



Standing In Awe, By Scott Manke, Director

This is the posture I find myself in as I walk around the Center, have conversations with my staff, perceive the joy on the faces of the children, and listen to the conversations happening throughout the day. To think that we are invited into what God is doing at times leaves me speechless as I think about how He does this beautiful work that we get to be a part of at the Family Empowerment Centers.

One of the stories this summer that fills my cup is thinking about Andrea whose family has been connected to us off and on for over 10 years. This summer she came to camp regularly and went to our 3 day sleep away camp. Towards the end of our camp I walked into our multipurpose room turned quiet time for reading any of the 100 plus children's books we have in our library and there she is reading the Bible she was given a few days earlier. As my soul leaped with joy I asked one of our staff about it and they said, "She has been asking so many questions about God and she is reading her Bible at home and coming in with questions."

We never force our children into spiritual things, we live out our faith, have some structured learning, and create space for discovery. We allow for the Spirit to do His work and when He does it, we know that it is special because it is never manipulated.

For almost 15 years we have seen God at work this way at every level of what we do and who we are. That is exciting and worth connecting with. That's why we have such a great staff, hundreds of volunteers every summer, and 40-50 volunteers weekly throughout the school year. That is why we have Envision teams that come back year after year with their churches to serve and supporters like Amy who find a way to return for weeks at a time to serve our community and sacrifice vacation time and resources to do so. That is why we have retiree's donating time to serve us so that those on the ground can have the freedom to focus on people and the mission can go on.

We are looking forward to this school year with great expectation of God continuing to touch the hearts of children and their families and we are excited to see who will catch a vision for what God is doing here and then joining with us in supporting the work.

Obeying The Voice of God...

This past Summer we were blessed to witness multiple occasions where we heard and saw people respond to the voice of the Lord. Moments where 8 kids made professions of faith during our camps, and having adults commit to take new steps of faith toward God.

In the picture to the right, we had a young mother that took the step of obedience to get baptized. It has been a long journey for her but she praised God that He has never given up on her. As a community we celebrate this special occasion.



Summer Recap



Summer Camps

10 Weeks of camp and children's activities equals hundreds of hours of love, nurture, guidance, joy, and learning for each child that we serve. Soccer Camp is our warm-up for Day Camp as the children are still in school and we saw more than 40 kids registered and part of that. Thanks to a donor we were able to present each child at soccer camp a ball at its completion. Day camp was equally exciting with more than 40 registered and we sent more than 25 children to the sleep away camp we partner with. All totaled we had over 60 unique children participate this summer. To give you an idea what that looks like consider the fact that most churches run a week long VBS and I hear their volunteers remark how exhausting that is for them. This would be that times 10 and then squared. We enjoy the opportunity to do these camps and give the kids of our community a positive outlet all summer long and this summer we had 7 kids come to Christ! They also received their own personal Bibles. Other children saw how they cherished their Bible, so we had a few more ask for their very own! It is awesome to think that these kids would seek God even on their own.

Envision Teams & Interns

Leadership development has become one of our core activities and this summer we had 14 short-term mission teams serve with us with a total of 180 people from all over the U.S. One young person even gave their life to Christ during the experience and others talked about returning as interns. We also had the opportunity to impact the lives of 3 Envision Interns, all whom we would have loved to keep with us long term. Abigail, Brenda, and Michelle were stellar in their service.

"One day this summer, one of the adult leaders of an Envision Team told me that she really needed to talk with me about some painful personal issues in her life. As we concluded a time of tears and counseling, she stated that she was so grateful that God had directed her to come with the team so she could talk with me for guidance in making Godly responses to the turbulence in her life." - Carol

Fall Programming

ESL Classes Begin September 11

Switching back from our Summer mode, we're busy registering and testing for ESL classes starting Sep 11th, 2018. Through a partnership with students from Moody Bible Institute's TESOL program, we are able to offer quality class environments at three levels- Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. With these classes, our students are continuously improving their English and are communicating better on a daily basis.

The classes are interactive and designed to creatively enable learning through story-telling games, life skill lessons, conversations and use of computers in addition to the assigned curriculum. We aim at incorporating some job skills and basic computer literacy, starting his fall.

"ESL class helped me a lot to understand and speak English, it helped me a lot in my job. It helped me how to read, how to speak, how to understand. I enjoy all the classes. The teachers are wonderful and I like it very much." - Tomas Bernabe, ESL Student



"Let the Children Come..." Jesus

After a busy summer, we are getting ready for another great school year! On the first day of registration, we had 35 kids sign up for the After School Program starting on September 17 and we currently have 40 children registered and many more on our waiting list. These children will have a low teacher to student ratio, usually 5:1, and they will be encouraged, loved, fed, helped, and guided during their time in the program.

We also were able to provide more than 70 bookbags containing many school supplies such as paper, coloring utensils, binders, and notebooks to our children through the generous support of Bloomingdale Church and Campus Crusade. The kids received book bags when they registered and were also invited to our Back to School Bash during our Sunday worship service where we prayed over the volunteers, parents, and children asking that the Lord would bless them this new school year. Five families that came had never come on a Sunday morning before.



"A parent asked me once 'How can you have so much courage to do what you do?' I answered that God has given me the faith to trust in him to leave my family and my home to come here to Chicago. He invites all of us to be on mission for His kingdom." - Dylan

Host a Dinner or Lunch?

After much reflection we have decided to move away from our fall banquet this year in order to do more intimate meals with potential supporters and donors. This is a reflective decision that we hope will allow us to speak more directly with you and other potential donors in more specific and targeted ways. We still plan on doing a 15 year Celebration Banquet in 2019 so be watching for those announcements. However in the meanwhile, we are looking for friends of the center to host a gathering for dinner or lunch. The plan is simply for a host to invite some friends and we will do the rest by coordinating the venue (a local restaurant to the host) and covering the expense of the meal. We will share personal stories, share some vision, answer questions, and let them know how they can partner with us on an ongoing basis. If this is something you might be interested in doing, please contact me (Scott) directly.

Staff Acknowledgement

I (Scott) can not say enough about how amazing the staff at the Center are. The majority of our staff are part-time and doing what they do for much less than they could earn in other work places. They serve at 110% of their capacity all the time and that is especially true during the summer months. Please be praying for the staff at the Center to receive from the Lord the strength they need to continue on. Also, please consider supporting those who raise support as missionaries to be here. Currently Carlos, Tony, Dylan, and myself are regularly asking friends and family to join with us through missional support.



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