Reaching the Next Generation for Christ

Dr. Katrina Forseth on Good News Clubs, Camp Good News, Training Young Leaders, and Opportunities to Serve

Dr. Katrina Forseth | Thursday, October 29, 2026 | Host: Donna Leland

Program Summary

On this Thursday edition of Mark & Friends, Donna Leland welcomes back Dr. Katrina Forseth, Illinois State Director and national education leader with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF). Katrina reviews the summer's Camp Good News and five-day backyard Bible clubs, including a ten-day training program for middle-school, high-school, and college-age young people. She reports more than 300 campers, approximately 70–80 summer clubs, and nearly 80 after-school Good News Clubs across Illinois, with these figures presented as her estimates. The conversation explores outreach in Cairo and Jacksonville, the expansion of Junior Youth Challenge into middle schools, and CEF's account of an equal-access dispute involving a school district in the Moline area. Donna and Katrina also preview the November 5 CEF Illinois fundraiser featuring Robert J. Morgan and Jeff Nichols, explain opportunities for churches and volunteers, and close in prayer for children and the workers who serve them. Katrina recalls speaking at Mark's Pastors & Ministry Leaders Luncheon and urges churches in Champaign-Urbana to consider starting clubs. The overriding invitation is to help the next generation hear and understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Key Takeaways

• Children are an important part of the church’s present mission, not merely its future.

• CEF equips young people through structured training before they lead summer clubs or serve at camp.

• Katrina reported more than 300 Camp Good News participants and roughly 70–80 summer clubs; these were estimates given in the interview.

• After-school Good News Clubs are being rebuilt after pandemic-era interruptions, with Katrina reporting nearly 80 clubs statewide.

• Church partnerships and local volunteer teams make community outreach possible.

• CEF also offers Junior Youth Challenge for middle-school students, extending outreach beyond elementary ages.

• Katrina described legal developments concerning equal access to public-school facilities; specific legal requirements should be checked locally.

• Volunteers can serve as teachers, helpers, prayer partners, organizers, or supporters.

• Christmas Party Clubs offer churches another seasonal opportunity to present the Gospel.

• The conversation invites believers to pray for workers and to share the hope of Jesus with the next generation.

Scripture References

• Matthew 19:14

• Mark 10:13–16

• Matthew 9:37–38

• Deuteronomy 6:6–7

• Psalm 78:4–7

• Acts 1:8

• Romans 10:14–15

• 2 Timothy 2:2

Quote of the Day

“The harvest is great, but the laborers are few.” — Jesus (as recalled by Dr. Katrina Forseth)

Broadcast Notes

Donna introduces Dr. Katrina Forseth as CEF Illinois State Director and a national education leader. Katrina describes the longstanding camp in Washington, Illinois, and a ten-day training program with several tracks, including a new middle-school track. She reports more than 300 children at Camp Good News and estimates 70–80 five-day clubs over the summer. Outreach stories include a first visit to Cairo and renewed activity in Jacksonville. She estimates close to 80–82 school-based clubs across Illinois and describes how clubs were disrupted during COVID. She discusses a Jacksonville volunteer's efforts to establish school clubs and the Junior Youth Challenge middle-school program. Katrina then recounts a dispute over fees and access for CEF in the Moline/Coal Valley area and describes a permanent injunction. These are her characterizations of legal developments, not independently verified legal advice. Donna previews the Thursday, November 5 fundraiser at Bethany Community Church in Washington, Illinois, with speakers Dr. Robert J. Morgan and Jeff Nichols. They discuss volunteer teams, prayer, teaching, support roles, and Christmas Party Clubs. Both women pray for children and workers. At the close, Katrina remembers her appearance at Mark's Pastors & Ministry Leaders Luncheon and says CEF currently has no school clubs in Champaign-Urbana; she hopes local churches will form teams. The transcript's reported participation figures and organizational roles are retained as described by the guest, with approximate language where she expressed uncertainty.

