



November 21, 2023

Dear, Hope Lutheran Church,

What a wonderful time our girls and staff had on their recent visit. They are still talking about meeting you, some specific conversation, and most importantly, how loved they felt. Each girl that we took was chosen for a specific reason. Emily is an alumni camper who will turn 21 shortly. She graduated camp at 18 as a high school graduate. She will honestly say that she would have never completed high school if she wasn't at camp. Since graduation, she has been totally independent, which has not been easy. She has struggled financially, emotionally, and spiritually, but has continued to grind and make things happen. She is currently working two part time jobs and has applied for Habitat for Humanity housing. She is a hard worker but has little real connection to a support network. Adults who can mentor and guide her. Someone to confide in who has not other interest but to assist her. She has no core self-worth and doesn't understand that she is uniquely made by a creator who loves her deeply. She was asked to accompany the camp girls to the event for her to understand the intrinsic worth of healthy connections. What an experience Emily had. She felt seen and valued. She longs for a place of comfort and belonging and has often sought this in all the wrong places. What she experienced spending time with you all is that she wants to belong to something, be a part of something, that has meaning. Before, she thought that was just a camp thing and that she would never have that again after leaving camp—you showed her that she can find that again.

Taylor has always wanted to be the “cool” kid, or to at least hang with the “cool kids”. Unlike Emily, Taylor has a family that loves her deeply. She has siblings that look up to her and an extended family that runs deep. However, she was always looking for something more. Something more exciting, more adventuresome and whatever the rule or boundary was, Taylor would challenge it. She went away and appeared to have no desire to return to the family that waiting anxiously for her to want them more. For Taylor, it has always been the peer pressure and trying to fit in with a group that she never really would. Being with you all, Taylor experienced genuineness. She stated that she was able to just be her-something she is learning to figure out. She was able to have conversations, laugh, share, and feel accepted without expending unnecessary energy pretending to be something else. You all were such great role models-

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whether you were friends, partners, individuals, she was able to see how genuine relationships looked.

She stated that she wants to have friendships, relationships like she saw that night.

I want to sincerely thank each of you again for how you love us, support us, and pray for us. Camp is about the “little” things, all the little things that add up to who we are and the direction our lives take. The girls and staff had a wonderful time with you all. Your financial contribution, from checks to cash, was amazing. We thank every supporter. Your dollars will go directly to the girls. As you saw that night, we furnish everything for these girls—the dollars get spent for their needs. China needs new pants, Allani needs to new boots (hers are actually duct taped together right now), and we are always getting Ari hygiene supplies. Chief Gale, as our Principle furnishes all education supplies and is always in need of updated educational materials. Trust me when I say, there is always a need for financial support.

Thank you- Always,

Chief Jo

Jo Lynn Smith

Operations Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Thank you' on the first line and 'Chief Jo' on the second line.