



Charis Hills Camp News

November 2019



As the holiday season is upon us, I can't help but think back to this summer at Charis Hills and realize how thankful I am for the summer that we had.

This was a GREAT summer out at Charis Hill. We had 8 camper weeks that were packed full of joy, laughter, and sometimes chaos. Okay, a lot of chaos, but hey it's controlled chaos that makes camp fun, right? Throughout the summer I witnessed campers trying new things that were sometimes scary for them. I saw campers develop friendships with other campers, and I saw staff sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to our campers through CrossTalk, Devotionals, and by how they lived their lives here at Charis Hills.

We require a lot from our staff, and this year they went above and beyond to make sure the campers were safe, had fun, and learned something. They did this throughout the summer, even after late nights of comforting a few homesick campers or early mornings with some campers who were just ready to go for the day. There were many times which our counselors were tested (it happens every summer) but this summer in particular our counselors stuck it out and reached new levels of growth they might not have even thought possible.

Our activities also went incredibly well this summer. My favorites to see were: Geocaching, Camping, and Film & Drama. Whether it was watching campers hunt for "caches" with their GPS, creating maps of camp from their perspective, or hiding "caches" for their fellow campers to find, there were always lots of smiles during Geocaching. Out at camping you could always find some interesting conversations happening about different scenarios that could happen while camping, or how to best pack for a camping trip. I think my favorite is on Thursday nights when campers stay overnight at the Tree-house, and they get to witness all of the stars around an open fire while sharing funny stories and get to know their fellow campers and the counselors better. This summer we had some INCREDIBLE Film & Drama classes. From hilarious skits performed in the talent show to film productions about prank wars to learning new acting skills, film & drama was anything but dull this summer that's for sure.

Summer 2019 at Charis Hills was certainly one for the books, and it makes us even more excited for what Summer 2020 will hold.

Cara Krueger
Program Director

Charis Hills Camp

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Family camp is always fun for all involved. The counselors that come to work with the kids get to remember what camp is like, the parents get to see their children in a whole new environment, and the kids... just get to have fun. My pleasure at family camp is watching the parents. The new families come with a huge amount of anxiety, wondering... What can we expect? Will my family fit in? Does anyone really have the same problems I have? Will we be accepted?

I see it that first evening as everyone nervously enters the dining area to eat, wondering where to sit and how will this whole thing go for them. After dinner the "get to know you games" the kids start to loosen up, but most of the parents are still anxious. At the campfire and the devotional, they sit around a fire, tired from the day's drive, wondering how the night will go in the cabin.

Then morning comes. Kids are anxious to go do "stuff". Some are excited and run around the dining hall and don't eat and parents are expecting it to be like a normal restaurant, where their kids are exceptions, where the looks from other patrons start making them feel unwanted. They look around, and no one is watching them, there are no stares, they begin to talk with each other. Simple things are shared... Where are you from? What do you do? By noon, they have watched the kids laugh, play with each other, make friends, and it becomes okay.

That's the great moment when they feel what we hope the campers feel in summer camp. It's acceptance, grace... charis.... the word in Greek for grace and acceptance. That's when the parents find it from the other parents. They truly start to talk then, to share and by Sunday morning they have new friends. They sit with each other at the table and getting them to leave to go to an activity is sometimes difficult.

We meet as a group of parents on Saturday. Sometimes tears flow, sometimes they laugh so hard at what is shared that they can't stop. Ideas flow, bonds are made, and with many a new understanding is achieved of what God has gifted them.

My hope is that the parents learn some of what the campers learn during summer camp. That they are okay just the way God made them. He has a plan and a purpose for all people; them included. Life is not broken, but rather is blessed with some unique challenges that they are capable of handling.

We all have challenges to bear in this life. I've met no one without them. As the apostle Paul said, keep your eye on the prize, run your race, the reward is there for all who put their faith in Christ.

Be blessed this holiday season! Hope to see you in camp!

Rand Southard
Co-Founder / Director



Dining Hall

There are a lot of things that go on in our Dining Hall. Food Service is a very important one. Good nutrition and enjoying the food is paramount. We serve lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. We only serve fruit juice, milk, water and tea. No sodas! We limit sugar intake and have dessert after the evening meal.

