

Super Summer ‘brings out the best in everybody’

*By Lindsey Williams
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From Day One of Super Summer, an evident excitement filled the Mississippi College campus as eighth through 12th grade students came eager to dive right into the Word. This year, 1,084 students, 133 youth ministers and servant staff, and 167 team leaders – the most team leaders MS Super Summer has ever had – arrived ready to be challenged for the week.

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From Central Baptist Church in Jonesboro, AR, Cory and Stephanie Epps and their praise band led the worship at Super Summer, singing impactful songs of adoration and confession to God. Even from the very first night, no one had to usher the students to stand in worship; they rose to their feet and

lifted hands by their own desire to praise Him. When the speaker made his way to the stage, Bibles were opened, and hearts were attentive.

Sue McAllister, Associate Director of MS Super Summer, has attended every Super Summer since its beginning in 1987. "Super Summer is for students who want more than Sundays and Wednesdays, who are hungry for the Word," said McAllister. "It's those kids who have servant hearts inclined to become influential yet humble leaders. They're the ones who bring their Bibles, take notes, and are engaged and focused in worship. They're the ones who sign up for Disciple Now or summer camps without waiting to see who's coming, because they know Jesus is going to be there."



(Photo credit: Brandon Allen)

In the mid-1970s, Super Summer itself started in Texas by Barry St. Clair, founder of Reach Out Youth Solutions ministry. St. Clair had a dream for a leadership conference which would disciple not only students, but students who intentionally led their own small groups. A decade later, a group of MS

Baptists, including McAllister, desired to form their own Super Summer. The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) approved the event but labeled it a “zero-budget item.” For years, the leaders worked to make Super Summer possible on its own budget. The first year hosted 125 students and leaders. Thirty-seven years later, almost 1,400 people filled the Mississippi College campus this July 8-12.

From the very first summer to today, the mission of Super Summer has not changed. McAllister assured, “We want to take your core students in leadership and equip, train, challenge, and send them back to impact their communities, their campuses, and their families. These are the kids who will sit among their peers and display what it means to really worship the Lord.”



(Photo credit: Brandon Allen)

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Andrew Irwin, Student Pastor at First Church, Laurel, and servant staff member in his sixth year of Super Summer, commented, "Usually when you go to a regular camp, by the first night, the kids are tired, and it's not until night two or three that they get into it. But with Super Summer, on night one the kids go all out because they *want* to be there. They are here for the right reasons. We get down to business at the start and it's just incredible to be a part of that. What's even greater is that we see some of the same kids the next year, continuing to come to Super Summer, get involved,

and grow. We have even seen some that were in our schools come back to serve as team leaders (college students who return to Super Summer to lead small groups). It's awesome to see them continue to walk with Jesus."

Ken Hall, Director of Super Summer and MBCB's Student Ministry Consultant, explained, "Our Super Summer requirements have been criticized as putting some kids above others, but that's not the case. We're not saying your teenager is not spiritual if he is not eligible to go, but our desire is to get kids who want to be challenged in their growth in Christ, teenagers who are already serving in some way.

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Serving his first year at Super Summer, Reagan Ivey, Associate and Student Pastor at Wynndale Church, Byram, said, “I’ve heard people talk about Super Summer, but growing up, our church never got involved with it. It’s awesome to see people actually wanting to invest in leaders. Our first night of worship was phenomenal and our Bible studies allow us as the servant staff to instill into our team leaders that we are here to support them as they take the reins.”

Having served 16 years at Super Summer, Brandon Palmer, Youth Pastor at Tuscumbia Church, Booneville, described, “I’ve seen students get out of their comfort zone that would normally never leave it. I would call them leaders, no doubt, but they were timid, and that’s not the case anymore. What happens at Super Summer is hard to bottle up and replicate. You can have small groups in your youth group, but everybody has something in common here. There are no cliques. It’s just people who love Jesus all in one room, and it brings out the best in everybody.”



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Super Summer, however, is not only challenging and encouraging for the students, but for the leaders as well. Garrett Mills, who attended Super Summer as a student and now newly serves as Pastor at Montgomery Church, Bogue Chitto, commented, “It feels like the Lord’s always moving this week, and you don’t really know what He’s going to do next. The unique part about it is that you get to see the same people every year. It builds relationships and connections between the students and the student pastors all throughout the state that normally would not happen. It’s a beautiful thing to see.”

Jason Holmes, Family Equipping Pastor at First Church, Madison, said, “The best thing about Super Summer is the people. We’re connecting, coming back, reconnecting. Even within our team, our dean is already pouring into our future dean. He’s already training up the next, and that’s what it means to be disciples making disciples making disciples, and that’s just a smaller picture of the greater picture of what we’re trying to do, not just here, but everywhere.”

Kevin Barnett, Student
Pastor at First Church,
Richton, and Super Summer Dean



(Photo credit: Brandon Allen)

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For more information on the 2024 MS Super Summer, visit mssupersummer.com.