❤■ Practical Applications

• Pray by name for children in my family, church, neighborhood, or community.

• Ask a local church whether it already partners with a children’s outreach ministry.

• Encourage a teenager or college student who may benefit from supervised ministry training.

• Consider volunteering in a practical role such as hospitality, snacks, transportation coordination, prayer, or teaching.

• Invite a friend to join me in praying for a local Good News Club team.

• Learn what training and safeguarding requirements apply before serving with children.

• Explore whether my church could host a Christmas outreach for children and families.

• Ask God to raise up more faithful workers in communities without an established club.

• Share an age-appropriate Gospel resource with a parent or caregiver who requests one.

• Pray that the next generation will know the Lord and be equipped to serve others.

Today's Challenge

During the next seven days, pray Matthew 9:37–38 each morning, asking the Lord to send workers into His harvest. Identify one child, parent, young volunteer, or church leader to encourage. Then take one practical step: ask about a local ministry opportunity, offer to serve, introduce a potential volunteer, or commit to regular prayer for a children’s outreach team.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving children and welcoming them into Your presence. Give me Your heart for the next generation and open my eyes to the needs of families around me. Thank You for faithful teachers, volunteers, pastors, parents, and ministry leaders who share the Gospel with boys and girls. Please protect the children in their care, guide those who train and serve, and raise up more workers for the harvest. Show me how I can pray, encourage, give, or serve with wisdom and compassion. Help me never overlook a young person who needs to know the love of Jesus. May Your Word take root in hearts and be passed faithfully from one generation to the next. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Dr. Katrina Forseth serves as State Director of Child Evangelism Fellowship of Illinois and, as introduced in this program, also holds a national education leadership role with CEF. Her work includes equipping churches and volunteers to share the Gospel with children through Good News Clubs, summer Bible clubs, camps, and leadership training. In this conversation she shares Illinois ministry updates, opportunities for local involvement, and a passion for reaching the next generation with the message of Jesus.

About Today's Host

Donna Leland regularly hosts the Thursday edition of Mark & Friends, a ministry of Great News Media. Through warm conversations with authors, ministry leaders, and guests, she highlights biblical encouragement, personal testimonies, and practical opportunities for listeners to grow and serve.

Additional Ministry Resources

Child Evangelism Fellowship — https://www.cefonline.com/

CEF Illinois — https://www.cefillinois.com/

Good News Radio — https://www.greatnewsradio.org/

WLUJ — https://www.wluj.org/

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.

It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear. Everyone loves you.

We're glad you're here. Welcome to Mark & Friends. I'm your host, Donna Leland.

And today, it's my privilege to talk once again to Dr. Katrina Forseth. She's the State Director for CEF Illinois and the CEF National Education Director as well. Thank you so much, Katrina, for joining us on Mark & Friends.

Oh, it's my pleasure. Thank you so much, Donna. I always love to do a check-in with all things Child Evangelism Fellowship.

So I know you've got some really exciting things coming up. But let's go back into the summer. How did that turn out? I know that was a lot of effort being given to do all those backyard Bible clubs as well as maybe even some camps.

Absolutely. Well, we had a really good summer. So our training school started in early June.

And we're one of the few states in CEF USA across the country that actually owns and operates our own camp. A lot of states in Child Evangelism Fellowship, they may rent a camp. But I think we're down to like five of us or maybe even less than that of states that actually own their own camp.

And kind of a little bit of claim to fame is we I think we're the oldest camp in Child Evangelism Fellowship here in the USA because it started 71 years ago in 1955. So that's pretty cool. That is very cool.

And that's right outside of Peoria, right? Yeah, it's in Washington, Illinois. So that's where we have had our training school ever since the COVID years. We just have a combined training school with all of our high school and college students.

They come together for, like I said, this, you know, like this 10 day training. And so it's like we're doing like four tracks at the same time. It's almost like a like a college university in a sense where like you have general ed classes together about the biblical basis of why we do what we do and evangelizing children.

