

*“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”*  
 —1 Timothy 4:12



# Homeschoolers and Excellence

## Taking a Closer Look at Action Impact Ministries

By Deborah Wuehler, Senior Editor  
 With Jory and Tess Rolf, AIM

**H**ave you ever seen children and teenagers who don't buy into the world's idea of selfish attitudes, scanty work ethics, and prideful egotism? Action Impact Ministries is a unique ministry that four of my own children have been involved in over the past few years.

The students are imparted with a vision and the tools not only for spreading the gospel through dramatic presentations but also for spreading the fire of excellence in character. On the outside, you will find predominantly homeschooled teens presenting mime and drama to evangelical and patriotic songs. They have presentations at parades, street events, churches, and youth meetings; they have various service projects and travel on mission trips across the country providing workshops on mime, drama, and character excellence. On the inside, you will find students who are committed to upholding strong biblical principles and who maintain a strong desire to glorify God in all they do.

What I appreciate about AIM for my own children is the character excellence and strong biblical principles taught and that the values and philosophy match up so well with what we are teaching our

kids at home. Add on to that the fact that they are spreading the gospel in a unique way that utilizes the gifts God has placed in them, and we find a perfect match.

With me are the founders of AIM, Jory and Tess Rolf, who are currently headquartered in Branson, Missouri.

**TOS:** Jory and Tess, tell us a little about where this ministry came from and where it is today.

**ROLFS:** Growing up, Jory was burdened with finding anyone that was call-

ing for excellence among young people. He continually asked God, "Where is the call to excellence?" He saw young people that weren't being challenged to use their gifts and talents for the Lord and knew that God was asking him to be a part of changing this for the Kingdom. Jory had a passion for discipling and mentoring young people to go beyond what the world was expecting of them and truly change their culture for Him.

God gave Jory the vision to start a creative evangelism ministry specifically for the purpose of discipling and mentoring young people to rise up and to use their entire lives for the glory of God. Recognizing that Christian homeschool young people, brought up in solid homes with a family-oriented foundation, were equipped to rise to this challenge, the ministry began with homeschool families and young people in mind.

The mime/creative evangelism aspect of the ministry originally came from Tess. She comes from a homeschool family in Kansas, where she is the second of thirteen brothers and sisters. Tess traveled on mission trips to Japan and Scotland as a teen and learned the art of creative evangelism through mime. She became



Jory and Tess Rolf and family, founders of AIM International

so passionate about sharing her faith in this way that she came home [and] taught her family and any other homeschoolers that would join to reach beyond the four walls of their churches and homes and reach people with the gospel through creative evangelism.

We combined Tess's mime experience with Jory's passion for discipleship and excellence to create a unique way for homeschooled youth and families to share their faith and be challenged to make a difference in their world.

From day one, this has been an impossible (no other way to explain it, except for God) kind of journey. In 1998 as we entered into marriage, we also by faith entered into full-time ministry that was clearly called out by God.

In 1998 the Road-School program was started. The first Mission Trip took place in October 1998, comprised of eight young ladies. They traveled for three weeks through California, taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world in need using mime, drama, and sign language. They also presented workshops for other youth and churches on the art of mime evangelism.

Facing page, top: Michelle Otto with the AIM Sacramento team. Below: AIM Team mime cross.



## Here's What They're Saying ...



"AIM is my way of witnessing about our Lord. All of my teammates are Christlike and fun to be with." —Cacey Fifield and the San Diego, California, AIM Team

From driving there with the jitters, to putting out the props, to smearing on the white face, to the actual presentation, everyone is nervous. The whole mime team is wondering what this high school is going to think of the next song, "America Again." The message is clear: we need to put God back into America, and especially in the schools. It makes me nervous to be telling teens my own age about what they may not desire. But it is one of my favorite places to present, because they may not know God.

—Courtney Brown,  
AIM member, Wyoming, Delaware

Our experience with AIM has been absolutely wonderful. We have watched our children being grounded in the Lord and blossoming as they reach others for His kingdom. AIM is truly a youth program that puts faith into action.

