



ADVENTURE, RISK, CHALLENGE

A Summer Leadership and Literacy Program
2005



Writings of **The Extreme Challengers**

Also Featuring the Story
"Summer at Sagehen Transforms Teens"
from **The NRS Transect Journal** - page 16

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An Old Sugar Pine

I am an Old Sugar Pine
which survived
the wild fire.

My cones almost burned
and my bark turned scorched, charred black.
I had internal damage that I wanted no one to find.

The heat made me spread
my seeds
and my roots have grown.
Now, I am strong enough,
there is no wind that can blow me down
Now, nothing can bring me down.
I have learned my lesson.

I have grown,
my bark might be rough,
but now,
it's open to those
who want to be loved and trusted
as I love and trust.

My inside has changed
and now it's time for me
to spread out
my beautiful painted cones
to show the best
of me to the world.

I know
I can let them see the beauty
of my orange, red and pink
that I have hidden and covered
as a way to protect
my most sensitive part,
to never be hurt and betrayed again.

By now,
you must be angry,
you didn't make the fire
strong enough to burn me down.

My heart,
the most important part of me,
which keeps me alive, is safe
and I recognize that it took me a while
to conquer it,
but as you can see
I'm resting
beside a beautiful river
which cools me with its sparkling water.
The sun shines
and the sound of the river
rushing against the rocks,



as it moves slowly down its path
brings me relief.

I rise above
the other trees
surrounded by a high rocky mountain
in the figure of a women's silhouette.

I am at the top,
but you.
I can barely see from up here
to the bottom of the valley
where you are
between those trees
which never fought
to make their dreams come true.
I will keep that in mind
and always fight for what I desire.
I tried so hard and got so far
discovering loneliness in the wilderness.

You thought I couldn't overcome
the depression in my desolation,
but here I am once again
enjoying the privilege of knowledge
with a gorgeous tendency to succeed
after all your hypocrisy.

Now, I can feel
the wonderful sensation
when the rain runs
through my branches and my bark
purifying me,
growing seeds and cones.
I revealed my treasure,
because I care

My Worst Enemy

"Fear is our worst enemy," that's what I told myself when I was climbing up a tree to get to a log, fifty feet above the ground, at the Ropes Course in Mt. Rose. During my climb, I could feel my heart beating as fast as it could go at that moment; I had butterflies in my belly, my hands were sweating like a waterfall, my legs were shaking worse than jello, and of course, something in my mind was telling me, "You can't do it." But just as the fear was taking over my body, my friends started cheering for me, screaming as loud as they could, "Come on, Celina, you can do it!" It seemed like my personal strength suddenly woke up, and I realized I was walking on the log, towards my friend Tania. Just then I made my biggest mistake. I looked down. The fear punched me back, and this time it was stronger. I ran back to the tree and I held it as hard as I could. The little voice again was telling me, "You can't!" I wanted to cry; my legs weren't responding, instead, they were shaking more than ever and my hands were stuck to the tree grabbing it like it was my savior; I could feel the pain of the splinters sticking in to my fingertips. Yes, I was determined to stay pasted to the tree until someone brave enough could rescue me.

Simultaneously, Tania, my partner, who was in front of me, looked directly into my eyes. I knew she was scared too, but she put away her fear and with great confidence she told me, "Celina, look at me. You can do this. I know you can." Right after that, I heard Katie commanding, "Celina, let go of the tree." Obviously in my dictionary the phrase "I can't" did not exist anymore, instead I answered, "I don't want to do this." Tania kept talking persistently to me and reached out her hands until I walked to the tree in front of me, all the way to the other side. This time my shaky legs were responding. I felt like a baby taking my first steps. When I got to the middle part of the log, I sat on my butt and let it lower all the way down. By the end of the rope course, I felt relief and a great satisfaction because I had been able to do everything so far in this program. During the summer, I have learned that I can do anything if I have determination to do it.

