

End of Summer 2016

Where He Leads

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SERVING IN NORTHWESTERN PA

HELLO FRIENDS & FAMILY!

I hope that this letter finds you all doing well.

As I'm sure you can imagine lots has happened since my last newsletter! Fall, winter, and spring have all come and gone and summer is barreling towards a close too! It's been a busy and growing year being on staff here at Miracle Mountain Ranch.

Fall. As many of you may remember, last fall was when I graduated the School of Discipleship and decided to stay on as staff in the programming department. In programming we schedule, plan, and facilitate activities for most of the retreats and events that go on here. Last fall I found myself definitely in a transitioning time from student life and schedule to joining staff and taking on the different responsibilities that it includes. Fall was also busy with welcoming a new class of students, hosting horse retreats, our annual harvest party, ladies retreat, and doing outside work projects before the winter's snow and cold set in.

Winter and Spring. While it was cold again this winter, and Lake Erie provided us with a good amount of snow, there was a time that my family back home actually got more snow than us! During the winter we hosted a few retreats for church groups, had our winter camps and SALT (for which Philip, my brother, got to come up and join us). Meanwhile, training and classes continued for our students. My job also includes a lot of the paperwork end of things, while it was cold outside, I was warm inside getting paperwork updated for the summer staff applicants. I also was able to do some traveling home for holidays and my oldest brother's wedding. 😊 Next thing we knew, our summer staff started to arrive and we began staff training!



A GLIMPSE OF WHAT I DO....

God has been expanding my borders of ministry opportunities since coming on staff. It has been a growing, challenging, and rewarding time. Here is a quick glimpse of what I do here as Programming Staff/Retreat Registrar:

- ❖ Scheduling and coordinating retreats for guest groups.
- ❖ Helping train students in group facilitation, team building activities, and minor work projects.
- ❖ Working with groups that come in for our various retreats. (Making announcements, running activities, etc.)
- ❖ Overseeing and development of the Archery program.
- ❖ Building relationships with students.
- ❖ Processing summer staff applications and other paperwork details.
- ❖ Helping organize and lead music for retreats and events.
- ❖ NEW: Co-advisor for two of the students!

Summer Camp!

The theme for camps this year was "Follow Me" based out of John 21.

This summer definitely had it's challenges, but it has been amazing to see the growth that God has done in the lives of the summer staff, kids that come to camps our students and resident staff, and myself.

CAMP CRAZINESS. During our 8 weeks of camp we have about 140-150 Ranchers (our term for camper) per week. They come for camps that vary from our general "Wild West" camp to our specialty horse camps to our wilderness camps. Over the whole of the summer we had a total of 1,188 Ranchers!

It is hard to believe that our summer camp season has ended. There were times when a day felt like a week, but then at the end a week it felt like a day. Out of all the days however, Thursday is by far my favorite day of camp. That is the when we set an evening aside to have a campfire and sharing time for all the ranchers and staff. This is a special time that they can share things that God has been teaching them throughout the week; Whether it be from a chapel time, challenge course activity, trail ride, or if they came to know Christ as their Lord and Savior during the week. It's always an encouragement for me to hear many of the simple and profound truths that God has been opening their eyes to and how He is deepening their relationship with Him. Many seeds are planted during camp, sometimes we get to see the fruit and others we may not, but I am reminded that it is God who causes the increase and we're just called to the joy of sowing the seeds.



NEVER RANDOM. Over the summer my job changed some to work with the summer camp schedule. My summer responsibilities have consisted of continued paperwork, overseeing the archery program, and miscellaneous programming jobs. It sometimes seemed like my day had many random task, but as I was reminded by a fellow alumni, as random as some of these tasks and opportunities may seem, they're never random when it's the work that God has for you. One of the biggest changes was that I was also given the opportunity to be the Counselor-In-Training (CIT) supervisor for the girl CITs.

Over the course of the summer I worked with 6 CIT girls who have come for 2 weeks as CIT. During the two week period I met with them individually every day to talk about how things are going with the girls in their bunkhouse, the writing project they do each week, and also spent time praying and doing a short Bible study.

I have been stretched and blessed by working with these young ladies. Each one was very different, yet all desired to grow in their walk with Christ. God has been using many of the things that we talked about during our meeting times to challenge and grow me as well...Isn't that how that usually works? ☺

One of the main things I have been reminded of this summer is the importance for us as Christians to go back to the Gospel in our everyday life and how it effects our lives every day. It's been a great time of looking at who I am in Christ and gaining a deeper understanding of how to stand on that truth and live it out as a witness for others. It has been incredibly encouraging to see the work that God is doing in the lives of the kids who have come to camp as well as us as staff (both seasonal and resident). It has been a wonderful time working and growing with them.