You know, like the foundational classes and how to share the gospel of children, how to lead children to Christ. And then we break into our individual tracks, whether they're going to be a summer camp counselor or running, you know, camp activities. So that would be a track.

Or if they're going to be a five day club, backyard Bible club teacher that goes out and does those Bible clubs all throughout Illinois. So we have that track. And then we also have a returnee or senior returnee track.

So that's a third one. And then we just started a middle school track for those would be like junior summer missionaries. So it's like we had almost 50 students, like I said, ranging from middle school, high school, all the way to college.

And we're all together for these 10 days. And and I love it because it's so transformational. And it's really about discipleship and equipping these young people, the future generations to have a heart and also how to share the gospel with boys and girls.

And so just kind of fast forward. We had like six weeks of camp. We had over 300 plus children that came to our camp at Camp Good News.

And we had many decisions for Christ and rededication. So that was great. And then I think I'd have to look at the statistics again, but I think we were close to maybe about 70 or 80 clubs, those backyard Bible clubs that we had throughout the state.

And we also had a travel team that went over to the Urbana Champaign area for one week or over there by Danville. And then we had another travel team. And I was actually going to be part of that one.

We went all the way down to Cairo, Illinois. And if anyone knows where Cairo is, it's like way, way, way down the most bottom part of our state. It's like right across like a stone's throw across from the Kentucky River.

And we were able to the first time doing ministry in Cairo. And and they just they just fell in love with CF. They just really did.

They said now that we see they said they were trying to understand what you're explaining, what the five day club was. But now we see it with our own eyes. We see the picture.

Remember, this pastor said this to me. He says, you come again next year. And he said, we'll just have this whole fellowship hall filled with children.

And we'll work with all the churches in Cairo and we'll try to reach our community for Christ. How exciting, you know, this summer, we also did that, tried to bring churches together and we did a five day club at this church. And it was wonderful.

And it turned out so great. Everyone was so well trained. These kids were amazing.

And this is a wonderful opportunity. If our listeners know a young person who you'd want to just give some training, steer them towards ministry. It's a great way for them to get their feet wet and figure some things out under the guidance and security of Child Evangelism Fellowship.

That's wonderful. Now, we would love to do that and we just love to if they're age actually 13 and older, they're in. You know, we have an application process, but I mean, we can work with all the way to 13 or not because of these four different tracks that we have.

And it's not too early. We would we would love to to work with them and get to know them and talk to their parents and explain the whole program to them. And it's really just like they were going overseas on a business trip.

But this is their backyard, Jerusalem, where they're not just over there, the other most part of the earth, but they're also in their Jerusalem, their Judea, their Samaria. Another wonderful aspect of Child Evangelism Fellowship, my daughter was with CEF for many years in Chicago, is that they get to go in to schools completely legal. And it was actually CEF who won that decision at the Supreme Court level that says we can take the gospel in through CEF.

And tell us about your year coming up and how many clubs you have. Well, we are already beginning our our fall ministry in the schools, and I think we're pushing very close to 80 or 82 schools that we're in throughout Illinois, through all of our good news clubs. And we're just so excited that God is continuing to rebuild that back, because if you go all the way back to 2020, which I know a lot of us, we don't like to remember.

But, you know, or 2021 and I remember March around that time of year when just everything just, boom, just shut down. We went we were at 90 some, I think, 92 or 95 good news clubs. And so when that happened, when COVID happened, we went from there in the 90s and then, boom, just all the way down to zero because we couldn't be in the schools.

And that was a hard day. I think that was March 13th. That was a hard day.

But slowly the Lord has built that back up. So we're pushing 80 right now. And a lot of those teams just needed to be rebuilt in those, you know, because of the gaps.

But we're just so thankful for what the Lord has done. And also just like, for example, in Jacksonville, Illinois, just in the past three years, we had a transplant of a person that was from the state of Maryland who did CEF clubs, good news clubs in Maryland. And she was trained by them over there.