Last spring I remember when Jess Osier, my mentor for the Summer Search Program talked to me about the Adventure, Risk, and Challenge program. She knew that I wanted to do something challenging and fun, but at the same time, I wanted to learn English. But this ARC trip wasn't twenty-two days long as I had planned for; instead it was going to be forty days. And the most exciting thing was that I was going to be the first one from Summer Search to try it. Can you imagine being challenged every day for forty days, living with strangers, sharing personal things with them in a place far, far away from home and family? "That's too much!" I thought, but I took the

risk and I had to work hard to make it happen. Now I realize that it was worth it because I have become stronger in many ways, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Physically, I've become stronger because I have hiked 25 miles in eight days, carrying a backpack that weighed about 30 pounds; I have been on Mt. Tallac, Deadwood Peak, Castle Peak and Basin Peak, all of them in an elevation higher than nine-thousand feet. In the Mokelumne I hiked for 11 hours and I still had energy to keep going. Everyday at Base Camp I ran at least two miles early in the morning, and the day before graduation I will run 7 miles. But that's not all. I kayaked 12 miles in three days, and I rafted down class 3 rapids on the American River for a day. My muscles grew up, and when Katie found out, she told everyone what she had discovered and took pictures of my superwoman arms.

I feel that I became healthier physically, but mentally I have changed even more, in a good way. I am more independent; I can make decisions about my destiny by myself, and I can direct a group of people because I have learned leadership skills, like how to delegate jobs and different leadership styles. Also I know that I can be a good teacher because I'm energetic, enthusiastic and clear. When we taught the Boys and Girls Club kids, I was able to show my knowledge about my research project and I learned how to change my teaching style depending on my group.

At Sagehen Creek Field Station, I have also discovered my love for nature and being in the outdoors. I used to think nature was my enemy, but I found beauty and fun in it. I can now feel the breeze blowing my hair, messing it up, and it makes me feel truly alive. Normally the mosquitoes, flies and bugs can make you crazy but instead they taught me to learn tolerance and patience. Now almost nothing in the wilderness can make me anxious or desperate. That makes me feel proud.

I have also changed emotionally. I used to get sad or angry easily, but now those things seem like nothing and I can't believe I used to complain about little things like when someone criticized me or looked at me strangely. Now I am cautious but open to everyone; I am more willing to share and trust other people. I also learned that I am not able to make people change because

I don't like some aspects in their life, but I can look at their bright side and recognize the other good parts of their personality. We can be friends. That's what ARC has made me realize, because at first it was not easy to live 24/7 with other people that I hadn't ever met before, but we got along, lived through 40 days of rough experiences and helped each other when we felt down or scared. I can feel the huge appreciation that has grown between us, and that makes me feel loved and safe.

"Fear is my worst enemy" and here at ARC, I overcame it. Now I am stronger and nothing can bring me down. My point of view has changed; it has grown more expansive. What used to be dull now seems interesting. Nature has woken me up and shown me how beautiful the world is; I will always appreciate music, my computer and long hot showers, but I know I can live without them (at least for a little while).

What I'm taking home is plenty of confidence, a new positive attitude, love and help, because I already demonstrated that "I Can Do Anything If I Set My Mind to Do It". About my Summer Family, I know I won't ever forget them; they taught me to always say "I Can" and also to never give up.

I would like to appreciate THE EXTREME CHALLENGERS: Tania, Jojo, Jenny, Karen, Izzy, Javier and Fabian.

