Camp promises hope

By Tim Warner*

I n 2005, before the phrase “school pipeline” was mainstream, I heard a statistic that made the hair on the back of my neck stand up: 70 percent of the children of people who have been incarcerated have negative contact with the penal justice system, most becoming incarcerated themselves. Seventy percent. Let that one sit with you for a moment. Nearly all these kids come from communities like the one in which I was raised. I knew we needed to do something — anything — to take a shot at getting them into a setting where the power of God could change some of their despicable reality. There is a reality of economic deprivation, families broken by addiction and hardship, and schools that don’t have the resources students need. There is hunger, stigma, and anger. What other outcome is possible for these kids? In some prisons it’s not surprising to encounter three generations from the same family. What do we imagine lies ahead for these children? West River has proven to be a place of transformation for kids. I experienced it first-hand working at its Basketball Camp for years. I wondered, could a week with young mentors with whom they could build positive, lasting relationships and hear authentic testimonies about God in their lives really help break the cycle? Could a week of building community and having good old-fashioned, unstigmatized fun without the daunting responsibilities and troubles of their everyday lives help them break free? Could adults who understand their plight expose them every day to enough about the Jesus who could transform them to make any difference? I delighted to share that, for years now, the answer has been, “Yes.” While I went there woefully unprepared, this summer’s camp was full of proof of the possibilities. Five of the original campers (all but one of whom are now enrolled in 4-year universities) were scheduled to be counselors. Those, who are siblings, could not attend at the last minute because of the untimely death of one of their infant children. We will see them next summer back at West River, which has become their old stomping ground. I was delighted that another of them was actually serving for the summer on camp staff. Having her there as our liaison brought tears to my eyes every day.

See Camp Hope, page 3

The Commission on a Way Forward’s final report is now available in four languages: English, French, Portuguese and Swahili. Visit: bwcumc.org/wayforward

With reading, new mission reaches youth

By Erik Alsgaard

D at 90 percent of elementary-aged children spend four days a week for eight weeks during the summer, reading more than 1,450 books and maintaining or improving their reading skills? In Washington, D.C., this summer, it was called Project Transformation. And it wasn’t only the young children who were transformed; young adult leaders and congregations had that experience, too. Coming together in early August at a banquet to celebrate the program’s success, leaders, staff and children all shared stories of what Project Transformation meant to them. Rachel Luna, Executive Director of Project Transformation DC since last November, hatched the idea as part of a school project while enrolled as a Fellow at Wesley Theological Seminary’s Institute for Community Engagement (ICE). “I was kind of lost with what I was supposed to do in that fellowship,” Luna said. “This evolved out of an asset mapping project of looking at education in DC, and seeing these huge holes. Hopefully, being able to use the power and the physical space of the church provides a patch for one of those holes, which is the fact that so many kids lose reading levels during the summer.”

Combine the local church resources with kids needing to read and young adults who want to serve, Luna said, and coming alongside Project Transformation was easy.

According to its website, “Project Transformation was founded in 1998 by Sarah Wilke and Dr. Leighton K. Farrell, two visionary leaders in the North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church.” Project Transformation formed a separate, national nonprofit organization in 2011 through an investment from the Young Clergy Initiative of the United Methodist Church’s General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Project Transformation Washington, D.C., is part of this nationwide effort.

Luna was hired full-time in November 2017, but “this has been a project since early 2016” for Washington, she said. “Project Transformation is a ‘ministry that focuses on what we call ‘The Three Cs,’” said Luna: children, college students, and churches. “We engage young adults in meaningful leadership and discipleship opportunities while serving children in a holistic manner, and opening churches up for Community Engagement (ICE).”
I love the time that I get to spend with the youth in my church. They are always so enthusiastic, joyful, energetic and talkative, at least until they become teenagers. I love hearing them talk about their hopes and dreams for the future and especially what they want to be when they grow up.

I have one youth who wants to be the best point guard the Washington Wizards have ever had. I have another who wants to be the best doctor in the world.

Not to be outdone, I have another young person who, because their school bus driver is so bad, wants to grow up to be the best bus driver in the universe.

Over and over these youth amaze me with their ability to think big, aim high and want to be the best at whatever they do.

We are all hard-wired to want to excel. The only problem is sometimes life intervenes and conspires to lower our expectations of ourselves and the world.

