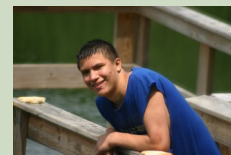


Great Oaks News

Camping & Urban Youth Ministries Apr—Jun 2017 Report

Open House 2017-Reconnecting with David:

We are so thankful for all of you who were able to attend our Open House. We were pleasantly surprised to see so many people, despite the rain and the road closures. Originally, about 175 people RSVP'd, but with the storms and the roads, literally, caving in around us, we were not even sure anyone would come. To the 75 people who came to support us that day, thank you! It was great to meet and reconnect with all of you!

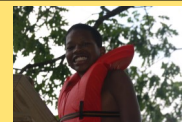


At the Open House, I was able to reconnect with David. David spent his summers, as a child, attending Great Oaks Camp. After updating me a little bit about his life, he shared with me his testimony about coming to Great Oaks, as a camper: "Great Oaks is a place you can go to and be free from all the difficulties of life and just have fun, while praising Jesus Christ." It was great to reconnect with David and see he's still living out his faith!

*From the Desk of Tyler Keene
Executive Director*

Camper Sponsorship:

Every summer, Great Oaks Camp has the privilege to host about 1,400 people through our Summer Camp Program and our Retreat Group Ministry. Our goal, for every person that comes to Great Oaks, is summarized by our mission statement which is *to connect people to Jesus through life changing experiences*. Every year Great Oaks Camp offers around 200 at-risk youth a free week of camp; this is possible because of donations made by you. It is through Camper Sponsorship that children, like David, can attend camp. This summer would you consider sponsoring a camper? Every dollar given helps us provide a free, *life changing experience* to those who attend.



\$230 sponsors one camper for a week
\$1150 sponsors a whole cabin of campers

Please keep us in your prayers, as we spread God's love to at-risk youth this summer.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Overall, Summer is such an amazing season at Great Oaks, but it is also our busiest! Over the last few years, God has blessed us with a volunteer who has taken care of almost all of the mowing and weed-eating done around camp. Because of his help, the Full-time Staff has been able to focus more on our Summer Campers and our Retreat Groups, knowing that the campgrounds are being taken care of. We are very thankful for his services, but this year we are needing some additional help. Would you consider helping us care for our grounds at Great Oaks? If Grounds keeping is not your specialty, maybe you would like to work on the Ropes Course or help us clean buildings between Retreat Groups? We even have General Maintenance that needs taken care of, as well as just spending time with some of our campers. If any of these volunteer positions catch your eye, please either call the office (309) 246-4005 or email Jim at ropes@greatoakscamp.org.

The Power of Camp:

Great Oaks Camp remains committed to our mission statement which is *to connect people to Jesus through life changing experiences*. The natural follow-up question is, “What is so life changing about the camp experience?” The National Christian Camp and Conference Association helps us understand why camp is a life changing experience in their *Power of Camp* campaign.

Camp is such a life changing experience because it is radically different than everyday life for many of our campers. Typically, youth spend an average of about 7.5 hours per day on electronic media and only about 4 minutes outside, playing. Also, somewhat alarming is the fact that youth and their parents spend only 3.5 minutes, a day, in meaningful conversation. The atmosphere at camp is completely different because at Great Oaks, youth are surrounded by an entire staff of people who want to have meaningful conversations with them; because of this, true, un-interrupted quiet time and reflection can happen. During a typical week of camp, campers spend almost the entire time, outside, playing and enjoying God’s creation. Finally, at Great Oaks, campers have the opportunity to face unique challenges and overcome fears while participating in our Adventure Challenge Course and playing Paintball. These elements are designed to give our campers the opportunity to grow in their walk with God (and to grow closer to their peers through teamwork and learning about encouragement and group dynamics).



Our Board President, Dr. William Washington, is a prime example of what the *Power of Camp* can do in your life, if you let God in and allow Him to change you. Dr. Washington’s testimony helps us understand the power of quiet time and reflection. Years ago, as a counselor, Dr. Washington heard a message about salvation, directed towards the campers, during one of our Chapel services. During his own reflection time, after the service, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Now, 30 years later, he is the Board President of Great Oaks Camp!

One of our alumni campers, Chelsea Armstrong, really credits Great Oaks for her understanding of what it means to have meaningful conversations. “I came to know Christ after camp, but I realize, now, that during all of my summers at Great Oaks, God was planting seeds in my life.” Chelsea continued to explain that God used many conversations, with her various counselors over the summers, to greatly impact her life, even as an adult.

Deb Helms, a Retreat Leader from Community Presbyterian Church, has personally seen the impact of the Adventure Challenge Course on her Retreat Groups. “The Ropes Course fits in perfectly with our yearly Confirmation Retreat theme, TRUST. Throughout the retreat, using the Ropes Course as a guide, we talk about what it means to trust ourselves and others but most importantly, God. The challenges of the Ropes Course and the Zipline continue to be great teaching tools and openers for our discussions.”



Finally, Damion Smith’s testimony points out the impact of exploring and playing in God’s creation. He says, “Great Oaks is a place where you are free to have fun and learn about God.”

Testimonies from both our Summer Camp Program and our Retreat Group Ministry confirm *the Power of Camp* campaign. Camp is life changing because it is radically different than every day life, providing youth the opportunity to experience quiet time, engage in meaningful conversations, explore and play in God’s creation, and utilize high adventure activities.

Please pray for us as we continue to fulfill our mission statement which is *to connect people to Jesus through life changing experiences*.