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This Boulder is Here to Stay

Day to day
I wake up to the orange strikes
Of the sun
For I am a boulder
On the side of a steep jagged mountain
Tired by the pressure
Put on me by the ongoing hikers
On their endless trip
To the top of the mountain
But I remain strong
Never wanting to slip
Never letting the weight of the snow push me down
Never letting the wind blow me away
Never letting the rain permeate my soul
I remain strong
Holding on for another day
Never easing up
To the hikers filled with anger, laziness and frustration
Trying to bring me down
I remain strong
Always daring to be happy
To stay where I am

Sitting here
On the mountain
I think about
The past year
How I slipped
And how my grip decreased
I forgot how strong I was
And turned into a little stone
Smooth and slippery
With little grip
I seemed to lose all footholds
When the report card came
With the sad look of disappointment
On my parents faces

Sitting here
In the trees
I begin again at Sagehen
The air is clear; it smells of pine perfume
The trees sway back and forth in the open sky
Dry dirt kicks up as the wind rushes by
Here, I am hoping
To bring back the Boulder
By clinging to rocks with growing trust in my rope,
Hanging in mid air taking deep breaths, calming myself down,
Slipping, sliding and mastering the duck walk on the steep snow,
Swimming in the cold with the help of my ARC family,
Squeezing their hands to give me strength.

Overcoming these fears of snow, rock, and water
Brings new energy to the boulder

But I know
There are still many difficult challenges
To come

I see graduation looming as my biggest
Climbing these mountains
Is teaching me
That every difficult obstacle can be overcome if I believe
In Myself



Courage: The Path to Leadership

Heart pounding, legs shaking, hanging on to the rope on a side of a cliff, I felt like it was going to take days to get down. "If I ever get down," I thought to myself. "How did Katie convince me to do this?" I had to take deep breaths to rid my mind of all these doubting thoughts. I slowly lowered my butt to get a better grip on the rock. I knew I needed to have my feet flat against the rock in order to rappel down this cliff. Trusting Aaron and Colin to stop me from falling, I nudged my way down the vertical rock step by step. I reached the most difficult part of the rappel where the cliff ended, and there was only air below me. "Now they want me to lower my butt all the way down! I am going to fall!" I screamed in my mind. Now hanging like spider man, I had to let my feet go and hang in mid air, more nervous than ever. As I was lowering down, Katie asked me to stop while she ran to get her camera to take a picture. It seemed like and eternity waiting. My stomach was tight and I was afraid of falling. I told myself "I can't quit now. I've gone too far." When I reached the bottom the greatest sense of accomplishment came over me.

Never have I felt like this before. Never did I feel so strong. At home when I am scared, I used to give into my fears. I did the normal routine every day with no challenges to make me stronger. At school, when challenges arose I never took them I would blow them off and say "Oh well", and find myself behind in class and struggling to catch up. Now thanks to the six week Adventure Risk and Challenge Leadership & Literacy program in Truckee, CA, I take challenges straight on with new confidence. Challenges like: reading out loud every day, finishing three books in five weeks, writing essays and poems in English class, practicing and improving my grammar, finding information on forest fire to make a bilingual interpretive sign for Sagehen Creek Field Station, and teaching ten, eleven, and twelve year olds about forest fire. Besides the challenges of reading and writing, I also faced many physical challenges like hiking, rock climbing, rappelling and kayaking.

One of the most memorable things I will take with me is the day of the ropes course, the day I pushed myself further mentally than I ever have before. Everything was going smoothly. Together we overcame the circle of fire where we had to get everyone through a circle in the air, the wire walk, and the wall. I was good at the teamwork elements. While we relaxed during our lunch break, I knew we were going to the catwalk next, a log crossing fifty feet in the air. I

