

THE GATHERING USA *Backgrounder*

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The Gathering USA, Inc. is a national outreach movement started in 1978 by Dr. John Tolson. He formed this organization in order to teach men leadership principles and motivate them to be active in their families and communities. The basic approach, which provides monthly networking and leadership events for men and their friends, has proven to be extremely successful.

Since its launch, The Gathering has impacted more than a half-million men and has become a powerful network of chapters in 16 U.S. cities and soon to begin in South Africa. Numerous charities, even international groups, have been aided by the group's longstanding community service programs and missions. Across the U.S., chapters have worked with national organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity. And in 2002, The Gathering took its outreach to the Dominican Republic where it has constructed clinics, sports facilities and a school that serves more than 500 children.

More than 30 employees help run the organization nationwide, including full time staff in select cities that are also supported by a large volunteer network. Gathering chapters are based in the U.S. cities of Baton Rouge (LA), Bloomington (IL), Columbus (OH), Dallas (TX), Houston (TX), Myrtle Beach (SC), Orlando (FL), Palm Beach (FL), Pittsburgh (PA), San Antonio (TX) and throughout the Southern California region.

With each year, the Gathering becomes a greater resource for men, women, families and the community at large. Gathering events range from intimate networking breakfasts and lunches to major seminars and conferences featuring powerhouse speakers, such as Joe Gibbs, Mike Krzyzewski, Ken Blanchard, and Adolph Coors. On the average, some 500-1000 men attend the events, which often include participation by top business and government leaders. A new Gathering of Women group is also experiencing significant growth annually.

At the heart of all Gathering programs rests a strong belief in leadership training and teaching men and women to train other leaders. The Gathering creates many community tools, from books and tapes to seminars and outreach programs. One seminar, *Qualities of a Leader, Maximum Impact*, regularly features a simulcast with the best-selling author and leadership guru John C. Maxwell. The Gathering also created an accredited graduate level course.

Other projects include a video *Children in Rage/Fathers of Hope* and a seminar series *Dads and Moms That Make a Difference*, both designed to teach effective parenting techniques. Additionally, there are many grassroots programs, such as the *50 Good Men*, aimed at encouraging men to give back to their community, *Read & Succeed*, a program that tutors at-risk inner-city kids, and *First Step*, a basketball camp and mentoring program. Another project called *Mission Emanuel* focuses on growing a large school for low income children in the Dominican Republic.

The Gathering has fervently helped to create stronger families and stronger communities through principles of love and leadership. Tolson and Kreider have recently adapted their successful Gathering philosophy, *The Four Priorities*, into an in-depth book that is being released nationwide.



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