It happens the day you forget that you are fearfully and wonderfully made and start comparing yourself to others.

When you start comparing yourself to others, you forget that you are gifted and prepared to excel just the way you are. All you have to do is remember that you, the way you are, are made to excel.

So, from this day forward, pledge to yourself that you will excel with the gifts that you have; that you will remember that little voice in you that wanted to be the best ever.

We can’t all be the best at everything that we do, but we can try to excel and be the best that we can be.

Commit each day to work as unto the Lord, doing your best, being your best, and giving your best.

If you put your talents to use every day, you will be the best and you will excel.

Information, contact the Rev. Lou Piel at 410-751-9049.

Stepping up to Staffing and Supervision training
Nov. 6-7
Foundry UMC, Washington, D.C.


Bishop’s Advent Day Apart
Nov. 13, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Epworth UMC, Gaithersburg


By Daryl Williams
Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Oxon Hill

EXPLORING A WAY FORWARD WITH REV. TOM BERLIN
Sept. 15, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Nichols-Bethel UMC, 1259 Murray Road, Odenton, MD

The Rev. Tom Berlin, who spoke at this year’s Annual Conference Session, will help you understand the issues and options facing The United Methodist Church as it approaches the February General Conference and takes decisions on how the Church will address issues of homosexuality.

bwcumc.org/wayforward

Exploring a Way Forward

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This symbol appears with stories that show your apportionment dollars at work, making a difference in people’s lives.

ROCK 2019
Feb. 8-10, 2019
Convention Center, Ocean City, Md.
Registration opens Sept. 15 for ROCK 2019, a retreat for youth. The featured speaker this year will be Ben Glenn, the Chick Gay. Satan will provide the music and Egypt Speaks is the weekend’s spoken word artist. ROCK is designed as a God-centered counterculture, life-changing, high-energy, retreat focusing on revival for youth and adults. Info: www.bwcumc.org/rock.

By Mandy Satters
Lead Pastor, Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City

Pre-retirement seminar
Oct. 18, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Mt. Zion UMC, Highland

The BWCU's Pension and Benefits team will hold a Pre-Retirement Session for any clergy considering retirement. Spouses are also encouraged to attend. Registration opens soon.

reCall Summit
Oct. 26-27
BWI Double Tree Hotel

The reCall Summit is a time of courageous faithfulness. The faithful servant because we invested everything we had in finishing together, and hearing, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” May we turn our eyes again toward the start of a school year, you too are hoping for “All A’s” or at least “a few B’s.”

The more difficult a subject was, the more I enjoyed it. And the times the grades were not what I wanted, I knew I had tried my very best to excel. I went to a good college and I got into law school. I passed bar exams. I practiced law. Ah yes, dear ones, I wanted to excel.

Now that would be….excellent.

For more information, contact the Rev. Lou Piel at 410-751-9049.

Strawbridge Shrine meeting
Oct. 27, 9:30 a.m. through lunch
New Hope (Old Bethel) UMC

The Strawbridge Shrine Association’s annual gathering will feature a panel discussion with Delores Martin, Rev. Doug Tzan and Pastor, Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City

This year I came out of the womb driven: six weeks premature back in ’65-something-else, determined to arrive early, get moving, survive and thrive. I tried very hard to excel at everything, and of course, failed a lot in the process.

I threw my whole mind into schooling and getting good grades. The more difficult a subject was, the more I enjoyed it. And the times the grades were not what I wanted, I knew I had tried my very best to excel. I went to a good college and I got into law school. I passed bar exams. I practiced law. Ah yes, dear ones, I wanted to excel.

Here’s the rub, though. Jesus’ notion of greatness and achievement looks a little different than how I thought of it as a kid. Jesus said if you would excel, be a servant. If you would excel in the kingdom, get humble.

“Greatness is measured not so much in being better than the other person, but in putting their needs first, lifting them up, and showing them love. Excellence is putting forgiveness over "being right" sometimes. Jesus’ picture of "excellence" and Paul’s picture of “excellence” look like bearing with one another in love and washing one another’s feet.

Maybe as we turn our eyes again toward the start of a school year, you too are hoping for “All A’s” or at least “a few B’s.”