About every other camper application has the words "my child is a very picky eater" on it. We do our best to make our food service kid friendly while providing great taste and good nutrition. We also accommodate special dietary needs while maintaining the same menu items. In other words: If a camper is on a gluten and dairy free diet, they will be served the same menu item but only with gluten and dairy free ingredients. We don't want our campers to feel different because of their dietary needs. Sometimes parents will send food items with their campers if they are concerned that their child won't eat anything else.

We serve chicken strips, burgers, pizza and lots of other foods that children and staff enjoy. The menu is very consistent but we try to introduce a few new items each summer. We frequently have campers asking if we will have their favorites and sometimes parents ask for recipes. We do not allow food in the cabins and ask parents to please not send care packages containing food, candy etc. We provide morning and afternoon snacks.

We are blessed with a kitchen staff that have for the most part been serving The Lord at Charis Hills for quite a few years. They love feeding our campers and enjoy getting in on the fun at camp.

Colleen Southard

Give The Gift of Camp
Contact us for details



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Our Campers

Our campers are what camp is all about. I love getting to know them. I know some campers very well after coming year after year. It is such an honor to give a camper a 5 year bead or a 10 year award! I've watched 7 year olds come to camp, as anxious as their parents, grow up to graduate from high school and go on to college or other training. Some even return on summer staff. I've seen campers go on to other camps and succeed. I love seeing the progress "our" campers make from the beginning of the camp session to the awards ceremony as well as their growth from year to year.

The Lord never ceases to teach me through them. I've learned to think outside the box more. I've grown to appreciate how intricately God has woven us together and made our minds. I get glimpses of how our campers think and I see the blessings of their creative thinking. I've watched some of the silliest acts as well as some of the most gifted acts at hundreds of talent shows. At times, I've had a front row seat in watching you and your children persevere through difficulty. Sometimes, perseverance lasts an activity hour, sometimes a week and often years. I've watched campers share their faith with others. I utter phrases that your children say that are sweet reminders of who they are. I've watched friendships blossom and bonds made over some of the strangest things. I've seen kids support each other through tough times and learned more about joy through the eyes of a child. I've received some of the most precious gifts made by your kiddos. God has used our campers to increase my faith. I am grateful. I am blessed. Thank you for sharing your children with me and our staff. Our lives are richer and fuller because God saw fit to connect us all according to His plan.

Colleen Southard



Giddy Up

Giddy Up has always been a favorite activity at Charis Hills. This past summer we had lots of great changes. We moved the riding program up to the new barn. It was my dream to move the program up the hill and I saw my prayers answered and the dream developed. Men came for a weekend working retreat from Kerrville Bible Church. They worked so hard and what they accomplished was amazing. They put in a new arena, built a horse bathing station, built benches for the trailer, repaired fencing, added new sensory trails and lots more. There is so much more space at the new area to develop and more trails to ride. There are more trees, and shady areas as well which is very important in late July and August. Because of the new location, campers were picked up for a hay-less hayride to the new riding area so they didn't lose any riding time.

This summer I had the opportunity to watch campers learn new skills, their confidence swell and sometimes their fear squashed. Some campers rode off lead rope. There is nothing better for me to see than the big smiles of our campers and being able to witness their accomplishments.

