

Jimmy Brazell Community Impact Scholarship Award

2016 Essay submission written by Isaac Richardson

When I was younger, I had the misconception that, in order to impact the world, I had to go to an exotic country like Zimbabwe and do things like hand out Bibles to natives and feed orphans in the streets. In fact, whenever I would hear missionaries speak about all the great ways they had impacted people, I would feel a little useless, like I could be doing more. So, when I was 13, I started volunteering at a ministry called Camp Del-Haven. Del-Haven (which is short for Delinquent Haven) was created so that underprivileged kids from the Kansas City area can come and have a week of summer camp for free. Since 1952, Del-Haven has been able to spread God's Word to thousands of kids and teenagers. Over the past few years I have been blessed to spend a big part of my summers there as a counselor. Understand that most of the kids who come to Del-Haven have only heard the name "God" used as profanity, so teaching them more about Him is extremely important.

Basically, a week at camp consists of the kids arriving on a bus Monday morning. We then spend the rest of the week learning Bible verses, hiking, swimming, eating, doing crafts, and most importantly, learning about God. Then, on Thursday afternoon, we all go home. This is a very sad time because there is a possibility that we will never see some of those kids again.

Last summer I was in charge of a cabin with one of my friends from church, and we were assigned a young camper named Julian. For some reason, Julian latched onto me and proceeded to follow me around the entire week, calling me his "Camp Dad". The first few times it was cute, but then it started to become irritating. Later that week, Julian and I were sitting next to each other during a chapel service and listening to the camp director talk about how God is our Father in Heaven. After we finished, and we were walking up to the dining hall for lunch, I noticed that Julian seemed abnormally happy. When I asked him about it, he said, "I'm happy because I came to camp and I got two dads. You and Jesus. It's really fun because I've never had a dad before..."

At that moment, all my feelings of irritation went away. God has blessed me with two parents who love me, and I can't imagine my life without either of them, especially my dad. When camp finished and I was at home unpacking, I found that someone had slipped a folded piece of construction paper into my duffel bag. I unfolded it and found that, to my surprise, it was from Julian. Due to the fact that he was around 7 years old, it took me awhile to understand what it said. When I did, I was really touched. It read: "Isaac (spelled Isic) is the best. He is funny. He is my friend" Julian is just one of many campers that I've met who've come from a broken home, so I keep him and all of the others in my prayers.

As a staffer, I've had to do a lot of physical things like bandaging injuries, breaking up fights and cleaning up some gross messes. But last summer, I had one of the biggest spiritual growing points of my life happen while I was staffing the last older boys camp of the year. Due to being sick the previous weekend, I ended up missing the first day of camp. Even though I was pretty tired, I was ready to teach the boys about God.

When I arrived at camp I found that, in addition to being understaffed for the session, one of the adult staffers had brought his two foster boys with him as campers. Within the first half hour of meeting them, I realized that they were bent on being disruptive and causing trouble.

Just to put their behavior in perspective, the way we correct bad behavior at camp is to take away swim time in 5 minute increments. These boys ended up spending the whole hour and twenty minute swim time sitting on a bench. Not only were these boys rude to me, but they were also mean to the other campers. Throughout the week I was called racial slurs, disrespected and even had my iPhone stolen.

On my last night at camp, I was lying in my bunk looking up at the ceiling wondering, *"Why did I even come out here? I can't believe I gave up some of the last days of my summer just to be treated like this."* Then God put James 1:2 on my heart, which reads "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of various kinds".

So the next day, I was as nice as possible to the boys, because it was more important that I showed them Christ's love instead of holding a grudge. After they left, I thanked God that he had put the boys in my life, and prayed that they saw Him through me. That experience made me want to do even more to work with my community. It also affirmed that working at Camp Del-Haven was not only helping the kids, it was growing me.

So in the end, I learned that whether I'm feeding orphans in Zimbabwe or flipping burgers at McDonald's, everyone needs to hear about Jesus, and I can serve Him wherever I am.