

Justice and Creation Fellowship

Meegan McWilliams
Green Chalice
Camp Kum-Ba-Ya



campkby.westarea@gmail.com

www.campkumbaya.org

Community Need

The main need at camp Kum Ba Ya was better access to the nature trails on site. Most people there were unaware the camp even had designated trails. The trails were unmarked, overgrown, and almost all the signs were broken or fallen. Along with the trails, the camp also lacked any kind of garden.



ACTION

My main goals during my time at camp Kum Ba Ya were to improve the hiking trails as well as sparking campers interest about the natural environment. I cleaned the trash from trails and very clearly marked them. I also repaired the existing trail signs and placed new ones.

I also planted various gardens around the campgrounds, including a vegetable garden, an herb garden, and a pollinator garden. The vegetable garden contained tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, cantaloupe, strawberries, and watermelon. The herb garden included mint, lavender, dill, chives, rosemary, basil, lemongrass, and citronella. The pollinator garden had various native plants, such as purple conehead, geraniums, butterfly weed, black eyed susans, and I also included a wild pollinator seed mix.

Lastly, I created fun and engaging posters for the lodge. A scavenger hunt including native insects and animals to encourage campers to explore the trails. If the campers do see one of the animals or insects on the campsite, they are encouraged to place a pin where they saw the creature on the map of the camp.



Collaborators and Partners

Everything I accomplished at this internship wouldn't have been possible without the community I found there. All the campers and counselors treated me like family. But the ones who helped me the most were three strong women.

Becca, Ellie, and Susan. All three of them supported me the most throughout my time there. Susan helped brainstorm ideas, Ellie made sure to take pictures of everything for my project, and Becca took me shopping for all the plants and materials for my projects. I was quite nervous traveling so far from home, but these ladies made me feel more than welcomed. Without them, none of my projects would have been possible.



Impact and Ripples

One of the biggest community needs was better access to trails and the wilderness. While improving and maintaining the trails was one thing, sparking interest within the campers was another. During my time at camp Kum Ba Ya, another one of my responsibilities was to offer a educational hike to the campers. The kids had the choice between my nature hike and other outside games. The first day, I only had 4 children sign up for my hike. But every day following, more and more groups of children signed up to join me. By the end I had a crowd of campers signing up for my nature hike. This brought me a lot of joy. I was able to see this interest and excitement spark within them. This rippled outside of the nature hikes too. I had many campers bringing me insects and flowers in hopes that I could identify it for them. Many also asked if I could come back next year as well so I could offer the nature hike again.



Spirit of God-Awe Moments

During my internship, I noticed God's presence rather often. I felt it when I walked the wooded trails down to the lake, I felt God when I dug into the Earth with my hands to plant the gardens for the community. I felt God when we all sat down together for a meal, and I felt God when my co-worker Ellie and I would read our books on the porch together. I felt God's presence when I shared coffee with the counselors. I felt God when the sailing camp took me out on the waters, and I felt God when I worked in the kitchen to prepare meals for everyone. These experiences helped me appreciate how God can be present not only in nature, but also in the connections we build with others.



Beloved Community

Through my work improving trails, planting and caring for gardens, and leading educational hikes with campers, I was able to contribute to a community where people could learn, grow, and connect with both one another and nature. I was also able to teach campers about plants, animals, and the environment while encouraging them to slow down, ask questions, and appreciate the natural world around them. My time there also helped me grow personally as a leader. Working with campers taught me how to communicate with different ages, it taught me how to make learning fun, and it taught me how to be patient. Overall, the fellowship made our summer camp community better by helping create a place where people could connect with nature and recognize the importance of caring for God's creation. I hope my passion for God's creation and the practice of caring for it ripples down into the campers lives.

