

Great Oaks News

Camping & Urban Youth Ministries

Jul-Sept 2017 Report

Our Annual Banquet is an opportunity for you to reconnect with the Great Oaks community and to learn about our ministry over the past year.

This year, our speaker will be Pastor Martin Johnson, founder and pastor of New Beginnings Ministries in Peoria. He and his lovely wife, Lady Lisa, serve together, faithfully, as servants in the Kingdom of God through New Beginnings, a ministry designed to build a people of purpose, power, and praise.

His ministry has been largely birthed on love and compassion in help making a difference in the lives of people. Pastor Johnson is an alumnus of Aeon Bible College, Moody Bible College, and Liberty University. He has also been serving honorably for the last twenty six years in the United States Air Force. In addition to being married to his one and only, Lady Lisa, Pastor Johnson cherishes his three children: Tavis, Martez and Tia Johnson. In addition to his many accomplishments, he has been serving on the Great Oaks board for the past two years. Please don't miss the opportunity to hear him speak!



This year's event is Thursday, November 2nd at the Embassy Suites in East Peoria. Doors will open at 5:30pm, and the banquet will begin at 6:00pm. You can purchase tickets online at www.greatoakscamp.org or by phone at 309-246-4005.

Annual Banquet

Expanding Local Ministry Opportunities

As a staff, we are always trying to seek ways in which to expand the ministry of Great Oaks Camp. One of the ways that God is directing us is in the area of local ministry. Last year, Great Oaks offered the opportunity for over 150 students from Midland Middle School to come and experience the Adventure Challenge Course for free. We are planning to provide the same experience this year, as well.

Jim has begun the process of partnering with the High School counselor at Midland to create a Leadership Program, led by Great Oaks; it will focus on reaching those students who don't qualify for the present, school-based Leadership Program offered at Midland High School. Jim's hope is to meet twice a month, once at school and once at camp, to help these students develop leadership skills through leading and facilitating on the Adventure Challenge Course. By the end of the program, Jim's desire is for the students to develop enough confidence and competency to lead a group of their own peers, as they participate on the Adventure Challenge Course.

Another way in which we have been able to reach out to local kids is through our Adventure Camp. We had 10 campers from the local area attend. Great Oaks Camp plans to continue creating more opportunities to reach out to our local community by connecting people to Jesus through life changing experiences.

Summer Camp 2017

Great Oaks had another successful, fun-filled summer! Throughout the seven weeks of Summer Camp that we offered, we saw almost 200 campers from Peoria come through. Our campers enjoyed the new Adventure Challenge Course, as well as the new Paintball course. They even enjoyed learning about farm animals this year! Thursday nights at camp are always memorable with campfires, hot dogs, s'mores! Of course, to top it off, we provide ice cream, along with an "end of the week" *dance party*, complete with a DJ from Peoria!

Through all of the fun and excitement of the summer, counselors were able to demonstrate the love of God through their words and actions. Our campers learned about God's love, Jesus' sacrifice, and the gift of eternal life. Campers were challenged with the idea that followers of Christ are called to live differently and to be *aliens* to the rest of the world (1 Peter 2:11-12).

Here are a few stories from our summer staff about how God was at work this past summer at Great Oaks Camp:

At night I would sing the girls lullabies to help them fall asleep. On the second night, one of the girls held my hand and wouldn't let go. I continued to sing until she fell asleep. Over the course of the week, she had shared with me that she didn't want to go home; in that moment, when the night was still and all that could be heard was my singing and their breathing, I knew I was where I needed to be there. God had put me there to love these girls.



On Wednesday Denise asked me if God really loved each of us. She had come to camp, very confused about what she believed in, but by Thursday night, she wanted to accept Jesus into her heart!

Mark started out the week not wanting to participate in any activities or events, especially not when we were singing during Chapel. However, something must've happened during the week because by Thursday morning he knew the words to every song and was willing to participate in every activity, despite his bashfulness.



Deborah, was very open and accepting of the message of Christ. She wrote down all the Fruit of the Spirits, a song or two from Chapel, and a poem about how she was loved by God. She was also able to memorize and quote Jeremiah 29:11. She really got a good grip on how she was made by God and how much she was valued by him. She expressed an interest in church, but she did share that her mom was not a believer. I encouraged her to ask her grandma to take her to church



On the last night of camp, Jessica was sitting on her bunk, picking at a hole in her shoe. She wanted to throw them away, as well as leave camp and just go home. One of the other campers took Jessica outside to talk to her. This particular camper was so moved by Jessica's *story* that she rallied her whole cabin together and decided to give Jessica her pair of *good* shoes. At first, I was unsure whether or not she would accept the shoes, but by morning she was wearing the shoes, with a faint smile on her face.

