

Madi Hawkins

Field Experience Reflection

During the summer I volunteered at His Kids Camp at Camp Luther, which is outside of Schuyler, Nebraska. His Kids Camp is a camp for individuals with disabilities who are over the age of 13 to get to pair up with a “buddy” and have the camp experience in a Christian atmosphere. I got to be a buddy for Michelle, who was in her forties and had schizophrenia, diabetes, and depression. The camp lasted a total of four days and three nights for the campers. The “buddies” spent five days and four nights there, arriving early for training.

My role as a buddy was to essentially spend the entire day and night with my buddy and make sure that she had the best time possible while there, including doing activities with her, helping her get dressed and ready to go to places, and making sure she took her medication. During the first day everyone was moved in, introduced, and there was a campfire that night. The next day had a variety of activities, which included chapel, crafts and games, free time where you could go swimming, boating, or something else, and a dance at the end of the night. The next day had many of the same activities, except this time there was a movie night at the end. On the final full day at camp the campers got to show off their unique talents during a talent show. On the final day when the campers left, each camper got a special award from their buddy.

What amazed me about my camper, Michelle, was how independent she was. She needed very little help when it came to getting ready for things; In fact, with some of the things she was probably better at being prepared for than I was. When it came to taking her medication that she needed, she was very on top of making sure she took it and was also taking it at the proper time. She was aware of what she needed to be prepared for with having diabetes. I was very impressed

by her level of independence that she had, and I could tell how much instruction had gone into making her so prepared.

During training, one of the key things taught was redirection – if anything came up that wasn't safe or appropriate then the best thing to do with the campers was to redirect their thinking with a new subject, idea, or activity so that things could continue on smoothly. I found this to be very useful tool, especially with some of the other campers who slept in my cabin. I learned how to adjust to what my camper did and didn't want to do. There were some activities, like boating, that I quickly learned she didn't enjoy, and I eventually figured out how to tell when she wasn't enjoying an activity anymore. I was there to make sure that she had the best time possible, and I ended up having a ton of fun myself.

While the camp is a place for the campers to grow, I learned so much as a buddy for my camper. I learned just as much, if not more than my camper from all of the fun experiences that I had, such as the dancing that we did, and also from some of the experiences that were sometimes stressful to deal with, such as when a camper did not want to leave the cabin in the morning. Probably my favorite part of the whole camp was the talent show that all of the campers participated in. A highlight from the show was when Brian, who was deaf, played the drums for the crowd. At the end of the camp I gave to my camper the "Kind Words" award, for always noticing what others were good at doing.

I have found being a buddy at His Kids Camp to be an awesome experience, not only for the campers, who have a blast, but for myself as well. I have learned how rewarding and enjoying working with children of God who have unique needs can be.