The more difficult a subject was, the more I enjoyed it. And the times the grades were not what I wanted, I knew I had tried my very best to excel. I went to a good college and I got into law school. I passed bar exams. I practiced law. Ah yes, dear ones, I wanted to excel.

Now that would be….excellent.
Camp Hope: Getting equally wet with the same water

From page 1
We don’t have room for her story here, but if you knew her, you’d be crying too.

The final Camp Hope veteran joined us as a counselor — or at least that’s what we thought at the beginning of the week. Midway through the week, this young woman, who had been neglectfully burned as a young child, who had been through too many skin graft surgeries to count, and who, with the God-sent help of many, had managed to survive, thrive and complete her freshman year in college. At age 19, her foster-care checks had stopped coming and she needed to find a new place to live. So there she was, without a home at 19, but around God’s people in the presence of God. And as God would have it, God had left a camp staff position open for her. God also sent her wonderful women from West River’s Grandparents’ Camp, who raised a huge offering for her on the spot and who will continue to be her grandparents in every way but blood relation.

In that beginning, in her story, I was reminded, “When you go through deep waters, I will be with you…” My understanding deepened during the trying week, during which I wanted to throw in my camping towel many times. After unexpectedly pouring out into this newly homeless young woman, after I had to intervene in a fight between campers, after poor behavior made me bring them back from a July 4th fireworks display before they had seen the fireworks, after I had preached and taught seemingly to deaf ears, and after my best efforts to get them exposed to sailing landed me and my cell phone in the bay rather than on the boat (shout out to Pastor Tim Dowell and the Sailing Camp for towing me in!), God told me why I was there.

God used three simultaneous behavior issues to put me under a pavilion with three young men for two hours, in which one of us was crying the entire time. I realized all I had been through in my own life was, in some way, what each of those young men needed to hear. Every one of them needed the father in me in that moment. In spite of my exhaustion, I sensed I needed a fresh view of the reality of why I had answered God’s call in the first place. I realized that my deep water and their deep water were not only equally as wet, but it is the same water, and that God was in there with us.

It was my spiritual delight this summer to stand in West River with those young men and baptize them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. While West River will always be a special place of transformation, it is the people who God sends there to be the church that he uses. We should be that church — together with people in their water — everywhere we go.

When we are a part of the body of Christ, God is in the deep waters of our lives with us. And because of God’s presence with us, we are compelled to be in the deep waters of others in the name of Jesus. That only comes by difficulty and sacrifice and inconvenience and the subjection of our will.

*Tim Warner is senior pastor at Mill Creek Parish UMC in Rockville.

Transformation: DC reading mission touches many lives

From page 1
to different and new ways of reaching out to their communities.

In short, United Methodist churches in D.C. opened their doors for eight weeks of literacy-based summer camp, staffed by volunteers and 14 young adult interns from around the country. Two so-called “House pastors” — students at Wesley — also served.

The Rev. Paul Johnson is pastor at Hughes Memorial UMC, one of the host churches, and on the Board of Directors for Project Transformation DC. He said participating in Project Transformation helped to transform his church.

“It was a way to bring vitality to our church,” he said. “While at the same time, the young adults and the children brought new life to us in this summer camp experience.”

“From day one, our church saw it as an opportunity to interact with the community,” Johnson said. “It was spearheaded by our United Methodist Women, but others joined in. This was a way to do more than we ever could on our own.”

As the children were engaged in structured activities during the day, Luna said the staff noted a decrease in behavioral problems as the summer progressed.

In addition to practicing reading skills, emotional, learning and behavioral education was offered.

“One intern showed so much love and patience with the children,” Luna said.

Brighter Day Ministers (formerly A.P. Shaw and Congress Heights UMC) served as the other host church for the camp. Partner churches throughout the area assisted with money, volunteers and other resources.

A typical week of camp saw children attend Monday through Thursday. Luna said Friday’s were reserved for the interns to have time for reflection, learning and connecting with each other, she said. It was also a time for them to listen to where God might be calling them in their lives.

Each young adult received a living stipend, paid for partially by the church, room and board, and dinners provided by the churches four nights a week. Luna said.

One tragic experience that transformed the young adults was gun violence. A shooting of a young girl, known to some of the campers, occurred just blocks from Hughes Memorial during camp. And another shooting took place just one block of the church while the children were in the church, Luna said.