STUDENT SNIPPETS

The end of summer is always a bittersweet time. Summer camps are finished, students move from their summer staff positions in to a full-fledged scramble into getting ready for graduation and what is next once they leave. The class of '15-'16 (*in the picture above*) was such a blessing to get to know. Their energy, comradery, and heart for learning things of the Lord made building relationships an easy task. Now these 24 are graduated alumni and have stepped into a new chapter of their lives which God has prepared for them. Some have gone home, some went straight into college classes, others started a new adventure in new jobs away from home, and still others have decided to stay as second year students. It has been a huge privilege to see these students learn and grow in each of their walks with Christ. I am excited to see where God takes them and what He has next for these guys in their lives!

Orientation. September 10th the new class of students came for orientation. We have 39 students: 29 first year students and 10 second year students who have just started their first week and are beginning their Bible classes and projects. This year there have been some new updates to the classes and projects for the students. During the course of this year each of the students (and some of us staff) will be reading through the whole Bible, doing writing projects based on the scripture they will be reading that month, and also the



attributes of God. There has also been New and Old Testament Survey classes added to the docket. Another new thing this year is I'M AN ADVISOR!!! It was a unexpected surprise when Dan Cooper, Director of the School of Discipleship, put me as a co-advisor with Kara Baratta (another single staff). Kara and I have two advisees: Cherish and Makayla that we will meet with every Tuesday for "advisor meetings". As an advisor I'll be making meals for our advisor meetings, answering questions about projects, grading projects, and being a consistent accountability mentor, and someone who they can connect with if they are having problems. I am looking forward to getting to know Kara better and coming alongside these other two young women during this year. From working with the CIT girls over summer, I know that God is going to use this to not only minister to others, but also to stretch and grow me in my walk with Him and what it means to walk in obedience and rely on Him.



UP NEXT...

- Horse Lovers Retreats
- Ladies Retreat
- Apex Adventure Run (benefits our scholarship program)
- Harvest Party (an open house day event)
- Miscellaneous guest retreats
- Hunter's Retreat
- Community Christmas Party

Please be in prayer for us for continued strength, wisdom, and humility to continue in what the Lord has for us!

The Commonly Asked Question: *Future Plans.*

Last year I came on staff with a one year commitment, yet I was open to the possibility of staying longer if the Lord willed it. Now the end of those 12 months is here. I'm excited to let you all know that I have made plans to stay here on staff. I believe this is where God has me for now and I am excited for what He has in store. I currently don't have an exact time commitment in mind, but in my plans I am looking forward to the possibility of continuing here for a few more years, Lord willing. Thank you to all of you who have been a part of supporting me by gifts, cards, letters, and prayers. Before I was away from home, I thought it sounded cliché when I would tell someone that I was praying for them, yet now I understand how it is SO encouraging to receive cards, letters, and comments from people telling me that they are praying for me.

Please continue to keep me and the other staff, in your prayers as we continue on with our fall and winter retreats as well as the students as they begin a new school year for the School of Discipleship. I hope to be down to visit sometime over the Holidays. 😊

Thank you again for all of your support and prayers!!

God Bless,

Melody Weaver



Above: Some of us girls all dress up in prairie dresses ready to walk in the Warren 4th of July parade!

***"A man's heart
plans his way, but
the Lord directs
his steps."***

Proverbs 16:9 NKJV

Prayer Requests:

- ❖ Wisdom and excitement for the '15-'16 graduated students in what God has for them.
- ❖ The new students (2016-2017). For a teachable attitude, financial needs met, and a joy in the lessons God has for them this year.
- ❖ God's provision financially for the ministry God has for me here.
- ❖ Wisdom and humility while I work with the new students, guests, and other staff.

Praises:

- ❖ Summer Camp: Many kids came to Christ, many lessons were learned, and many lives changed to the glory of God.
- ❖ Students' graduation and new students' safe arrival.
- ❖ Strength in my back has been improving since last year. (I had some minor back pain and issues).
- ❖ Progress on Broken Straw Bathhouse building project. (This houses our bathrooms, new nurses' station, a laundry room, and soon more housing for summer camps and retreats!)
- ❖ God's provision for needs personally and for the ranch.
- ❖ God is Good.