

# Great Oaks News

Camping & Urban Youth Ministries

Oct—Dec 2017 Report

## Banquet Report:

Thursday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> was a wonderful day for Great Oaks Camp! As many of you know, our Annual Banquet took place on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, and it certainly will be a day we won't forget. God richly blessed us in three different ways that day.

First, as our supporters, you blessed us immensely with your prayers and generosity. Because of those who attended, we set a new fundraising record and were able to introduce many new people to Great Oaks Camp!

Also, at the banquet, we were blessed to hear from Pastor Martin Johnson of New Beginnings Ministries in Peoria, IL. Along with being our main speaker, Pastor Johnson also serves on the Board of Great Oaks Camp. During his message, Pastor Johnson shared one story of *hope* that really resonated with me.

A few weeks ago Pastor Johnson was at a meeting with some city officials, and a local police officer told him about a young man whom he had come in contact with on and off over the last several years. The police officer admitted that he was sure this young man was headed for prison. However, throughout the last couple of weeks, the police officer had noticed a change in this young man's demeanor. Something was different...The police officer questioned the young man. "What happened," he said, "What's different?" This was the young man's response. "I went to Great Oaks Camp this summer. I am changed. Now all I want to do is go to camp and to church." Pastor Johnson's story about his conversation with that local police officer was very encouraging. It is great to know that another youth's life was changed by God while at Great Oaks Camp.

Lastly, the night before the banquet we got a phone call from one of our generous donors. Because of that call, we received the largest donation in the history of Great Oaks Camp. As a Staff (and a Board), we feel so blessed by God (and by this individual). We feel honored that God would trust us with such a significant donation. At our Banquet in the Spring we will unveil, to the public, how the donor and the Board will be utilizing this donation.

In conclusion, we are so thankful to all the individuals who attended the Annual Banquet, as well as Pastor Martin Johnson and his story. Also, we will forever be grateful to the donor who felt called to make such a generous donation to Great Oaks Camp. We assure you that this gift will be used to further God's Kingdom and the ministry of Great Oaks Camp.

From the Desk of the Executive Director

As the year draws to a close, I am wondering if God could use you to bless us. Here are a variety of ways you can help.

### Prayer:

Keep praying for our Board, Staff, Campers and Guests. At Great Oaks, we are a growing ministry that continues to get busier. Please pray for us as we serve those whom God has called to come to Great Oaks.

### Giving:

Sponsor a camper: \$230.00 pays for a child to attend a week of camp

\$1150 pays for a cabin of 5 to attend a week of camp

Camp would like to purchase a "new to us" truck. Our present truck is very old and needs to be replaced. We are looking for an individual willing to donate a truck, or we are looking for an \$8,000 donation to purchase a used truck.

We would also like to replace some old, drafty windows around camp. The cost to do this is about \$2,000.

### Volunteer:

Great Oaks is always looking for people to volunteer on a regular basis. We would love to have volunteers help us in a variety of areas around camp. In the past, we have been blessed by people who are retired and are looking for a place, like Great Oaks, to serve the Lord. Could God use you here in a volunteer capacity?

## Stories of Life Long Change:

Decurione started attending Great Oaks at a very young age. Last year, he was a part of our Summer staff.



“Growing up, camp was a place to have fun and learn about the Lord. At first, camp was tough for me, but as long as you act yourself you will always have a great time there.

As a counselor, I learned 2 major leadership skills: One is always put yourself last. I say this because you have a whole camp full of kids, so you can never put yourself first because a camper will always need you for something, no matter what. Second, try to build a bond with everyone because at camp there are so many different personalities that you are bound to get



Decurione Fletcher

know someone or even everyone. When you build bonds with kids, you learn how they react to certain things or even the reason why they do the stuff they do.”



Miracle Peyton

“When I came to camp as a child, I enjoyed the many activities that we could choose from. Also, the people I met made a really big difference in my life. I loved that we could have fun and learn about God at the same time.



I wanted to be camp counselor because I knew I was going to take on a new role. And, I wanted to get to meet new people and also encourage them to learn more about God. My favorite memory, as a counselor, was when it was super hot and all the activities got moved inside to the air conditioning! We were all in Pine Tree, and we got to spend time, just focusing on the campers and really getting to know them.”

## Guest Group Ministry

Our beloved Presbyterian Camp, on the shore of Lake Michigan, had to close its doors in mid 2013. Our church has a very active youth program, taking 5 retreats a year...3 of them to that particular camp. We knew that we had to find another special place, and so my search began. I looked at many different websites and then started doing site visits. When I went to Great Oaks, I cancelled my remaining site visits, knowing I had found our new place.

I was impressed by the physical place: the pond, the woods and the buildings, but it was way more than that. The Ropes Course fit in perfectly with our yearly theme for our confirmation fall retreat – TRUST. We talk about how we learn to trust ourselves, others, and, most importantly, God. The challenges of the Ropes Course and the zipline have been the perfect opener for those discussions.

But what has impressed me the most, over the years, has been the wonderful staff at the camp. I appreciate their servant attitude and the very tangible expression of God’s love that is so present at Great Oaks. Whether it is meals, making a campfire, or leading our youth on the Ropes Course, our every need is attended to with joy. As a leader, it is so wonderful to have any request that I have be met, whether it’s for tables, chairs, lights or Scripture themes. It has made it easy for me to focus on my group and on leading them where I want them to go.

We have felt God’s presence during campfires, as we watch our prayer lanterns floating on the dark lake, as we challenge ourselves to go on the zip line...or maybe just step onto the wire and then step off. Great Oaks is the perfect backdrop for things that we have been doing for years – whole group games, small group discussions, making videos of parables, making wood lanterns for a night time lantern walk, campfires, etc., as well as fun new additions like the Ropes Course and/or Zipline and the pond activities (canoeing, canoeing, paddleboating, bouncing off the blob, fishing). Each time, we are welcomed back with open arms when we arrive and are always made to feel at home. I am thankful that God led us to Great Oaks!

Deb Helms, Director of Youth Ministries