And her husband was a pastor and their church actually did two good news clubs. And so when they moved here and, you know, like she was also a special education teacher in the public school and she saw signs on the wall for those, you know, those LGBTQ, those rainbow clubs that were taking place of meetings in the school. And she was like, this school needs Jesus and they need God's word.

At first they were basically like, no. And then she's so bold. Donna, she walked right into the superintendent's office.

She says, look, she said, you have, you know, rainbow clubs meeting here and that's a community group. That's an outside school thing, but you're allowing that to take place, you know, in the school. And she said, you need to allow CEF to have a good news club here and it is legal.

And if you have any questions about it, CEF has a legal team called Liberty Counsel and they could help you understand that. I'm trying to be trying to be nice about, but it wasn't that many that too long and totally spun around the doors wide open. I'm so, so thankful.

And now I think of those six or seven schools. I can't remember exactly how many are down there in that Jacksonville district in Illinois, but now I think they're in, I think they're in almost five of those schools right now. And their goal is to be in all six or seven of that, how many there are, but then not only in the elementary schools, but also in the middle school.

And they just had a rally in September and they had 80 kids because not only can we be in the elementary school. A lot of people don't know this, Donna, is that CEF can not only, we can, we can, we can serve and do good news clubs in the public school immediately after school and elementary school. But we also, that at Wright extends all the way to middle school too.

And we've extended our curriculum now to middle school age, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade. So from kindergarten to eighth grade, I mean, children are still our focus, but now we, we see that we need to also have, I mean, what, what happens when they go to middle school? I mean, there's no more good news club. No, it's called JYC junior youth challenge.

So anyways, so she had a burden and a passion, got churches together. They had 80 kids show up for the first rally and the second month they had 120 kids, 120 middle school kids that showed up for the second rally. And then they use that as a, you know, as a launching point to launch the weekly good news club or the, the, the JYC meeting.

They have 20 middle school youth coming on a weekly basis now. So CF is not just the elementary school. Now we can be expanded in the middle school too.

Recently, Child Evangelism Fellowship had another challenge and this one came from Moline, Illinois. Tell us about it. Well, it was five years in the making and basically a school district was confused.

And the Moline school district, I think it was Coal Valley, that they were confused about what equal access, how it applied to a community group like the good news club. But, you know, in one sense, no, because it was very clear from 2001 when the Supreme Court took up that case that came from the state of New York and the Supreme Court ruled in 2001 that specifically a good news club has the same right to meet in the public school after school as any, any community group. So just like in the

same way, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts or Girls on the Run or whatever, they can access the public school facility after school, after school hours.

So can CF, so can the good news club. That's what the Supreme Court ruling is. But, you know, we live in a world that, you know, that's not, I don't know how to say this, but, you know, that, you know, not everyone's a fan of that or there's, there's other things that come up.

And so the bottom line is a school district was basically saying to the, to the different community groups, you, you, you, you, yes, you can access a school facility. And yes, CF, good news club, you can access a school facility, but you need to pay a building fee because you're a faith based community group. If that makes sense.

Yeah. And are like you, you, you, you, you community group. Yes, you can pass out flyers through the school or you can be part of the back to school parent night and you can set up a booth, but not you, you know, CF, good news club, because you're a faith based community group.

See, they were confused about what the equal access ruling actually was. And so anyways, it took five years and then Liberty Counsel, our legal team, they represent CF for $0. They took that up and it was a decisive when it was a permanent injunction.

And yeah, so everything has been reversed and now it helps clarify equal access even further. So in the future, if other school districts in Illinois, but not just Illinois, you know, across the United States have that misunderstanding, you can point back to this. Cause this, it clarifies it because of its case law, because it Claire, it clarifies the original decision of the Supreme court.

That's wonderful. God is so good. Isn't need to just continue giving that freedom to get those little kiddos to hear the good news.

And, uh, there's something coming up here that we'd like to talk about. It's a wonderful event that you guys do at least I think once a year, but it's the CEF of Illinois all fundraiser. And that's going to be happening, uh, November the 5th, Bethany community church in Washington.

