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Giving hope to families of prisoners!

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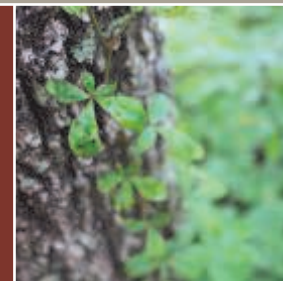


Volume 12

NEWS FROM CAMP DAVID OF THE OZARKS

Fall 2015

# camp *Community*



**Your Opportunity >>>**

## Sponsor A Child for Mentoring

*Camp David has 20 children of prisoners coming out once a week to be part of the ten week Front Porch After-school Mentoring Program. Another seven campers are meeting one on one with mentors each week. We are seeking 54 sponsors (two for each child) for the children in our Mentoring Programs at \$100 per child.*

**Would you help sponsor children of prisoners for the Fall Mentoring Programs?**

Below: Fall 2015 Front Porch Mentor and Mentee



## Violet blooms

### *Making a difference in mentoring!*

By: Benjamin A. Smith, Founder and Director

My first memory of Violet\*, is a skinny little girl in faded jeans with her knees gathered up to her chest, sitting at a picnic table. Her face is streaked with tears, and wispy blond hair was blown across her pursed lips.

That afternoon she had broken a rule in Camp David's Front Porch After-school Program and she refused to do anything her mentor asked her to do. One of our older staff sat down beside her and listened to her cry and then spoke to her heart. As suddenly as it all started- it ended as Violet jumped up and ran off.

At home, Violet's family called her "Trouble," "the problem child" and other names. But in the Mentoring Program she was hearing a new message- one of love.

Then, one afternoon we received an excited text from her Grandmother. The text contained a picture of Violet's daily progress school report. The whole day was covered with achievement stickers and comments in marker like "Good job!!!" and "We are proud of you!" At the bottom her teacher wrote, "Best day ever! Violet worked well with others and was a great role model!!!" Violet was starting to bloom.

This summer Violet came to camp. It wasn't all rosy and she had several meltdowns, but with each one we saw more growth. The last day at camp Violet sat at a picnic table with her arms relaxed. Her wispy hair scattered across the grin on her face. One of her leaders asked Violet a question.

"Would you be willing to hear another way she could grow?" Before she could answer something distracted them but then Violet blurted out, "You haven't told me yet about how I could grow." With the open invitation, Violet's leader talked about how Violet called herself "stupid" and "dumb" to protect herself. Violet intently listened and gave a slight nod. Then her leader shared how God saw her - as His precious child, and how it makes Him sad when she and others didn't value her. Violet drank it all in.

Now, this fall Violet is being mentored in the Front Porch After-school Program again. On Monday, Violet's mentor told me "Violet is doing so well, she has had only one small melt down this fall!! She's smiling so much, she compliments people, and she is helpful." Violet is in full bloom!

*\*Name changed for confidentiality*

### *Prisoners' families joining together to support each other!!*



By: Grace Smith, Assistant Director

"Honestly, I don't want to bloom. I feel like I'm drowning," thought a tired mother of 4 beautiful children. Our theme for our Spring Retreat was, "**Bloom Where You are Planted.**" The goal was to encourage our camper's moms in that while they can't change the fact that their lives have been affected by incarceration, they can choose life and hope for their families.

This tired mom had been holding things together for years while her children's dad was incarcerated. She never got a break from parenting. She came to the retreat and even turned her cell phone off so she could really "unplug." Having grown up as a pastor's daughter, she knew all the Bible stories and

worship songs. But she felt angry, exhausted and most of all — like a failure.

As she shared her feelings with the other moms in the room they began to encourage her - her beautiful children were testimony to the fact that she was a good mom!

Later, during a time of prayer, a host mom shared, "*When I look at you, I see someone who is drowning but God is sending His life-boats with life preservers to rescue you.*" Tears streamed down the tired mom's face as she realized that God heard the cry of her heart. That day she opened her heart to God and as she packed up her van to leave, her eyes shone with new hope and joy.



**Your opportunity >>>**

## Sponsor A Family

*Here is what a Camp David Mom says, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to come and be part of this wonderful life changing experience. My faith has been restored because of this weekend and my life has been given hope and new purpose. Thank you again so much."*

**Would you consider sponsoring a prisoner's family for the Family Weekend Retreat this fall?**



# Three church groups serve from OH, IL, and NC

For the first time ever we had three church groups come and serve on staff at camp this summer!! A group of 7 professionals came from North Carolina, a youth group of 10 came from Ohio, and a group of three families with 10 young people came from Illinois. They served in a variety of roles from Counselors and Support Staff to Kitchen Help and Camp Grandmas. The youngest children joined the Day Camp Program



and served on the Green Team. Not only did these groups impact kids for Christ, but it was an amazing experience for them to able to serve Christ together.

One mom shared, “It was an unforgettable week. It was a mix of hard and amazing. I have never seen my two older kids work so hard. I have never seen my husband grab onto patience and demonstrate it with such consistency while being stretched by five boys for five days.”



## “I like your shirt...”

By: Micah Burks, Mentor Program Director

“My dad is in for life, but I still get to talk to him on the phone sometimes!” said Antonne.

