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CAMP DAVID *Community*



Volume 13

NEWS FROM CAMP DAVID OF THE OZARKS

WINTER 2016

Big Momma Prayer Warrior

By: Benjamin Smith,
CDO Founder and Director



It's that time of year again—the season of making snow angels, eating fresh baked cookies, and wrapping Christmas gifts. I want to thank all of you for your generous support that made this year a success! Let me tell you a story of a family that has hope this Christmas season.

Prison has always been part of Raven's life. Raven's dad went to prison six months before she was born. He was released in time for her first Christmas. At just nine months old, that would be one of the few holidays they would spend together. He was sent back to prison a little later.

As a toddler, Raven's daddy would call from prison to talk to her on the phone. He would paint wonderful stories in her little mind of what life would be like when he got out. Sadly, even though he was released, most of the dreams never came true.

When Raven was six, her dad stopped calling or showing up all together. For the next two years he was silently gone; she didn't hear from him again until she had already turned eight. Sadly, he called because he was in prison again, only this time he was sentenced for seven years. How does an eight year old process a loss like that? Seven years was longer than she could remember being alive.

As you would guess, the effects of loss for Raven were huge. Raven was shy and quiet. When she tried new things and ran into difficulties she would just quit. Both she and her mother were often depressed. No doubt she wondered, "What is wrong with me? Why doesn't daddy want to be with me?"

Shortly into his seven year sentence, Raven's dad signed her up for the Angel Tree Christmas program. She and her mom Kita, went to the Christmas party and enjoyed the cookies and snacks. But when it came time for the gifts, there was a mistake in the list.

Raven didn't receive a gift from her daddy that year, yet something good came from it. Because she was on the Angel Tree list, Raven was invited to Camp David of the Ozarks the next summer. It would be her first time away from home, but it looked like so much fun. So Kita registered Raven for camp in 2011. Raven had a great time at camp! When she arrived home she showed her mom her photo album and all she could talk about was camp. Kita was pleased to see her daughter excited for a change, but as Raven continued to talk about summer camp even after Christmas, Kita started to wonder. "Did they brain-wash my child or something?" But camp made Raven happy, so camp made Momma happy.



For the next two summers Raven went back to camp. Then in the Spring of 2014, Kita received an invitation to a Weekend Family Retreat at Camp David. Raven was excited and Kita was curious. "Well, at least I could find out what they are doing to my daughter!" she thought. When she got to camp everyone was excited to see them, and she immediately felt loved and accepted.

In one of the mom's sessions Kita was asked, "What is something special about you?" Kita was silent. Finally she

sadly admitted that couldn't think of anything. The older host mom gently pulled her out, "You have a bag that represents you. What do you pull out of it?" Suddenly she saw it. It was art! That weekend Kita began to come to life. Kita cried a lot of tears, tears for feelings she had locked away years ago just to make it through the day. Now she could cry those tears because she was surrounded by people who cared to listen. She was beginning to feel again.

On Kita's last day at camp she said, "I get it, I now know why

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November 29, 2016

Big Momma Prayer Warrior continued >>>

Raven talks about Camp David so much. I feel it too." To this day, Kita says they are both excited about camp and they look for every opportunity to come, whether they are serving others or being served themselves. Now when the monthly camp newsletters come in the mail, Kita is excited too. They love reading the stories and sharing them with relatives. Kita's sisters say, "You got to keep going to those retreats- you always come back so happy!"

This summer Raven was 14 years old, and she was invited to our Timothy Staff Training week. She was thrilled. That week she heard a lot about teamwork, God, and hard work. After slowly following the others around that week, she was crushed to learn that she didn't pass the training. Knowing this was a hard blow, my wife, Grace, and I sat and talked with Raven and reminded her that it wasn't the end. We have several staff that didn't pass on their first try. We shared our confidence that next year she could make staff. Raven left with a determination to use this disappointment to grow.

This fall, when Raven struggled in Robotics, she felt like quitting as usual. This time she chose to stick with it and now she is glad she did. Raven also joined the ROTC but it got very hard. She prayed about what to do, and decided to push through. Her camp experiences are helping her to succeed in other areas.