—Kent and Flossie Cusick, parents of team members  
Justin and Jessica, Sacramento, California

Our family became an "Action family" 5½ years ago when our son joined the local team. We watched in amazement as he grew in confidence and his walk with God. Soon our other son joined, and AIM became a way of life. It replaced the "youth group" scene which we didn't feel lined up with our beliefs as homeschoolers, and became a safe, fun, and challenging way to grow our children spiritually and emotionally. And that is really what AIM is about—growing a new generation to reach a generation.

—Lori Byrd, Director,  
Faith In Action, Bakersfield, California

Our older children take more initiative (even on housework!), are always conscious of the example they are setting, they have learned to prepare Bible studies, they have developed close friendships with kids who hold the same values; in short, they are becoming the young men and women God has chosen them to be, and we are confident that AIM is an enormous part of this positive process. AIM has given our children the opportunity to be actively mentored by people whose lives we approve and admire. AIM leaders and interns have reinforced all the character, biblical training, and priorities that we have spent many years pouring into our children. AIM works with and for our family, not against it. We cannot imagine our family's life without AIM!

—Scott Roberts (and wife Party), Walnut Shade, Missouri



"I enjoy drama, and AIM is the best way to give presentations and evangelize at the same time." —Christopher Wuehler of AIM Sacramento (center)

Many of the groups who had been through these AIM workshops now formed into localized AIM Teams. These local teams now provide discipleship and ministry opportunities for other Christian young people.

God has been growing AIM in amazing ways. Mission trips continue to be sent out each year, now reaching far beyond California to the East Coast, Southeast, and everywhere in between, even Alaska! New AIM Teams are started each year, ensuring that ministry continues in the areas we visit.

It soon became obvious that God was growing the ministry bigger than one couple could handle! So the LifeSTEP Intern Program was created to train young Christian adults how to run a nationwide ministry on a daily basis. The purpose of the program was to provide mentoring, training, and service opportunities for the college-age students joining the program as well as people to help with all the needs of this burgeoning young ministry. We believe very strongly that God has called us to continually pour ourselves into others. That is something that is being accomplished through the LifeSTEP Intern Program.

**TOS:** What kind of response have you received from those involved?

**ROLFS:** We were amazed at the responses that we received. Parents and families told us this was exactly what they had been praying for in a ministry for their families. God encouraged us to continue on with local AIM Teams where youth and their families could continue to minister in their own communities on a weekly or monthly basis, as well as continue to be challenged through Bible studies, character development, and mentoring.

**TOS:** Why do you believe there are so many homeschoolers in the ministry?

**ROLFS:** This ministry was initially created with homeschool families in mind. We saw a need among homeschool families that wasn't generally being met by most churches, and we knew that God had asked us and equipped us to step up to the challenge. Many churches were neglecting the fact that homeschooled young people didn't need to be entertained and catered to week after week, as is the case in many church youth groups. Rather, they had a

deep desire to be disciplined and equipped for outreach and evangelism. Homeschoolers, for the most part, are already being taught this in their own homes and so the ministry seems to be a great fit for homeschool families. One of the reasons AIM began was to specifically help meet this need for homeschool families and to uniquely do God's Kingdom work. We strive to be family friendly, encouraging the entire family to be involved in ministry, if possible.

Another reason that many homeschool families are involved in this ministry is due to the high standards and core values that God has asked us to uphold. These standards and convictions are often consistent with many homeschooling families' values and standards, so AIM has become a safe environment for homeschool families to grow and learn and to allow their children to be involved.

**“One of our visions is to identify, empower, and introduce the future Christian world changers.”**

**TOS:** What sets this ministry apart from other youth ministries?

**ROLFS:** One of the main differences would probably take us back to the heart of the ministry: the standards and call to excellence. We have been involved in a number of ministries, and the thing that we continually saw a need for was an expectation for godly character and high moral standards. Our youth culture today is very “me”-focused and entertainment oriented, and too many churches aren't helping to change this. We constantly hear from homeschool families that they cannot and will not place their children into many church youth groups because of this self-centered mentality. AIM is changing the face of ministry for homeschooled young people, causing them to look outside of themselves and meet the needs of the broken world around them. We believe that the standards God has placed on our heart are a lifestyle, not just something that you put on and take off when it is convenient.