was anxious and nervous because Fabian and I were the last to go. Halfway through waiting, I had a weird feeling in my stomach, and I didn't want to try it anymore. My fear of heights overwhelmed me. Katie talked to me and told me that no one ever got hurt doing this and that calmed me down. Finally it was our turn. I got strapped in and I was ready to climb up to the log high up in the tress. I hesitated at first, but luckily I had my ARC family to support me yelling, "You can do it Izzy!" Upon reaching the top, I made my biggest mistake; I looked down. My legs started wobbling and I could barely move them. Fabian also was scared and I knew that I couldn't show my fear so I screamed out, "You can do it Fabian!" Following my own advice, I started walking. It was so hard for my mind to let my legs move. The thought of made it even worse. Eventually, Fabian and I made it to the middle of the log. Now we faced the most difficult part, we had to go around each other. Fabian volunteered to sit down on the narrow log and have me go over his shoulder; getting as close as possible would make this easier. Fabian asked me to put my left leg over his right shoulder. At first my brain wouldn't let me. It said, "No Izzy, you can't do this". Right then and there I wanted to quit, but Katie inspired me to do it, she yelled "You can do it Izzy your almost there." After several attempts at putting my leg over and back, I went for it. Right then two things came into my mind; either I'm going to fall or I am going to get over his shoulder. After my right leg touched the log, all my negative thoughts disappeared from my head as I successfully made it to the other side. As my friends below me lowered me down, I realized that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.

I realize I had the same fear in rappelling and the ropes course. The fear of falling came back at the ropes course after overcoming it during the rappel. I know I can never truly get rid of this fear; it lives in me right now. What these two experiences have taught me is that this fear, in the future, could come back and stop me from taking on challenges in my life. If I let this fear stop me I will never accomplish my dreams. Since I faced my fear in rappelling and the catwalk, let my courage take over, and was determined enough to complete both challenges, now I know I have the strength to triumph over fear.

Not only did I face my fears but I also faced aspects of myself I wasn't proud of. On day two of our Desolation Wilderness expedition, we were at the partly frozen Lake Lucille. Beth, one



of our teachers asked us to think about one aspect of ourselves we wanted to leave behind and one aspect we wanted to bring with us on the trip. I had ten minutes to write. One by one we walked into the freezing lake that still had an iceberg floating in the middle. I was last to go and had my rock ready; I said out loud what I wanted to leave behind, that fact that I judge people before I get to know them. I threw the rock, and watched it splash against the water and sink all the way to the bottom of the lake, and that's where this part of myself has been ever since. After leaving that part of the old me at the bottom of the lake, I have been more willing to get to know my teammates and build a great relationship with them. I've become one of leaders of the group, friends with everyone, and a positive motivator and influence.

After six weeks here, I have also become more independent. At home if I didn't do something, I had my mom there to do it for me. Not here at Sagehen. We cook on our own, we wash our own dishes, set up camp by ourselves, do our own laundry, run meetings by ourselves, and navigate ourselves cross-country by map and compass. Leadership has been my strongest role in the group. For the final expedition, I was a Guardian Angel along with Jenny. I was chosen because of my strong voice, my awareness of what needs to be done, and how well I took care of the group.

Now by the end of this course, I've come to appreciate, showers, TV, music, and friends. I really appreciate my family and the love and support that they have always given me. It's been tough being without them for the last six weeks. I miss the warmth I felt at home when my dad and I were outside in the backyard working, my mom inside making dinner, and my brother in the front playing soccer and knowing that everything was okay. When I go home, I plan on taking these leadership skills with me. I can use them to make my family even stronger. I am going to take home a new me. Someone who is more independent, more self-confident, a better reader and writer, more courageous. and someone who knows his dreams and knows how to get there.



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Rock to Ruby

I am one of a kind,
 Out of twelve other
 Flat, gray, rocks
 Shining with the sun and weeping with the rain,
 Only a rock on a green lush hill,
 Glittering with the stars, sometimes wishing I was one of them
 Bitter wind brings me back from my dream
 To my safe, green, lush hill top
 I stay still, as my job as a rock
 Is to be
 Still like an ocean.
 Until the time is right for me to depart
 Rolling and crashing down
 To a trail I've never seen
 Where my long, lonesome journey embarks
 Seeking a new home.
 Rolling and crashing
 I realize
 My journey is unprotected
 Filled with jagged edges, rocks
 Ready to damage me.

