

Summer Update 2020

This summer, Seeds of Hope Camp was faced with many challenges as to how we would be able to do camp amid a Covid-19 altered environment. The first disappointment was that we would not be able to have our much-anticipated overnight camp in Muskoka due to the pandemic. For a while even the possibility of a day camp also seemed in jeopardy, as schools were closed, including our usual site at St. Jane Frances, along with other possible alternative locations. In addition, we were also faced with the restrictions on how many people would be allowed to gather in one place and social distancing requirements.

All these challenges, coming at a time when it would have been most needed, made the prospects for camp very dim. Many of our students had already spent nearly 4 months locked in their apartments, away from friends and their usual interactions and social activities, were now facing a Summer of being stuck at home with no place to escape the boredom and unhealthy amount of screen time. This concern for our kids fueled our determination to hold an in-person, rather than virtual camp, regardless of the challenges.

We adjusted our camp structure to ensure that as many kids as possible were able to get the camp experience. It was decided to have 3 sets of 8 campers attending for two weeks periods, over the 6 weeks of camp. This allowed us to keep 'the bubble' to 10 including counsellors while still maintaining physical distancing and other health and safety protocols. We also adjusted our programming to include as many outdoor activities as possible.

Here is what one counselor Alice shared about her experience with camp this year. *"With only 8 campers at a time, I got the opportunity to get to know my campers on a deeper level. During my small group discussion, One camper said "I think I will go to hell" I went on to ask her why she felt that way, and she replied, "I just can't do the right thing, I'm always doing the wrong thing, and I can never do what is right. It gets me into trouble all the time". I could see that my camper was tired of where life was leading even at such a young age and wanted change. We further discussed what it means to give your life to Jesus and to live in relationship with Jesus. That camper and two others gave their lives to Jesus and one camper renewed their faith. We went on and said the salvation prayer. Then I prayed for every camper, and as soon as I finished my prayer the camper said boldly "I felt something while you were praying for me, and I now believe I can truly be a great person." I am certain that the Holy Spirit was among us and filled up that camper with new oil to conquer the world. In the days ahead this camper made themselves available to help myself and the other campers, and strived to be positive, caring, and peaceful. I am thrilled God used me to make a connection with one of my*

campers and I am excited about what more great things he has in store for me as I continue to work with the youth and children."

Praise God that He made a way where it seemed there could be no way! Thanks to the efforts of our **MP Judy Sgro** we were able to hire 3 students for our counselling staff. One of our church partners, **Lisle Memorial Baptist**, agreed to allow us to use their building which was still undergoing some renovations and another church partner **Friendship Community Church** stepped in to help support our efforts in training our staff by equipping them with strategies to make camp fun while still remaining within the health and safety guidelines.

We were further blessed by Seeds of Hope friends and partners who, stepped in to provide funding to contribute to the use of the building, and by supplying us with bikes for the kids to use during the camp! In addition, **Second Harvest** provided weekly kits of food, snacks and other goodies that were given to help the families of the participants. Also a new partner, **Hope Church**, blessed us with boxes generously packed, full of food and other essentials that we were able to give to the families who were very appreciative of the love and effort displayed in the various gifts they received. **With all these friends and partners coming forward to help, the team was very encouraged, making 2020 one of the best summers ever for all who participated!**

Here is how another counsellor Sarah summed it up. *"We were simply witnessing God's faithfulness and divine provision as we watched everything fall into place. I believe that every camper that attended was intentionally picked out by God for particular purpose and plan. Each day was a new adventure filled with lots of joy, laughter and fun. From morning devotions to friendly games ...campers were able to build a sense of community and friendship. Each camper had the opportunity to display their creative abilities and skills through various art projects, drama activities and differing sport activities. For some campers this will be a memorable time as they learned how to ride a bike for the first time. It was simply amazing."*

Thanks to you all for your support and prayers for this ministry of Seeds of Hope Camp! All the parents were very grateful for the opportunity that was provided for the children to attend the camp. We give God continued thanks for you as we know that we will see a bountiful harvest manifested in the lives of each participant as the seeds planted this summer of 2020 bear multiplied fruit!

Sincerely,



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