AIM Team students and families are committed to “setting the example” by

living lives that are “worthy of being imitated” every day in every way. They believe in and commit to a family-oriented lifestyle, courtship, and pure relationships and high moral values lived out in their everyday lives. AIM is committed to cultivating true community within homeschool families and groups.

Discipleship and high biblical and moral standards are primary components that are missing from a majority of youth ministries in America. AIM also strives to have a family focus and turn the hearts of the youth towards home—not towards self. AIM purposes not to insult today's Christian youth by assuming they need to be entertained, but instead empowers them to actively impact their world that is moving away from God. (2 Corinthians 6:3-10). This cannot be done through entertainment and shallowness. It can only be done through a deep commitment to walk beside each student in discipleship, a deep commitment to the Word of God, and through challenging them to reach beyond themselves to a world in need.

Another area that sets AIM apart is our structure. AIM Teams across the country are set up in a unique way so that young people are mentored and trained by godly parents and adults (LITE Team) to be the future leaders of the ministry team. AIM also empowers a SALTeam (Student ACTION Leadership Team) to learn leadership skills, participate in peer ministry, and learn to make ministry decisions in a safe, mentored environment to set a foundation for a lifetime of ministry.

AIM is a family-oriented ministry; any member of the family is invited to be involved. You don't find many youth ministries that want Mom and Dad to join them. We believe, however, that family is the most important thing that God has given us and that we are a powerful force when we work together.

**TOS:** As I said earlier, I really appreciate the fact that the values and philosophy match up so well with what we are teaching our kids at home, plus they get to use the gifts God has given them to spread the gospel. Is there room for more homeschoolers in AIM, and what is the commitment you desire from the parents as well as the students?

**ROLFS:** One of the goals that we felt was important to be achieved through AIM was that homeschooled young peo-

ple hear the same high standards, core convictions, beliefs, and values at AIM as they were hearing at home, thus helping to solidify this for them.

We are always open to new teams starting as God leads. We always encourage parents and families to become as involved in the ministry as their time and schedules allow. Whether it be helping to lead Bible studies, discipling a team member, helping with rides, props, music, or traveling as a family on an AIM Mission Trip, there are numerous ways that the entire family can be involved in the ministry.

We believe that if God laid it on someone's heart to start a team, He will provide all that is needed to make that happen. We are here and available to help in the process and training in any way that we can.

Most AIM Teams meet on a weekly basis for Bible study, character building, and rehearsing of the creative evangelism mime, dramas, and skits. Depending on the community that the team is a part of, AIM Teams also do an additional one to three outreaches per month. We also challenge teams to look for service project opportunities for the team families to be a part of. These are a great way to help build community as well as to reach out to the community and "show" them Jesus by helping to meet a need. We believe very strongly in "character on and off stage." Young people must be taught to reach beyond themselves so that we will not become just another performance group that entertains instead of ministers.

## "Our aim is to impact this world that is moving away from God."

**TOS:** Where do you see the ministry heading? What is your vision for the future of AIM?

**ROLFS:** God started out this ministry requiring extreme faith and obedience of us, and we believe that is what He is continuing to ask of us.

One of the primary visions that God has laid on our hearts is to be a premier Missionary Training, Discipleship and Sending organization for homeschool families and students. Our vision includes a property to host such, along with

"Character-based peer group" is a way to describe AIM. In a world where tolerance is the norm and standards are not expected for teens, AIM chooses to call teens up to excellence for the Lord. Seeing a song prints its message in our hearts. The message also quickens hearts of audiences, even ones not necessarily "Christian." It has brought joy to see our children have a means to share the Gospel. Thank you, AIM, for your impact in our family's life.

—Dave and Sue Brown,  
parents of AIM team members, Wyoming, Delaware

Mime is something active I like to do with friends of similar beliefs. I feel God's presence as we practice and present the gospel. I have grown closer to God and strengthened character traits Christ wants me to model in my life.

