

From the Mouths of Our Volunteers...Stories about Camp Connect
August 2011

- “Not one particular story comes to mind, but all the little moments when kids would randomly come up to me and hug me. They were just so adorable. Kids are so open with sharing their stories. One of the things that I saw in my group that was really sad was that I had a four sibling group and the oldest sister was not spending time with her siblings. She preferred to be with the teenagers and her siblings definitely felt that. She even said herself that she didn’t really know her siblings and didn’t want to be there. This just made me feel sad for the three siblings. I think they wish their sister was a better role model for them and genuinely want to know them.”
- “When a camper told me that he wished both me and another volunteer could have been in his cabin.”
- “The music session was incredible! Most of our kids were really into it. Two of the more quiet ones actually sang their songs out loud, by themselves! My three kids really worked hard to write their song. I loved the entire session. Powerful!
- “When I arrived I had a little boy that was ready for swimming. While at the pool his teen sister arrived and they talked. She also had her swimsuit on with a towel wrapped around her waist. She opened the towel to fix her suit and her brother looked at her and said “You look cute”. It was so sweet, even the sister laughed.”
- “While there were many times my heart was touched, I can remember one time in particular. While scrapbooking with pictures from camp, I took time to ask each child if I could look at their books. As I finished and turned to close the book of one of the campers, I noticed something written on the back. It said “Family is all I need.” This touched my heart and broke it at the same time. Often times we take for granted what we have and this was a reminder for me to always be grateful for my own brothers and sister.”
- “I was driving a teen mom back home because she missed her baby. On the ride back she started talking about her abuse history at such a young age. How the people closest to her had hurt and abused her, but now that she had a child her thinking has changes and she has a new perspective on life and is going to make good choices to support her child. It amazes me to hear what some of these kids have been through, but impresses me with how resilient they are.”
- “Honestly, it has been the most rewarding thing I’ve done in the past three years. It melts my heart to see a child write “All we need is family” on his scrapbook. Getting the opportunity to somehow make that happen is indescribable. “
- “The best moment was music therapy. Those smiles really made me feel good and that what we were doing was really going to leave a lasting impression and hopefully would be of some help in making their lives a little more positive.”
- “During horseback riding one of our kids was scared to death and almost didn’t do it, but after she said she felt a little bit taller and prouder.”
- “I think the zip line helped to show several kids that they can conquer their fears. I know a lot of them had to do a lot of “talking to themselves” to get up there and afterwards you could tell they were proud to have done it.”
- “During the last raffle when one of the older children in our group got the winning ticket for a Pizza Hut gift card and she handed her ticket to her little brother so he could go up and get the prize. He held on to that card ALL evening. It was a vivid reminder of how soft the heart of a child truly is.”
- “Watching the interaction between our sibling groups. Sweet family.”

- “The end of camp where the children on stage spoke of how they enjoyed camp and valued the time they got to spend with each other.”
- “I had asked a few kids what their favorite part of camp was at the last breakfast. One 11 yr old girl said horseback riding as did her sister. I asked a 16 yr old boy the same question. He said being there with his family and friends. That’s what counted. I had watched this sibling group throughout the weekend and they are truly bonded and they love each other very much. It also saddened me because they don’t have the opportunity to see each other as other kids (non-foster) do.”
- “I loved becoming acquainted with every child, even those whose behavior revealed their deep pain and confusion.”
- “I was especially impressed by the way the kids supported each other during the talent show with boisterous applause and noise, no matter how small the act. There didn’t seem to be any judgment or criticism on any level, just all out support!”
- “If you are not in love already with our kids and passionate about their needs, you should definitely plan on going to a Camp Connect event! It put me up close and personal with the kids and they share their hearts, both highs and lows.

The camp was well planned, with prizes and activities. The food was great too. I was in a group that was composed of three sets of families. They were incredible to get to know. I smile every time I remember their antics and personalities. I cry when I remember the pain that was apparent in some of their lives. Breakfast was the moment we prepared to face reality that the reunion was over. Everyone handled it differently. I heard a girl request that her volunteer sit with her on the bus, trying to grab a few last moments. Her volunteer had to give the news that she was not riding the bus.

The memories are fully captured and motivate me to return and look for the next opportunity to “CONNECT” with our kids and those who share their lifestyle of being in foster care.”