Tell us about your speakers. Well, we have two. And so we're excited about that one we've had before.

And so some people may know him as Dr. Robert J. Morgan. And he is like a gold medallion author. He's sold over a million books.

He's a pastor teacher. And he's still a pastor, uh, at a church and, and he's a teaching pastor, but also he's just a phenomenal, phenomenal author writer. Anyone that comes, they will not be bored.

They just, it's like, you can listen to him. It's like a, like a sitting around a, uh, a campfire or around a, you know, a warm, warm fireplace. And you just listen to him.

He's just, just story after story. Just the way that he talks and communicates is just amazing in his heart for the Lord. And it's grasp of scripture.

Um, he also loves hymns. And so he's written several different, like, like the stories behind the hymns, if that makes sense called then sings my soul, like the story behind the song, like it is well with my soul, where that came from. And different ones like that.

And he says he has volumes, like three different volumes of different hymns and the stories of how those hymns came about. And, you know, and, and historically, you know, how that, that all happened. And so it's just, it's just, he's a gifted, gifted, uh, speaker and just loves the Lord in our other speaker.

Um, I am very prejudiced too, because he is also my boss. He's the vice president of CFUSA, very biased towards, and he's, he's amazing. He's a great guy and he's just so passionate and his heart is to reach, um, this country for Christ.

Cause he's the vice president of CFUSA ministries and his goal, his passion is to bring the gospel to these, you know, uh, millions of children that live here in the USA. And we're only barely scratching the surface. So we want to go from where we're at, where we're at now, reaching like maybe 600,000 children through all of our CFUSA ministries.

We want to see that expanded, expanded to eventually 1 million, 2, 3 million children, but we have to get that infrastructure in place. But his name is Jeff Nichols. So, and actually kind of fun fact is that Jeff Nichols and Dr. Robert Morgan worked in the

same church, uh, and were on staff together for 25 years.

Actually, Dr. Robert Morgan hired Jeff. And Jeff was the children's pastor. And then he became the executive, I think, assistant pastor to oversee all the administrative stuff.

But they work together hand in hand. So basically you've got two besties that are coming together and, and they're, they're sharing their passion and love for God, God's word and ministry. But also, you know, they've been doing this for a long time.

Again, that's the CEF of Illinois Fall Fundraiser. And that's at Bethany Community Church, Thursday, November the 5th in Washington. And all this information is also on our website, our community calendar.

Katrina, I'm also thinking of our dear listeners and maybe they've got some extra time. Maybe now they're retired or they'd like to volunteer. How would they go about that? And what would be some of the requirements? They'd love the Lord and they want to minister to children.

And if everything's, you know, they're able to serve, we would love to have them. There's many different roles they can, they could serve in. You know, they can serve on committees.

They can serve as prayer partners, as supporters of this ministry. But actually, if they want to go into the schools, we would love for them to be part of those teams. We're always looking for, I mean, the doors are open in the schools.

We just need teams to go in there. And we only need like maybe six people to form a team. And like two of them could be your main teachers and the other four could be like helpers or even great shepherd helpers or listening to Bible verses or snack coordinators or, you know, a prayer partner team.

So it really doesn't take that many people to do a good news club in the school. But that's not the only thing we do. We have Christmas coming up.

We have Christmas party clubs. Maybe your church wants to host a Christmas outreach and they would go through a CF like an hour and a half, two hour training. And then we give them the curriculum, the materials, and they can have an outreach for their church that's gospel centered.

And they have an evangelistic message for the children and even opportunity for the children to trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior. I mean, there's, there's, and we have many, many different avenues. So it's just almost sky's the limit.

So if they're interested in reaching boys and girls for Christ, we have a fit for you. So we would love to talk to you. Yeah, you don't have to be up front giving the message.

There's so many behind the scenes, but if you do enjoy being up front, that's an opportunity as well. Well, I think Katrina, we should spend a little bit of time praying for this beautiful ministry. Okay.