Tiny parts of my heart
 Deserted and wrecked
 From my memories of the past,
 Thinking, and acting upon them, only ruining
 My life more, letting go now.
 The breeze will carry them to places remote from me
 Where they will no longer hurt me.
 Two sides of me,
 A defining moment
 Has come to me
 To choose either
 But which one will it be?
 A flat gray rock that only
 Shrieks, damages
 Others with my actions and my words said

To find I'm only hurting myself.

All those times fighting with my mom
 Knowing that she loves my little sister
 And me the same,
 but wanting her
 To show her love more,
 knowing it made her
 Feel terrible watching me sob over this.

Or

A new smooth, red, shiny ruby
 Making my family proud;
 Especially both of my moms, and even my dad.
 Getting phone calls from school
 To let them know how excellent I am doing
 Sharing giggles, sun like smiles
 With crazy things I do
 Camping with them, I did not
 Want to help bring the tent closer,
 So I ran and everyone turned off the lights on me
 and in the pitch dark they hear an "aw that hurts"
 Roaring with laughter, all came to see showing their love
 While making fun of me.

Decision

Take time to think
 I wait again

Decision

The only thing left,
 But it is done knowingly
 It is the most excellent choice ever made;
 one wish granted,
 What might it be?
 I will tell you so
 The flat gray rock is rolling down
 Its own path to be drowned
 With the refreshing clear, clean water
 Flowing from my sunny hill,
 Never again will it be part of me.

Now I move forward

Shining with the sun, transmitting new energy.
 The summer wild wind, blowing gently,
 Guiding me home to show my family the new me,
 An Outstanding red, glittering, smooth ruby
 That will always shine.

Nothing can hurt me,

No one will undo this change, try as they might.
 For every time I will fight back, knowing that
 Because of the past I am strong.
 I might fall far from my hill, but I will find
 My way back to a loving, happy family of my own.
 Looking back I see them,
 They are still here,
 With a promise of being in my future,
 I know

The New ME!

Jennifer Martinez used to be a girl with uncontrollable anger. She used to be a girl that would shout at her dad. A girl, who would back-talk her mom even if she knew she was wrong. One who would never listen to other people's reasons for their actions but who just wanted to feel safe from things that went wrong in her life. I was the girl whose family was afraid to talk to me because I might have a break down and start to shout and hurt myself. I, Jennifer Martinez, used to be the girl that hurt her family by hurting herself and then blaming them for her self-inflicted pain. I used to be the girl who did not know her true self but still expected other to know me. I used to live in the past, never letting go of memories, and not caring for the future.

Now Jennifer Martinez is a girl who knows how to control her anger when people make her upset. She is a girl who regrets shouting at and not appreciating her mom and dad's hard work. She is a girl who has blossomed into a calm and cheerful young lady. She is a girl who has learned to listen to others and tries to understand their point of view. I am now a girl who wakes up at Sagehen every morning at 6 am and goes to sleep at 10 pm, every day of the Adventure, Risk, and Challenge program. I am the girl who is trusted by her ARC family to show them the right way. I am a girl who was chosen to be a Guardian Angel on the final expedition because of my natural leadership abilities. My role was to see the big picture, watch after the group and make sure everyone stayed safe and happy. I am a girl with the voice that other people listen to and follow. I am a girl who is determined to get over any challenges and am a friend who motivates other to do the same. Jennifer Martinez, who looks forward to the future, appreciates the present and lets go of the past.

I am a girl who jumped onto a trapeze high up in the air, missed, but did not get discouraged and jumped again, a girl who made it the second time.

