

I just want to say "thank you" for the amazing camp experience that you gave my daughter this past week. She has been going to church and Sunday school every Sunday since she was a baby, and she knows all the Bible stories inside out, etc. She's an all-around good kid. But I gave you a spiritual child and you returned to me a spiritual young adult. The depth of the conversations that we had on the way home from camp and then in the car on the way over to my Mom's to pick up her sisters took me a bit by surprise. She matured in her faith immeasurably in the three days she spent with you. It is a wonderful thing to watch a child grow in God — but you guys know that because I'm sure that's what keeps you doing this year after year.

Thank you so much for giving the gift of your time to the ministry of these young adults. God bless you!

— A mother of a confirmation camper

The kids always have a wonderful time at [Camp] Fontanelle, and are eagerly awaiting next year. However, I especially want to commend you all on the Boys Only camp; despite the fact that I cried most of the way home because I was leaving my child all by himself at camp for the first time (I know, completely ridiculous), I knew that he would be safe and have a wonderful time. He was SO excited about the week when I picked him up, especially about the devotions that they had done with each of their projects (which he wanted me to read as soon as we got home). He even said that he would someday want to become a counselor :). Thanks again for all Camp Fontanelle does for families.

— A thankful mother

Dear local United Methodist Church

For the past couple years you have been helping me go to Camp Fontanelle's F.R.O.G. Camp. Summer '09 was my last year at that camp. It broke my heart to know that I wasn't coming back. F.R.O.G. Camp was an amazing experience. During my first year of camp I accepted Christ into my life and by my last year I was helping other people accept Christ.

The camp helped me with my leadership skills. It introduced me to different people and different ways to worship. When I was younger and was being forced to go to church I didn't really pay attention, but at this camp I paid attention I learned new things. And now when I go to church I want to go, and I want to pay attention and learn about Christ.

Without your help I would have never gone to this camp, and I wouldn't be the spiritual person I am today. So thank you for all of your help. I appreciate it a lot.

— A changed camper because you gave

I didn't want to come to camp. I didn't want to fit in. I didn't want people to care about me because I didn't really like me. Now I don't want to go home, I fit in, and these people love me!

— A past gang member

What did you do to my child? She is being nicer, she picks up after herself, and she smiles all the time. I love it! Can I send my husband to camp?

— A mother of a teen camper

About this time every year Camp Fontanelle publishes the assorted camps scheduled over the summer. Each year prior to last I had the same conversation with my son. I think many moms and dads probably have similar ones with their children. It goes something like this, "Camp Fontanelle has some really fun camps advertised, would you like to try one this year?" His response was always an emphatic "no". All the prodding and cajoling got me nowhere.

Last year something remarkable happened. A friend had invited my son to camp and let him choose the time and selection. My son said yes and I was slack jawed but tried not to show it. He was quiet the days before camp and was worried all they would do was "sit around and talk about the bible."

I dropped him off on a sultry August day and prayed that he wouldn't hate it. He bravely said goodbye and reluctantly joined his group in a game. I remember watching him and was scared he'd be miserable. After all, I had never been to camp and had no experience with Camp Fontanelle. I said a small prayer for him and left my child in the counselor's hands. I wrote emails every day and continued my vigilant prayers.

Four days is an eternity to a parent who is worried about her child. However, the day finally came to pick him up. Again, I said a quick prayer and shook my head. I was in for another shock and was completely unprepared. The same boy that begged me not to sign him up for camp every year greeted me with a gigantic smile across his face. I can't describe it properly but he was glowing.

He immediately introduced me to several friends he had met that week and couldn't wait to show me around the camp. He was talking incessantly about the tree climbing, swimming, cabins, archery, fishing, camp counselors, the list went on and on. He gave me a tour of the camp and surroundings as if he were the ambassador.

As we loaded the car he was waffling between the Tree Climbing and Boys Only Camp for next year! He talked about the benefits of both and thought it would be a difficult decision to make next year. Again, I was shocked.

In the following days I slowly asked about his bible experiences for the week. He quoted things the counselors had shared about the bible and God. There was no mistake about it; he had found God at camp. I silently understood the glow and said a prayer of thanks.

His love for camp hasn't wavered in the last year and he continues to be excited about this summer. In fact, last week was Camp Sunday at Church and he was asked to speak to the congregation about his experience. He boldly grabbed the microphone and spoke about his love. What a change camp can make.

— A mother of a camper invited by a friend

Camp is my happy place.

My wrists don't see sunlight all summer long because of all the friendship bracelets I get at camp. I don't take them off once school starts I have to wait until they fall off. Otherwise that is bad luck.

At camp you don't have to be afraid to be your true self.

“Because of Camp!” Is my general answer when asked why I am doing something strange or different?

— A summer camp staff member

The truly amazing thing about camp is it brings out the best in everyone.

Before camp I couldn't even take Nancy to Wal-Mart without her having an episode because of having to walk outside and being in a public place. Now we can go to Wal-Mart, to the park and to family gatherings. Camp had change her entire outlook on the outside world.

— A mother of an adults with developmental disabilities camper

My name is Kristy. I have CP [cerebral palsy] but, I go to camp anyway. Camp has helped me by giving me a place where I feel the same! Last year I was doing the ropes course and one of the campers told me I could do it so I took a breath then finished. Camp also helped me reach God more now that I am home. I'm trying to build on the “I can” instead of the “I can't” I am the only one in my family that has a disability. I love camp because of the changes I see in me and I to have friends and the chance to how people the real me. I hope to go back and climb the wall and go prairie surfing again and go down the slide at the pool. I hope who ever sees this will help camp.

— Kristy, an adults with developmental disabilities camp attendee