“It’s been a learning experience and an eye-opening experience for some of our interns,” said Luna. “For some of them, this is the first time they’ve faced gun violence and poverty of this type.”

Sean Gray, an incoming student at Wesley from Pennsylvania, served as an intern.

“Coming in to it, I was really nervous,” Gray said. “I had no idea what to expect. But very quickly, I found out that I loved and cared for these kids. It’s been an incredibly rewarding experience.”

Half of the 14 interns served at Brighter Day; the other half at Hughes Memorial.

Gray served as a sort of “team leader” at Brighter Day with the older group of children – those in fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

“One week, I was doing science experiments with them,” he said. “I was teaching them about inertia and I had a bucket of water with me. I told them that I could take this bucket and hold it over my head upside-down without the water spilling out. Once I finally swung the bucket over my head, all of their faces just lit up. It was such a heartwarming experience.”

Rachel Luna, Executive Director of Project Transformation DC, speaks at the banquet Aug. 9 at National UMC in Washington, D.C.
Light illuminates the landscapes of our living

By Jerry Wicklein

Light thinks it travels faster than anything, but it is wrong. No matter how fast light travels, it finds the darkness has always got there first, and is waiting for it. – Terry Pratchett, Reaper Man.

And this is the way it all begins.

God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared.

God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness.

God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. The light that disrupts calls us to awareness of our surroundings and of others on the journey. How to tell night from day...

The teacher sat around a blazing fire and this is the way it all begins:

God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. With each season, the dance of the leaves and the dance among the leaves, allows us to experience the landscapes of our living.

With God for the Word that created light.

How to tell night from day...

The teacher sat around a blazing fire with a small number of students late at night. Their meandering conversation was broken by periods of silence when they gazed at the stars and the moon.

The teacher asked... "How can we know when the night has ended and the day has begun?" Eagerly, one student answered: "when you can look off in the distance and distinguish your dog from the sheep." Another student offered: "When light falls on the leaves and you can tell whether it is a palm tree or a fig tree." The teacher said: "These are fine answers, but I believe that when you look into the eyes of a human being and see a brother or sister...you know that it is morning. If you cannot see a sister or brother... it will always be night."

The light that disrupts draws our attention to the mystery and wonder of God.

As a child, I would often visit my grandmother. My favorite times were when she would take me to a little hill near her home and we would lie down under a big tree and look up at the light dancing through the leaves and limbs of the trees. This sanctuary of the trees became a place of wonder and pilgrimage through the seasons.

The light that disrupts draws our attention to the mystery and wonder of God.

"Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an ink blackness." (The Message) God created light to disrupt the primaeval darkness and provide a rhythm for living. The rhythm of light and darkness, day and night, provides a pattern for living. There is a rhythm in creation guided by light: the setting and rising of the sun, the phases of the moon, the passing of the seasons.

The light that disrupts calls us to awareness of our surroundings and of others on the journey.

There was evening and there was morning. The first day.

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The light that disrupts calls us to awareness of our surroundings and of others on the journey.
es of my heart

reat set for Oct. 19-21

light of God in your world? BWC photo contest participants share their vision

Drawing with Light: Photography intersects with Spiritual Yearning

...pen the eyes of my heart

Contemplative Photo Retreat set for Oct. 19-21

With each season, the dance of the landscapes of our living.

"You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world." (The Message)

Light, especially from the sun, brings hope and vision as we consider the landscapes of our lives.

...tachment to life, the landscapes of our lives.

The always available light of the Son brings hope and vision as we consider the landscapes of our lives.

God-colors in the world.

The light of faith, the landscapes of our lives take on more definition and is transformed.

...es of my heart...
While building, church keeps growing

WILLIAMSPORT – Rehoboth UMC broke ground earlier this year for a $4 million building program with the theme “Room to Grow.” They’re now ready to pour the foundation slab.

Being built on a 105-acre plot purchased 20 years ago, the multi-purpose, 13,500 square feet building, will replace a teacher’s house converted to a clinic and contribute roofing, windows, and labor while the partners, such as Bel Air UMC, contributed roofing, windows, cement and payments for the contractor.

The completed clinic is expected to cost about $349,000.

I’ve been quite overwhelmed with the love and support that Bel Air UMC has been able to show to our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe,” said the Rev. Byron E. Brought, lead pastor. “We are absolutely committed, with God’s help and help from friends in Zimbabwe, to completing it.”

