you. You can reach out to me, and I can point you in the right place, you know, if you're wondering how to do that. But like you said, Blake, one of the magic pieces of Spectacular is that when you get on campus, there is 499 other campers just your age who have some of the same experiences. Some are completely different, but they've all shown up expecting to meet God in some way. And God is at work there in that space, preparing for each of those 500 campers. And without the support of the adults connected to those people, they wouldn't be able to be there. And so however it is you get there, if you're a camper age, or if you're an adult who can get someone there, I really hope that you're willing to give that energy and Christ Spirit to those who want to be there, so that we can have 600 campers next year. I don't know. I'm going to dream 700 campers next year and introduce them to the divine spark that is a part of their lives that they may not recognize. So however you get there, let's get there. And however you can get someone there, please do it.

Blake Smith 42:16

Well, there you go listeners, a challenge for all of you, whether you are a youth that is looking to go to Spectacular and falls within that age range, or if you are one who supports our youth and loves our youth and wants them to have this type of experience, there are ways that you can help and be supportive without having to necessarily experience the ungodly heat of Lamoni in late July and August. Well, Shandra, I can't say thank you enough. Of course, it's always a joy just to get to sit and talk with you because of our long friendship. But I really also deeply appreciate the connection that you have maintained with Spectacular, the vision that I know you've had for it and for our youth for a long time, and have carried that through and supported and encouraged and empowered not only the leadership and leaders in general, staff of Spectacular, but the youth. So thank you, and thank you for being here with me today.

Shandra Newcom 43:23

Blake, I really appreciate it. I'm not sure people could tell, but I have a deep love for Spectacular I

Blake Smith 43:30

I think it's clear.

Shandra Newcom 43:32

I'm pretty sure, I'm pretty sure, so getting to talk about it as a gift and getting to talk to you, of course, brings me such a joy. So thanks for inviting me to be here.

Blake Smith 43:41

And thank you to all of our listeners, especially listeners, if you have been a part of Spectacular and are part of one of those groups that's either the committee or a delegation staff or SPEC staff or directors or teachers, however you have participated, I want to give my thanks to you for all that you have done for our youth over the years, and just pray that this will continue to be a blessing as we move forward.

You have been listening to a what's brewing episode, of course, this is a SPEC 2024 recap. We've been here with special guest Apostle Shandra Newcomb, and we are so glad that you joined us today. Have a great rest of your day!