Taking that second jump, I will always remember as one of the most important lessons in my life. The morning began when I opened my eyes and looked all around the space inside of the giant teepee where we had slept the night before. I was ready for the challenges that awaited me that day. I was not scared because I had been on several ropes courses in the past and had done a lot of rappelling with ROTC. In the beginning of the day, we faced the wall, ring of fire, teeter-totter, the balancing line, the tall log high up in the tree, and the flying squirrel. Everyone was trying their best at the challenges and I was not scared during any of them. I was very pleased with myself because if I felt fear trying to creep up on me, I would punch it away and support another person through their fears. Finally Katie, one of our three amazing instructors, told us it was time for the Leap of Faith, which involved jumping to a dangling trapeze that was 25 feet high off the ground. I had never done it before but I told myself it was going to be okay. We walked cheerfully to this next challenge, and looked around the setting to see how hard it was going to be. One at a time, each person in our group climbed the Jeffery Pine tree, to a flat wood board that got thinner at the edge, no larger than a cutting board. Katie had asked us to say what we were jumping for, what goals we had in our lives. When it was my turn, almost everyone had already made it and we had all been supporting each other. I knew that I was next so I stepped out of the line and walked up to the brown Jeffrey Pine, telling myself, "It's all going

to be okay." I started to climb and as I left the ground, I heard a voice in my head say, "This is fun, don't be scared." I reached the top and I held on to the tree with a stubbornness that would not let go. This challenge seemed harder for me. In a few seconds, I heard the familiar voices down below cheering and encouraging me to let go of the tree that I had glued myself to. My ARC family told me "You can do it!" and I did not want to let them down. I remembered that we had promised to take on every challenge and this was a big one for me. I was scared to let go of the tree and the feeling that the tree represented, safety. I inched myself to the edge just as slowly as a snail would have crawled. As I was at the edge staring at the trapeze in front of me, it felt as if time had stopped and it would not move until I jumped. I stood there listening to my ARC family encouraging me and I could feel my body trying to jump. But my mind had wandered off to another place where fear was the only safe way out and I knew that this fear of mine was letting my ARC family down. I remembered that at home I had often let my family down in the past with school and my attitude. I remembered how sad and unworthy I had felt during these moments of their disappointment. There on the platform I had my mind set that today would not be the day when I would let my ARC family down. Hearing all the encouragement that they gave me from their hearts gave me the confidence to push through my fear.

My mind came back to my body, as I set it on reaching the trapeze. I remember what I was jumping for: not to let any obstacles get in the way of my life, and that I will overcome them all and always reach my goals. I bent down a little, getting myself ready to jump like a frog leaping out of the water. I jumped. I could feel my feet leave the wood as I tried to reach for the trapeze, but fear had a hold of me. I held on to the rope and did not reach out for the trapeze. On my way down I could still hear my ARC family telling me that I had done great. I thought I felt rain drops but the day was incredibly sunny and hot, finally I realized that it was my own raindrops that rolled down my cheeks. I felt as though I had let them down. Katie came to me and gave me a hug and told me that it was okay and that losing wasn't about simply missing the trapeze, but rather about not trying at all. I felt a lot better after she told me this and that she was proud that I had tried.

It was a little while until every one had attempted the trapeze. We did not know that Katie had something else in mind and I was ready to leave. Finally she asked if anyone wanted to try again. I felt sad and scared at the same time but I finally spoke the words "I want to try again." Now I was at the top once more and this time I was less scared of falling, and more nervous about letting myself and my ARC family down. This time it felt harder. "What if I fall again?" I thought to myself. But I pushed my fear away. I bent down into my frog position and with all of the courage people had given me, I jumped once more. I did not dare to open my eyes but my hands could feel the carved letters "GO BIG" that I had seen on the trapeze, reminding me that I had done it already. I opened my eyes to see that I had my hands holding tight to trapeze and to hear all of my friends cheering, saying how great I had done. Once we were done with the ropes course, we gathered in a circle where we all made a commitment to the ARC program for the summer. Mine was to help others when they need help and to be a very good friend to everyone. I chose this because my ARC family had been there for me when I needed them so I wanted

to be strong and be there for them when they need me. As a symbol to remind me, I will always wear the commitment bracelet we gave to each other that day.

