



crossroads farm

## Challenges Facing Rural Youth



When Traci and I first began to explore the possibility of working with Doug and Dawn Routledge of Crossroads Farm, we almost couldn't believe the statistics that were thrown our way. In fact, we looked up many of them for ourselves to see if the scene was as dramatic as it was painted. It was. We were shocked at what has happened to rural America on the whole, and heart-broken at what has happened to the teenager left behind. Read this unofficial report on the challenges facing rural teens and then please prayerfully consider joining our effort to make Crossroads Farm a reality in Kalkaska county.

“There are currently 59.5 million people living in rural US communities, or roughly 19.3% of the entire US population.”

-US Census Bureau 2010



## Compared to urban (including inner city) teens, rural teens are...

Two times more likely to smoke by 8th grade (26% vs 13%)\*

More likely to drink alcohol by 12th grade (40% vs 25%)\*

At a higher risk of death by gunshot\*

Far more likely to fight and use weapons\*\*

At a higher risk for rape\*\*

Twice as likely to commit suicide\*\*

At a higher risk for dying in a car accident\*

34% more likely to smoke pot, 83% more likely to use crack cocaine, 104% more like to use meth\*\*\*

\* = National Rural Health Association

\*\* = South Carolina Rural Health Research Center

\*\*\* = Columbia University



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## Challenges Facing Rural Churches



The challenges that face rural teenagers can feel overwhelming. Add to their challenges the fact that many rural churches are also in crisis mode, and you begin to realize how much opportunity there is to serve students and churches in these regions. Crossroads Farm is mobilizing a ministry here in Michigan that, Lord willing, will soon stretch across the country and be reaching rural communities from Maine to Northern California, and from the dusty counties of central Texas to the mountainous communities of Montana.

“Less than 25% of all rural churches report that they are experiencing any growth.”



## Challenges facing rural churches...

Many Pastors first call to ministry is carried out in rural communities where they are expected to preach, counsel, lead music, be available 24/7, direct the children’s ministry, teach Sunday School, AND run a vibrant youth ministry.

Add to this that pastors in rural communities often pastor more than one congregation!

In our community, most of the pastors we talked to expressed the feeling of being alone/isolated, and shared a lack of experience in working with teens. Most expressed fear about even knowing where to start in helping tackle some of the problems listed above.

The average rural church has less than 50 people in attendance on Sunday.

## Crossroads Farm has a model that works.

Crossroads Farm has a ministry model developed in, and for, the rural church. Unlike many para-church organizations, CRF develops partnerships with the local church in order to help reach teens AND train up lay leaders to go back in and serve within the church. This win-win partnership has allowed CRF to thrive in Reading, Michigan for over 17 years, and has created the platform for expansion throughout Michigan (and soon, around the country). Learn more about this ministry by visiting: [www.crossroadsfarm.org](http://www.crossroadsfarm.org).