Molly Southard

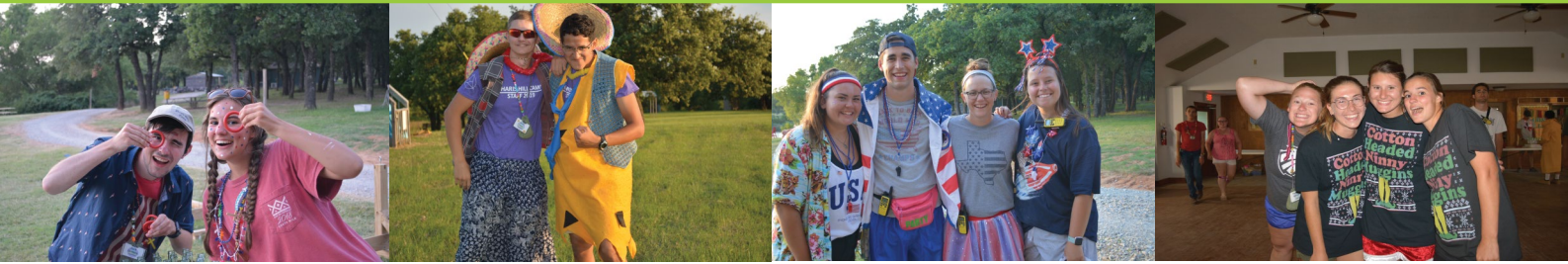


Play with Purpose



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Summer Staff

Charis Hills has always been very fortunate with staff that come and serve alongside us each summer. Though our full-time staff work diligently to find the right individuals, we know that it's because of the Lord that we are able to have such wonderful counselors each summer.

Our staff come from the east to the west coast and even sometimes from other countries. We are so very blessed with the different people who we serve alongside each summer. Our staff are some of the hardest working and most dedicated folks you will ever meet.

Summer counselors must be a minimum of 18 years of age and typically have one or more years of college. We have also had previous campers return as counselors or in some other capacity on summer staff. The majority of our staff are pursuing degrees in education, special education, ministry, speech & language pathology, medicine, ABA therapy, equine therapy...etc. We also have had some wonderful staff members who were studying in non-related fields. We do not utilize volunteers to work with our campers with one exception: The only volunteers working with campers are previous years staff members who have received our training. Many of these are teachers that return to volunteer for a session or two. We require our staff to participate in two weeks of intensive training prior to the beginning of camp. We have many counselors tell us that their training goes beyond what they learn at the university level and is very valuable. Every summer we are amazed at the counselors that are hired and their many talents that they bring to camp.

Working at camp is no easy task. Days are long and often spent in the hot sun. It's waking up at 7:00am or before and going to bed late after spending a full day outside teaching campers new activities, helping them to grow in their social skills, but also in their relationship with the Lord. It's coming to a new place with 25 other strangers, living life together, pursuing the Lord together, and spending a LOT of time with each other. It is not always easy, but it is something all our staff would agree in: "It's worth it!".

If you know of someone who would qualify and might be interested in Charis Hills, please share and ask them to contact Cara Krueger program@charishills.org.

Funding Our Volunteer House

We all like to think about the fun side of camp and what it does for the kids and counselors that participate. But without maintenance all of that falls apart. We have been blessed with many volunteers that have helped in maintenance as well as construction. The SOWER organization, Kerrville Bible Church men, and many individuals have contributed much. We are still in need of a full time maintenance person, so many things need consistent attention in this small city.

Over a year ago we began a campaign to raise funds to build a home on-site to house a volunteer couple willing to be here for that position. Mike and Janice Kennedy have agreed to serve in that position, he working in the maintenance area and she in the office and kitchen area. We are still raising funds to build that structure! We have put in a pad, built a road to it, and have in hand about \$35,000. We estimate the home to cost \$250,000 if we contracted it out. I believe that we can find volunteers who will provide labor of approximately \$75,000 in value. Which means we need \$110,000 raised. If you have ability to help, it is very much needed for the operation side of camp.

I know that it is more fun to give for recreational equipment, and things that you can envision the children enjoying, but lets face it, they want hot showers and clean water and toilets that flush as well. Sinks and faucets need repair, buildings need paint, drainage needs fixed, and so much more! Think and pray about it! If you have means, please help.



Be Safe. Have Fun.
Learn Something.



Donate toward the
Volunteer House



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Up Coming Events



Spring Family Camp
March 13 - 15, 2020



Open House
April 18th

We have Open House from 10:00am - 3:00pm. Come take a tour of camp, meet some staff and have some refreshments. This a great way to get your new campers acquainted with Charis Hills.



Share Day
June 16th

We will have Share Day 9:00am - 1:00pm. We are inviting some area professionals and media out to tour the camp and see what happens at Charis Hills. Please, share Charis Hills with your child's teacher or counselor and invite them to camp. This would be an excellent opportunity for them to see camp in action.

Registration Opens
November 25

2020 Camp Dates

June	7 - 13
June	14 - 20
June	21 - 27
June	28 - July 4
July	5 - 11
July	12 - 18
July	19 - 25
July	26 - Aug. 1

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