Antonne is a remarkable young man. As a veteran camper, he liked to leave an impression, and rarely missed an opportunity to make everyone laugh (though often at someone’s expense). He also wanted everyone to know that he would stick up for himself.

In the first few hours of camp, Antonne had already gotten into conflicts with several other campers. He knew all the right things to say to make good with the leaders, and would say he was sorry, but it was clear that it was just words to him, as he would go from one fight to the next.

Each time a “conflict” came up, I was there to work through it with those involved, so I spent a lot of time with Antonne! As his head cooled, I would ask him questions and give recommendation to help him resolve conflicts. I was constantly in prayer for Christ to reach Antonne, but it seemed fruitless. His incarcerated father was his hero, and he seemed destined to follow the same path that put his father away for life.

Antonne had many questions about God and the Bible. He had been told all his life that God didn’t care, and that God was responsible for the bad things in his life. As I shared stories from my life of seeing Christ, Antonne seemed torn between the two.

By Wednesday, Antonne was sick of me. All together we’d spent several hours sitting and working through conflicts, while the other campers enjoyed games and other activities.

He had just threatened and insulted a camper. At first I sat there softly smiling. Then, I started asking him about his family, home, and school. Antonne seemed confused: “Can I just go say I’m sorry, and go play the game?” I replied, “I really want you to be able to play the game, Antonne!” He looked perplexed, so I continued: “That is the reason why we sit out to talk through these things. I really care about you!” Then I saw a glimmer of understanding...

Before dinner that evening, as Antonne washed his hands, one of his rivals casually threw an insult toward him. I could see him tense up. I reminded him of all that we’d talked about by softly saying, “What do you think you should say back?” He turned to his antagonist and said “Hey... I like your shirt.”

My heart leapt with joy at his response which had not seemed possible! Antonne was overcoming evil with good! But my joy turned to fear as his antagonist, confused by Antonne’s kindness, called him a name and walked away.

Then Antonne snapped back, “I like your shoes, too!” I calmly put my arm on his shoulder, and told Antonne I was proud of him. But inside I could barley contain my excitement. From that point on Antonne didn’t have any more conflicts— instead he found ways to build up his teammates, and his questions about God took on a more personal aspect.

At the end of the week I asked, “Antonne, have you decided to follow Jesus?” He looked me in the eye and said, “Micah, I’m not sure. It’s a hard thing to do. But I want to. I want to follow Jesus!”



## 2015 Camp Theme Overcomers: Overcoming evil with good

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:10

## Staff Testimonies

“This week as soon as I got here I felt closer to God without all of my normal distractions. I was able to focus more on Him. Also being able to talk with my campers about God and having them respond was just really amazing. One of my campers got baptized and just seeing their journey from the beginning of the week to that moment was so inspiring.” – Becca Herbert, Counselor

“The Lord gave me an incredible amount of patience this week, and, also helped me to become a better witness for him. Camp David has also been instrumental in drawing me closer to God and strengthening my Christian walk.” – Jacob Underwood, Counselor



### To God be the Glory!!

Camp David 2015

- Total of 224 campers over 8 weeks of camp!
- 32 campers were baptized and many made decisions for Christ!
- Total of 170 volunteer staff!
- 20 children of prisoners served on staff and grew in leadership!
- The Day Camp Program served 17 children over 9 weeks!
- Completed 12 years of giving hope to children of prisoners!

### More than a week >>>

## Summer Camp

By: Benjamin A. Smith, Founder and Director

As we look back over all that happened this summer there are three words I would use to describe what we see.

**Provision** - We were blessed with all the counselors and volunteers we needed for the summer! There were times we were stretched thin and yet we were still able to keep the camper counselor ratio under 3:1. God’s provision included five health professionals who served as “Camp Nurses,” and Rosanne Emmet our Food Service Director (and a mother of 8 children!). We had 224 campers (our biggest summer yet!) and each camper was sponsored as well! To all of you who sponsored campers we want to say a big thanks! We have also been able to set aside money in a reserve fund.

**Endurance** – It would be remiss not to mention the trials. This summer we were hit with numerous challenges: lice and bed bugs; rain and heat; pool pump and icemaker break downs; and nighttime tornado and lightning storm evacuations to name just a few. I was blessed to see how people responded. One team

dawned shower caps in support of a camper wearing a shower cap while being treated for lice. Support Staff cheerfully got up and moved camper’s bedding in a 3 am thunderstorm. There was such a heart of compassion and servanthood.

**Fruit** - This summer many campers came to faith in Christ and we had the joy of seeing 32 campers and 2 staff follow Christ in baptism. We saw more fruit as 20 former campers served on staff leading activities, washing dishes, and serving meals! Two of them were brothers! What a joy to see some of them leading out in prayer times and sharing with their peers what they were been learning in their Bible reading!



### New Growth >>>

## Camp Kadesh

Our first camp launch “**Camp Kadesh**,” was held at Pine Crest Camp in Ozone, Arkansas, in August. It was a huge success! We had 18 campers and almost 40 staff. What a joy to it was see **three camps working together to reach children of prisoners in AR** with the love and hope of Jesus Christ. One 9 year old camper asked her counselor to teach her how to pray. By the end of the week she was praying for the team every at chance she got!

