



Christian Encounter NEWSLETTER

STUDENT PROFILE

Joseph

When Joseph left his life in Hawaii for the foothills of Northern California, he was ready for something different. “In Hawaii I didn’t feel like I had much hope in life. I hated the kids who were bullying me at school. I skipped school a lot. My GPA was between a 1.0 and a 1.6.”

Joseph’s mom and older sister had both been in the program at Christian Encounter decades prior, but his understanding of the program was limited. “I expected it to be like summer camp. I didn’t really have that mindset of wanting to work on myself.”

Joseph arrived in the middle of June, just as the Ranch schedule was shifting into summer. He spent his days outside, helping tend to the 86 acres and preparing for summer events like Family Camp and Agony. He attended church on Sundays and began weekly discipleship and counseling meetings.

The notion of summer camp quickly faded into the background. Prior to com-

ing, Joseph had been on six medications. He was misdiagnosed as having intermittent explosive disorder. Joseph’s violent outbursts had been happening with greater frequency. At the Ranch, Joseph was adjusting to life without medication, and the sadness and anger resurfaced.

Despite this, Joseph’s tender nature and care for others was made apparent at the Agony Ride, where he manned his post faithfully at the Beckwourth SAG, never missing a bike that came into the station. A month later, Joseph persevered through the 15-day backpacking trip in Tahoe National Forest and even jumped off a 40 ft dam with his teammates.

Through it all, Joseph was hearing the Gospel message and watching it lived out every day through his interns. But life had embittered him, and he continued to resist.

(cont. on pg. 3)



INTERN INTRODUCTIONS



Danika Young, from Winchester, CA, studied Christian Ministries at Azusa Pacific University. She was pursuing international missions when she was redirected to Christian Encounter. As Danika enters her second year of internship, she reflects, “Internship is not a job. It’s a place to be. Internship is purposely putting yourself in a community, and allowing the experience of living in a community to shape and refine you.”

Cassie Peters came to us in January



from Elk River, MN. She graduated last May from Moody Bible Institute with a bachelor’s degree in Human Services and Pre-Counseling. “I’m learning what being a leader looks like and that leadership doesn’t look the same for every person.” Cassie is recognizing the value of the different giftings of her fellow interns and the opportunity to not only serve, but live alongside her teammates. “I’ve never really been a part of a team like the intern team.”



David Choban first stepped foot on the Ranch at Family Camp last summer. From Sacramento, he and his parents along with his brother came with some church friends who had been attending for many years. That weekend, David connected with some of the students and observed the special bond that the interns shared with the students. He saw that there was a more intensive model of discipleship happening...

(cont. on back page)

Long-term infrastructure investment: \$60k still needed

Nate Boyd, Executive Director

Over the past two years we've been tackling big infrastructure projects that will expand and strengthen the mission of Christian Encounter. These are long-term investments, but they're already making a difference in day-to-day ministry.

Our list has included:

- Buying a 1500+ sq. ft. ministry house for girls (see opp. pg.)
- Rebuilding an 1819 sq. ft. duplex from the ground up
- Remodeling the administration office and replacing the barely-functioning phone system
- Adding a new 1280 sq. ft. residence, which will be delivered early June
- Building an accompanying 480 sq. ft. garage and installing a septic system
- Replacing a 47-year-old septic system on another residence
- Paving two gravel roads that continuously need repair due to steep inclines
- And many other smaller projects



Help strengthen our mission

Ways to give:

- Mail a check and designate gift "mission"
- Online at christianencounter.org/give



Left: Former intern David Ramey and Executive Director Nate Boyd baptize Joseph in the lodge pond. Below: A painter by trade volunteers his time to assist in the administration office remodel.



In February, CDC.gov reported that nearly one in three teen girls has seriously considered attempting suicide.*

The costs add up to about \$930K, which is a huge undertaking for us. But compared to what we've received, this figure is almost inconceivably low. Major discounts from friends, massive volunteer efforts, and other forms of help have all driven the costs down and been affirmations and avenues of God's grace.

Almost all this work is already finished or fully funded! But we still need \$60K to complete the full set of projects. We want to do this work "right the first time" in

order for these investments to last long into the future.

