



SUMMER PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS, JUNIOR STAFF, AND KIDS!

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

ADVENTURES AHEAD SUMMER PROGRAM

JULY 2016

Reading, rockin' and rolling numbers is what Adventures Ahead summer is all about. In the morning the kids dive right into reading and math, then transition into sports at the park and end with an exploration of rocks, plate tectonics and natural resources in the afternoon. Giving students time to practice reading; sing and rap their multiplication tables to popular tunes; burn off energy though basketball, soccer or hockey; and explore the world around them by making crystals and edible landforms has helped encourage their learning experience.

Lizbeth, who has been in our program for several years now, has felt discouraged about math at times. This summer, when trying to understand place values, she teared up and shut down out of frustration because she was unable to grasp the concept quickly. In the past, she hasn't liked opening up, but this summer she opened up to one of our college interns, Howard. He shared his own story of math being challenging, how he hated it, and how he almost didn't graduate high school. Lizbeth was intrigued by Mr. Howard's story of how he began to work hard and improve in a subject he thought he'd never succeed in. He told her that he's observed her succeed in many things, but sometimes learning new things will be frustrating. He told her to stick with it and try her best. In the past couple of weeks, she's shown incredible grit and has been excelling in math.

Our hope is to see kids excel. The beautiful thing about this summer is that the majority of our students who have attended Adventures Ahead since last September 2015 have continued with the program this summer. One of these students, Zulhey, a first grader, struggled with letter recognition and phonics. In the spring she showed vast improvement, and this summer she has blossomed from shy and reserved to reading fluently and excitedly. She also enjoys being appointed honorary coach and helping our junior coaches lead sports at the park...if she chooses to eat all her vegetables on salad day!

For the last three years, our summer internship for junior staff has grown significantly. Youth that once attended Adventures Ahead as students are now leading their younger brothers, sisters and neighbors. Daniella, who has attended the program intermittently since kindergarten is now heading into her junior year of high school. Summer after summer she would confide in staff about being disheartened by school and family life to the point of depression. This past year, unbeknownst to us, Daniella left home and traveled with her friend and her friend's dad on a tour of the nation, visiting national parks. Her friend's dad home schooled her during this time, and she was able to explore, learn, appreciate the beauty of creation and experience the beautiful natural resources we've been teaching the kids about this summer. When she returned, her mother was overjoyed to have her daughter home again and Daniella felt heard. We have seen that a deep appreciation for God and his people has sprung up in her. She has brought us all joy by sharing her story with us this summer. It is encouraging that through all of the prayers, talks, and moments of Daniella crying out summer after summer is bearing fruit. She has a renewed excitement for reaching out to other youth in our South L.A. neighborhood and is stepping outside her comfort zone to teach art this summer at Adventures Ahead.

Stories of hope like Daniella's, Lizbeth's and Zulhey's are reminders that we get to be on the journey with our kids. It's not just about getting them to read, rock and roll numbers, it's about being a constant support, encouraging grit, and praying that they taste a bit of God's goodness along the way. Would you consider giving a gift today to sponsor a child or youth in our program, helping them to thrive academically in and beyond the classroom?

Lauren Tigrett, Adventures Ahead Program Director