When Kita and Raven came to their third Family Retreat this fall, their faces were glowing. Kita had another "first" when she chose to face her fears and ride a horse. Thinking back on her experience she said, "It was amazing: I felt peace and connected with nature. I overcame my fear and I was interacting with a horse." Kita felt alive! She ended the retreat with a prayer request to be faithful in reading her Bible and praying. Kita now sees herself as a "Big Momma Prayer Warrior" for her family.

As the year ends, I would like to ask you to consider making a generous gift so we can continue to give hope to families of prisoners. These fragile families need someone to throw them a life line or they likely won't make it. We can't do this without your help. Will you sponsor a family? Will you support us monthly?



Where I got to know God

By: Faith Brown, Summer Intern

We all have one thing in our life that defines who we are today, and when we think about what makes us who we are it's followed with a memory. Camp David has been huge impact on who I am today as a college freshman.

Camp David is one of those places where you can't help but grow spiritually and emotionally. I have been a staff member at Camp David since 2013. During these past 4 years/summers I have had the positions of Photographer, Counselor, Life-guard, Games Leader, and Intern. Being all those positions over the past years I have learned so many new things and have grown in multiple ways.

When I first started at Camp David I was a freshman in high school and I had just been placed into foster care a few months before. Coming from biological parents who have both served/are serving time in prison I had no idea that camp would be such a huge impact on me as a staff and not a camper.

I was hard-headed going into my first week of camp. I knew about God as my foster family had introduced me to Him, but camp is where I actually got to know God. During my first week of camp I went from my hard-headed self to being completely humbled by the campers.

Although I had been through a lot by the age of 14, it seemed like nothing in comparison to what the campers have gone through. I learned that not everything is about me, but that as a Christian it's our duty to put others before ourselves. Philippians 2:3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."

Realizing all of that, I fell in love with camp—what it was for, and the community. Over the years I have gone from having little patience with kids, to absolutely adoring being around them. I felt my calling to the field of Social work due to camp, which is the whole reason why I'm going to college and majoring in social work.

On top of all of that, I have learned how to lead, manage, organize, and communicate with others in humility. I went from not knowing how to read the Bible, to reading it on my own as well as being a Small Group Leader during the summer. When I think of camp, I can't help but smile. My Faith is basically rooted there. It's my happy place, my second home, it's one of those places where you get abs from laughing so much, a leg workout from swinging so high, and overall it's a "ya have to be there" to know exactly what I'm talking about kind of place.



Camp David 2016 Together we served:

- Total of 226 campers over 8 weeks of camp!
- Total of 140 volunteer staff!
- 28 children of prisoners served on staff and grew in leadership!
- 23 families attended Family Retreats
- 8 Full-time Mentor Matches
- 33 students participated in our After-school Mentoring Program
- 26 campers and staff were baptized
- 23 children of prisoners attended Camp Kadesh in Ozone, AR
- 230 children of prisoners invited to Angel Tree Christmas parties that Camp David is organizing in St. Louis



You are invited to a
CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE
AT
CAMP DAVID OF THE OZARKS

JOIN US AT OUR OPEN HOUSE

Date: Saturday, December 3, 2016
Time: from 5-8 pm
6:00 pm Candlelight Service
7:00 Pictures with Santa
Place: Camp David
10 miles south of Rolla, MO
Go to: campdavidozarks.org

From the Parent of two students in our Front Porch After-school Program:

"My girls love coming to Front Porch. It has become part of their routine. Samantha's grades have improved since she's attended, and she looks forward to school every day now. She has more confidence in her abilities in her school and home. I'm always so pleased with how excited Samantha is when she comes home and her homework is finished."

~Julie

Banquet for Hope
January 27, 2017

Growing a legacy of healthy families

New Growth >>>

Camp David of Southern Indiana

On October 27th, at a banquet in New Albany, IN, Suzanna Johnson (CEO of Christian Formation Ministries) announced the launch of **Camp David of Southern Indiana**. Suzanna is a second generation Prison Minister and currently runs an After-school program for children of prisoners. Suzanne's goal is to host their first week of camp for children of prisoners in 2018.