The future of this ministry is worth the expense. Teen statistics about school absenteeism, drug use, mental health, etc. are grim. In February, CDC.gov reported that nearly one in three teen girls has seriously considered attempting suicide.* This leads me to the conclusion that our teens are one of the most in-need populations in the world.

Yesterday one of our students—with a

smile covering her face—asked me if she could be baptized. She's the third this month.

The need is terrible. At Christian Encounter, we get to do something about it. Help us expand and strengthen—for today and the long-term!

*<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/p0213-yrb.html>

Girls' transition house reopens after closure in 2014

The Girls' House first started back in 1999, but due to ministry-wide financial challenges, the house was closed in 2014.

In late 2021, a former intern offered to sell his house far below the listing price to meet this need. Thanks to his generosity, we were able to make a long-term housing investment.

As the ministry moved toward reopening the house, intern Grace Bunn was recognizing the need for a safe place for our students upon finishing at the Ranch.

The transition house is a blend of fellowship, fun, hard work, and discipleship. House residents, which can include former interns, can continue to grow in health, strength, and maturity in a known, safe community while maintaining continuity in counseling and discipleship.

Upon completion of her internship, Grace (pictured far right) joined our staff as the Girls' House Leader. Grace is from Greensboro, AL and studied Criminal Justice at Mississippi College.



Joseph (cont. from pg. 1)

"I kept toughening up against them, constantly doing my own thing, punching concrete, trees, plywood...."

In November, Joseph was standing in the Ranch living room, surrounded by the people he had spent the last four months with, faced with the consequences of his decisions. He was to be suspended from the program for two weeks. As Joseph looked around the circle, his face wet with tears, he saw his own grief mirrored in the faces of his peers, of his interns, of the staff.

After another suspension in January, Joseph recognized he was continuing in the trajectory of more discipline and that he felt powerless to stop it. He finally stopped fighting. Joseph surrendered his life to God.

"I've questioned the Lord about a lot of things that have happened in my life, but I have realized that my life is nothing without God. I needed him more than ever.

"I felt like I could have been dismissed many times, but I either got put on restriction or was suspended. The Ranch

gave me a lot of grace. With that grace, I feel that must have been God working in that as well."

Immediately following this decision, there were positive reports from his counselor and his teachers that there was a noticeable shift in Joseph on both fronts.

In the coming weeks Joseph began to learn how to walk with Jesus. In May, he made the decision to be baptized before the Ranch church family.

"If I never came to the Ranch, I wouldn't have uncovered the things I'm working on until way later in my life. I could have been violent to my kids...."

Joseph looks forward to God's good plans for him and holds on to the words in Jeremiah 29:11. "I have more aspirations now. I want to be a wildland firefighter and also want to do something in ministry. I've always wanted to tend to people...."

Pray with us as Joseph takes steps in this new path.

Zoya Lee



Joseph experiences the extravagance of Christmas at the Ranch made possible by generous donors.

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*In memory of Norman Brouwer, given
by:
Mary Brouwer*

*In memory of Ron Fritz, given by:
Marlene Stevens*

*In memory of David H. Roberts, given
by:
JoAnn Weser
Tom & Margie Hanacek*

*In memory of Jerry Yost, given by:
Laura Yost*

HONORARIUMS

*In honor of Shawna Majerus, given
by:
Michael Majerus*

*In honor of Marion Parker, given by:
Don & Judy Person*

Interns (cont. from pg. 1)



...in this relationship - one that was strengthened and fostered through doing life together in a community setting. David joined the team in January.

Angel Sanchez, from Merced, CA, was introduced to the Ranch through the Agony Ride. He was pursuing a different path in life when God redirected him, and he was encouraged by a mentor to take the "narrow road." Angel arrived in January and in a few months time shared, "This place is starting to feel like extended family." As he continues to put down roots in this community, Angel recognizes the staying power of these relationships. "I didn't expect to be as close as I am to people here."

Christian Encounter is a non-profit, non-denominational, residential community helping 16- to 24-year-olds by providing love, spiritual guidance, high school education, counseling, and 24-hour supervision. Internships are offered to young adults 21 years and older. We are a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, and all gifts are tax deductible.

