

Northern Frontier Update
July 25, 2010

(Please send any replies to Ralph Essery office@northernfrontier.org)

We have begun week four with campers! It's hard to believe the 2010 camping season is half gone – and it's flown!

The Kayak Trip went out this morning. I had the opportunity to pray with them before they left. I love to see the happy anticipation on the faces of trip participants. They'll be tired when they get back on Friday, but, if the NF Trip pattern holds true, the smiles will be even wider. I like to talk with the guys from a returning trip to hear them laugh their way through the telling of their week's adventures.

The 46ers have reported in by cell phone from the top of a few of the peaks they've climbed. They like the tops of the mountains for the views (and for the cell service!). They are halfway through their quest of 23 high peaks. They took a rest day in Lake Placid last week, and they will return to us on Friday with two weeks of stories to share. After sharing them here, those stories will be told and re-told for the rest of their lives. I guess I'm an old man – I like to picture these teens telling these same Northern Frontier trip stories to their children ... and grandchildren. (I haven't got great-grandchildren ... yet!)

Tuesday evening one of our Battalion Counselors gave part of his testimony at campfire. He has had "father troubles" pretty much all his life and he shared about that. Seven campers stayed after campfire to talk. A counselor immediately joined each one. I stayed just to take pleasure in the sight of these meaningful "God-conversations." I was sitting on the hill in back of the Battalion campfire site, but could hear certain words that were emphasized. Within the space of a minute, I heard the words "father" and "dad" from several directions. Several minutes later, again in the space of no more than a minute, I heard several counselor voices saying the word, "God." A few minutes later, a sight that is repeated here year after year graced my eyes – an older young man and a younger young man bowing together in prayer – the deeper voice of the older praying for the younger. These guys (counselors) are doing exactly what they should be doing – modeling Christian manhood, listening to their campers, and pointing them to God. I am a happy camp director.

You should have heard the singing at last night's campfire! It was indoors because of rain. The impressive thing was that last night was the first night with a new set of campers, plus the fact that this week is our lowest camper week of the summer. Despite that, the volume was "over the top." They did two skits – the "Re-wind, Slow Motion" skit and the "Did You Sneeze" skit. As you'd imagine, I've seen these old stand-bys more times than I can count, but these guys did them so well they had me laughing as hard as the Tree Climber boys were. This is one talented staff.

On Saturday morning, we showed the video that Sage Clark, our videographer this summer, put together for last week. The whole Dining Hall erupted with laughter at certain parts, and I heard dozens of guys exclaim that they saw themselves in a brief clip (which is one of the goals of these videos). Each Saturday morning has been the same – a three minute video that captures the week in many of its highlights. One clip was of Stockaders passing one of their number through an obstacle on the Adventure Course. The smile on the face of the “passee” was what I have come to call “the Northern Frontier Smile” – broad, wide eyed and full of fun. To Sage’s parents – please encourage him to come back next summer. We need him!

Boys and Fathers and Sons are still signing up for the coming weeks. Please let folks know that there is room and we’d love to have them. We are barely keeping even with scholarship requests, but God does seem to be moving people to give to the scholarship fund at the same time we receive scholarship requests. As much as I’d love to be ahead, I am pleased that we have kept pace with the need. I pray that pattern continues through the summer so we don’t need to turn anyone away because of finances.

The last report I received from our Registrar (last Tuesday) showed us to be 34 camper-weeks behind the same time last year. That is significant – first, to ministry (34 fewer campers to help grow in Christ) – and second, to finances (34 times \$440.00 is not a small number to make up). The blessings have been great this summer, but we are not without these concerns.

A couple other “word pictures:”

Tonight I took some pictures of the Tree Climbers cooking their hobo stove dinners. These six and seven year olds are delighted to be with their dads in the great outdoors. The scene is always the same – the dads working hard to make the stove and build the fire. The sons excitedly scurrying about, gathering sticks and playing with each other. Then there are the small (and large) faces being stuffed with hamburgers, hot dogs, carrot sticks, celery sticks, potato chips and “bug juice.” After that come the marshmallows, Hershey bars and graham crackers for a treat (s’mores) that some of the boys have never had before. So many “firsts” at Northern Frontier.

One evening after campfire I was walking from the Battalion area back to the office. As I passed the Battalion Duplex, two headlamps bobbed into sight over the hill by the Trip Locker. Instantly I saw the scene as a silhouette depicting Northern Frontier’s ministry. One headlamp was six feet off the ground – the other perhaps five. A counselor was walking a camper back from the Health Hut after the camper had taken his nighttime medication. I could hear them talking as they approached – just like they should be. To them, I said, “Goodnight, fellas.” Then to God I said, “Thank You so much for that picture and what it means.”

This has been a summer of strong ministry at Northern Frontier. To those of you who pray for us, I say thank you. God is listening – and answering.

In Christ’s service,

Ralph