Well, Lord, we just thank you for just the years that you have blessed CF with. It's coming on 90 years. But Lord, this goes way beyond an organization or years or anything, Lord.

I just pray that you would just help your people across all churches and denominations to see the importance of reaching the children this generation now for you. That there's children growing up that they haven't even heard really a clear presentation of the gospel. Some of them not even once in their life.

I just pray that you would help the church to be the church and help ministries like CF to come alongside and help the body of Christ and to equip the body of Christ and to encourage the body of Christ to reach out and to share a clear presentation of the gospel and just to begin to love in those children. I just pray that you would just you just raise up a generation of people, Lord, that see that that they need to pass on the faith to the next generation. And that has to begin with us.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the faithfulness of CF and God. We are just going to stand by and watch you get things done, Lord, through that beautiful ministry and all the excellent training that takes place. So people are equipped and they're going in and sharing the gospel.

We thank you for the freedom that we have in America to share the gospel through these clubs. And we want to thank you for CF leadership to keep that access available through our court system. And I just praise you and thank you in your name.

Amen. Well, thank you so much, Katrina, for being a part of our Mark & Friends experience. We've been talking with Dr. Katrina Forseth of Child Evangelism Fellowship of Illinois.

And we just appreciate you, Katrina. You know, you are Mark Burns favorite. Well, I just I had a wonderful time because we were over there in Urbana-Champaign and he asked me to come as like their lunch and guest speaker and to share about CF.

And it was just amazing because right before I got up, a district superintendent who was a who is a believer who just recently installed as a superintendent and is either Urbana-Champaign district, not sure which one. And he got up and he said, you know, he's a believer. He's a strong believer.

But he said he basically said, pray for us. He said, because everything and anything can be in the public schools. He says, but not Jesus, not the Bible, not prayer.

And he says, but pray for us. He says, because our students need Jesus. Well, then right after it was like a two minute thing that he shared.

And then Mark Burns, he asked me to come up next. You know, and so I came up and I had this plan presentation, like walking through CF. I couldn't let that hang out there.

And that's like low hanging fruit. And I just asked the Lord, like one of those, you know, Arab prayers, like, OK, Lord, help me. And I just I just began to share my heart and I just wanted to affirm, say, yes, we can be in the school.

He just didn't know that. See, there's a lot of there's a there's even a lot of district superintendents and they may even be a believer in Christ. But they don't know that, you know, you know, you know, the second rule isn't going to readily tell them about this.

And so, yes, we can. And so I remember when I was sharing about how we could be in a public school and the Supreme Court decision decision since we've had since 2001, the superintendent listening literally stood up and began clapping and then the whole room just began just clapping. And I just shared, you know, what that meant and how you walk through that, how you form a team.

I just almost like I did a mobilization meeting with them. I kind of booted my notes to the curb and my PowerPoint. And then I caught up my PowerPoint later.

But I mean, it was just I feel like Lord just pushed me out of the way and the Holy Spirit showed up. And I don't even know what came out of my mouth. But I mean, I was just I just wanted to say, yes, we can.

And let me share with you how and different things. And long story short, there's about 60 people in the room, 50 or 60. And I think it was about an hour, hour and a half that I just stayed in the room just talking to group after group or individuals that wanted to know more.

And I wanted to follow back up with Mark because there seemed to be a lot of interest. And we are not in any schools right now in Urbana-Champaign. We know it's like Jesus said, the harvest is great, but the laborers are few.

You know, pray the Lord that he would send laborers into the harvest field. And that's what we need. We need churches that would catch a vision that they can be in the public school even now this year.

Well, thank you again, Katrina, for your heart, for Illinois and for the children that we know are near and dear to the heart of God. Thanks again for joining us on Mark & Friends. Thank you.

All of our program notes and contact information sitting on our website under the Mark & Friends tab. Mark & Friends is a ministry of Great News Media. Have a great day.