Chabadza is a local concept where farmers take extra boxes in the field and passers-by can take up the spare boxes and assist.

Chabadza partnership builds new clinic

BEL AIR – Thanks to a Chabadza partnership between Bel Air UMC and the Zimbabwe East Conference, construction of a modern health clinic at Muyuri Mission is well underway, according to a story from United Methodist News Service. The clinic will replace a teacher’s house converted to a six-room clinic in 2009 that can no longer cope with the demand for services. The new location is on a campus with a primary and secondary school and a church sanctuary.

Villagers provided the bricks, stones, sand and labor while the partners, such as Bel Air UMC, contributed roofing, windows, cement and payments for the contractor.

The completed clinic is expected to cost about $349,000.

WEBB receives “unsung hero” award

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Rev. Nancy Webb, a blind retired Elder from the Baltimore-Washington Conference, received “The Unsung Hero Award” at the caucus’s annual meeting in Washington, D.C. These awards provide opportunities to authentically engage with those who are experiencing homelessness.

The Peace with Justice special Sunday is observed the Sunday after Pentecost, which is June 16, 2019.

Gift stretches from 1 to 250

SMITHVILLE – The long-term effects of giving aren’t always known when they happen. But what started as help for one student in a northern Zimbabwe community now reaches more than 250 secondary-level boarding school students.

The congregation that helped to build the school provided financial support to Albert Mashamhakanda and six other students.

Mashamhakanda, 22, credits David Booney, a longtime member of Smithville UMC, with his academic success. “He realized my hard work (and) out of love, he decided to give me support as well as a chance to achieve my status and identity together.”

The young adult has started a ministry, “Partners for Success,” that provides mentors to the teens in the boarding school. Ten mentors work with the students in interactive group discussions. The Partners for Success team encourages students to learn by listening, questioning and sharing their life experiences. All to have completed studies at Bindura University of Science and Technology or the University of Zimbabwe. They tutor in business management, chemistry, law and music, peace and governance, psychology, media production (radio/film/television) and social work.

“The idea is that, with the support we got from all stakeholders, our mission [of] providing an interactive platform toward the transformation of lives can be spread across the whole district, province and nation at large,” Mashamhakanda said.
There is no one,” the bishop said, “exempt from this work of repentance, healing, dismantling or working to overcome racism.”

“Love is bigger than our individual interests, love is bigger than what we’re comfortable with, and love is enough.” – Christie Latona, BWC Director of Connectional Ministries

**Change Makers seek to answer community questions**

“With our lips we proclaim obedience, but with our actions we demonstrate betrayal. When anyone believes themselves to be superior to others, they betray God; when anyone believes the color of their skin means God favors them over skin of a different hue, they betray God; when anyone passively benefits from racist and discriminatory policies, practices and programs, they betray God; when anyone silently witnesses the mistreatment of others created in the image and likeness of God based on racist, sexist, xenophobic and other categories of designed difference, they betray God. … There is no race but the human race.” – Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

By Beth Ludlum*

*You just can’t be God’s answer to the question your community is asking.*

This sentiment, articulated by a ministry partner in London, captured one impact that drives the Change Maker’s Project. Launched this summer, the Change Makers Project supports young adults in hearing God’s call to innovative ministry through mentoring, missional immersions, entrepreneurial community engagement, and vocational conversations.

This year, 22 diverse young adults are engaged from three geographic regions: Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Western Maryland. The Change Makers are accompanied by eight mentors, all ordained Elders in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, whose role is to foster theological reflection, spiritual growth, and vocational discernment. Each cohort had initial gatherings in May and June, and the cohorts began the learning journey with a trip together to London in July 2018.

During the London Learning Lab, the Change Makers were introduced to diverse forms of Christian social innovation in a post-Christian society. By hearing stories, interacting with social entrepreneurs, and experiencing projects firsthand, they gained inspiration and insight on the innovative process.

One day was spent with an intentional Christian community that has launched a café, learning garden and refugee welcome projects with their neighbors. On another day, the Change Makers heard and reflected theologically on historical spaces and artistic exhibitions throughout the city. Most important of all, however, were the conversations — with Christian social entrepreneurs at all stages of dreaming, creating and launching diverse projects and ministries, and with each other.