—William Otto, AIM team member, Sacramento, California

AIM gives me a chance to share God's Word in a unique way. AIM promotes such qualities as character excellence (not performance arrogance)—teaching young people that it is all about God and not about us! AIM is not just an evangelical ministry, it is mostly a discipleship ministry ... it does not do much good if you tell someone about God, but then not show them how to obey Him and live for Him.

—Joshua Moody, AIM member, Smyrna, Delaware

The values our family strive to live by are reinforced by the Bible studies and mentorship program that this ministry offers. The accountability that my children have with their leaders and peers is a life-giving model that will help them in relationships for the rest of their life.

—Chuck Voth, parent of three AIM team members,  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

I have met the most servant-minded people in this ministry. The integrity of the founders and people serving at the headquarters has challenged me to higher standards. This is a ministry worth checking out!

—Sharon Voth, AIM team director, Colorado Springs, Colorado

"Now here's how you do the rope ... and that's how you make a balloon ... and at this beat in the song you need to do this with lots of expression ... Oh! Don't cross your hands when you're making a box!" Is mime all that AIM is about? That's what I thought when I first joined "the mime group." I've been on three mission trips with AIM all across the United States. There I found out how much AIM impacts your life. They take you to where the edge of your comfort zone is and push you far beyond. I look back on mission trips as a few of the best times in my life. Now almost four years from when I began, I don't think God could have given me a better opportunity.

—Ryan Brown, AIM team member, Wyoming, Delaware

Over the past six months I have enjoyed learning to mime to Christian and patriotic songs. AIM has been a great place for me to learn how better to be a Christian and how to share my faith. I've made some great friends at AIM and learned how to follow Christ in my relationships.

—Rebekah Schroetlin,  
AIM team member,  
Colorado Springs,  
Colorado

I have witnessed more spiritual growth in my kids since their involvement in AIM than all the past combined.

—Kris Schroetlin, mom  
of seven, six of whom  
are on the Colorado  
AIM team



AIM team presents at Baltimore Inner Harbor.

a National Homeschool Family Camp and Conference Center. The Institute will be designed for hands-on missionary and ministry training. Young people and families will be equipped for life with powerful evangelistic skills, practical hands-on application, and a chosen ministry focus. Students will be taught and mentored using a hands-on apprenticeship approach that partners with local Christian ministries, churches, businesses, etc., as they receive mentored opportunities to boldly share the gospel.

Our hope is also to expand the LifeSTEP Intern Program, continuing to train homeschool graduates in “hands-on” ministry and missionary skills, raising up the next leaders of AIM and other ministries.

The visions that God has given us are definitely God-sized! We have already seen God growing the ministry in big ways, with more AIM Teams starting across the country every year. We saw eight mission trips for homeschool students and families crisscross the U.S. last year and several AIM Teams travel internationally with their ministries.

AIM is a faith-based organization and has made it a standard and policy for the

ministry not to enter into any debt, and so we await God’s timing and finances to see these visions come to fruition. We are excited to see where and how He will continue to grow this ministry in the future. We are watching to see where He is at work so that we can join Him in it!

Please join with us as we continue to pray for God to expand His ministry through AIM and to provide people and resources to carry out His plans. May He continue to be the one glorified through His people in ACTION Impact Ministries!

**TOS:** Thank you, Jory and Tess, for following the Lord where He is leading. My children absolutely love AIM, and we as parents love what AIM stands for and Who is glorified in their lives! I am excited about what the Lord is doing in and through this ministry.

**ROLFS:** If families and/or homeschool groups would like to learn more about starting an AIM Team, traveling with AIM, or bringing AIM to their community for a workshop, we can be reached at 1-888/542-9186 (voicemail); 417-334-

8001; or e-mail [aim@aiminternational.org](mailto:aim@aiminternational.org). You can also get more information at our website: [www.aiminternational.org](http://www.aiminternational.org). AIM is a 501(c)3 with a group exemption. 🏛️

*D. Wheeler*



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- on and off Stage!

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