As one Change Maker later reflected, “I am feeling refreshed and energized by all the conversations, stories and experiences. My mind is racing with the possibilities for holistic Christian community and what it means to live out faith every day in creative ways, centered in my story and the story of my community.”

The Learning Lab was designed and facilitated by Matryoshka House, a London-based group of Christian social innovators who have been intentionally inviting people from all faith backgrounds and of no faith background to try to do good together for their communities and the world. A few Change Makers who were not able to attend the London Learning Lab will travel to San Antonio for a similar experience at the end of September.

The Change Makers will journey together for the next nine months. Individually, they are following a curriculum, designed in conjunction with the Matryoshka House team, that helps them think through the people, resources and ideas that will help to form and launch a social/ministry project in their communities.

The geographic cohorts meet regularly to interact with social entrepreneurs at all stages of dreaming, creating and launching diverse projects and ministries, and with each other. The formal process will conclude with a Missional Entrepreneurship Week concludes with an opportunity to pitch their idea to investors who may pledge financial support, mentoring, connections, or other resources. More information will be published in the spring about the Pitch and Pledge event; clergy and laity are encouraged to attend and support the young adult entrepreneurs.

The CMP is a collaborative project of InspireDC, Wesley Theological Seminary, and the Baltimore-Washington Conference, generously supported by a Young Clergy Initiative grant through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church.

To learn more about the Change Makers and to follow their adventure, visit www.thechangemakersproject.com.

*The Rev. Beth Ludlum is an ordained Elder in the BWC, and serves as Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at Wesley Theological Seminary.*
What we do at camp has an exponential impact”

By Chris Schlieckert*

I have been to approximately 150 weeks of summer camp as a staff person. I have been a dishwasher, a lifeguard, a counselor, a wilderness guide, an assistant director, and director. But this year I had a new role: parent of a summer camper. My oldest daughter, Anna, was finally old enough to attend her first overnight camp, a half-week Mini Camp at Manidokan.

I was able to experience camp in a whole new way, through the eyes of a parent. My wife and I got the reminder e-mails that the health form wasn’t complete (until a few days before camp), helped pack her bags, talked her through her nervousness about being away from home for the first time, wondered how she would sleep without us tucking her in, worried that we hadn’t heard anything from camp (even though I am the one who always tells parents “no news is good news” from camp), and refreshed the camp Facebook page constantly to look for photos.

I was also able to see the impact her three days of camp had on her. I heard her recite the story of Moses (this year’s theme), sing camp songs insistently for weeks, tell me about all the friends she had made and beg me to set up play dates with them across the state, see how proud she was to do the Flying Squirrel, and see a new level of confidence in her. Her excitement was just the same after a week of day camp at Harmison and West River.

One of the frustrating things about working at camp is that we often don’t know the true impact we have on the campers because we only get to see them for a week. We hope they return for several summers and we get a better glimpse at the person they are becoming. When we are really fortunate, they become summer staff for a season or two and we journey with them as they become a young adult.

As a parent of a camper now, I was able to see in a new way how those precious weeks at summer camp change the trajectory of a child’s life and faith. Camp is a sticky experience (sometimes literally). Because it is an immersive and set-apart experience, the lessons learned at camp about self, others and faith have a staying power few other settings for youth provide.

I believe what we do at camp has an exponential impact on the world. This summer, 1,400 young people came to camp. While here, they experienced the love of God, engaged in authentic Christian community, and were called to put their faith into action to transform the world in Jesus’s name. Now those campers have returned to their homes, churches, and schools throughout our Conference, energized to spread the love, community and transformation they experienced at camp.

Anna spent her whole summer in various programs and camps, ranging from ice skating, to art, to environmental education, but I know the time she spent at Harmison, Manidokan, and West River will have the greatest and most long-term influence on her life.

I am grateful for the support the Baltimore-Washington Conference gives our Retreat and Camping Ministries. A unique oversight structure, strategic financial support, and strong ministry leadership has nurtured a relationship between us that has become the healthiest across our United Methodist connection. In addition to this support, more than 250 volunteers and 95 staff were involved in camp leadership this summer. It is because of this commitment to our young people through the Retreat and Camping Ministry that I know my daughters will be stronger, more confident, more connected to community, and more committed to their faith because of the time they spend at camp.

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