With the bracelet, I will also always remember how this program and my marvelous ARC family has helped me to learn to control my anger. This summer I have made a commitment to become a calmer, more agreeable person, understanding with everyone and not just thinking about myself. I think this helped me in so many ways. I remember how I was with my family at home, always shouting and having breakdowns. I hurt my family with my careless actions in my upset moments. Afterwards, I would regret my actions, not because of the punishment I was given, but the fact that these actions pushed my family away from me. Even if I tried to change at home, I would always return to the same angry me.

But here at Sagehen this summer, I have changed. I am happy about this change because I know my family will be surprised to see the new me. I have learned to be patient and listen to other's side of the story and come to an agreement. When I find myself not caring for others, I remind myself of when I threw the rock into the icy Lucille lake. The rock represented my anger, burning me with every little thing I dislike. The cold water put out that fire. I think that this change has come to be because I do not feel pressure to be someone I'm not. I can be who I want to be, whenever I want. If I want to be heartrending, joyful, a sweetheart, kindhearted, timid, or talkative at any point of my life, I will not be scared to show any traits that I feel are special whether it is at home or with my friends. I learned not let what others want prevent me from being my true self. Knowing who I am and not letting any thing change me is a great feeling. Back home when I wanted to use one of these traits, I would be who others wanted me to be, holding back my search for whom truly I am. Here I learned that it's okay to fail as long as I try, and that I do not always have to do it perfectly the first time. Here I have no pressure and I am free to be myself.

All the new challenges I did this summer have helped me to learn new writing tools, how to set up camp, and how to be myself. I have become stronger physically, by hiking 11 hours through rocks, bushes, rivers and off trail. I have become stronger mentally, smiling and cheering for others while I was homesick. These experiences have all helped me become a stronger person. I feel that rock climbing, rappelling, river rafting, ropes course challenges, kayaking, and hiking Mount Tallac, Deadwood, Castle, and Basin Peaks have all showed me that if I tell my mind that I can do it, I will be able to do anything. I feel that ARC has changed me in so many ways, all of them for the better, that once I am back home, I will want to do all of the things I learned that I can do. Beth, Colin, and Katie will always be in my heart even after I leave this amazing summer that I have shared with 7 other great teenagers, who became close friends in six weeks, trying to improve themselves like me. Now at home there will be a new me, a fresh new Jennifer Martinez, one who does not give up on any challenge. I am the girl who will help her mom and will respect her and treasure every moment together. I am the girl who is not scared of trying new things or changes. I am the girl who will go help the Boys and Girls Club when I am back home. I am the girl who learned about fire and taught it to fourth and fifth graders and was not shy. I am the girl who knows who she is and will share it with the world. I am the girl that missed her family this summer while learning and having amazing experiences. I am Jennifer Martinez, the one that will never let anything keep me down.

Leaving a Reflection

I am a frozen lake, waiting
to be warmed by the
winter sun.

Melting away as if there was
all the time in the world.

filled by the rain,
waiting for the
changing leaves of the trees
to fall

to the ground
to cover my surface
with their colorful
bright yellow-green.

But still, waiting for next winter
to be the same as
last year.

Trapped inside
with nothing to do
but worry
about what comes next.

I am a frozen lake
expected to be the same,
but yet don't realize
that I'm different every year.
I'm changing like a chameleon
any way I can
without leaving a reflection
of how I really am.
Nobody sees underneath
my surface
to see who I really am.

My family knows me
differently,
with a mood of changing color.

They know me as
a place for
them
dump all of their
problems.

They see me as
a place to hang their heaviness
but

inexchange they change
their minds and
break my
heart

and make me want to hide..

They say I'm way
too clean for them
to play with
so instead they try
to bring me down.



My friends know me
as a person with a happy
life.

Yet, they don't know how
my life these past few years
has gone.

They think I can do anything
and that I have
it easy.

But they don't
know how much
it hurts to see them
destroy their
lives
with cigarettes and
alcohol.

They think they understand what's
hard,
but they don't know
my life is a lake
of rushing water, waiting for change.

I'm scared of revealing
my childhood

I close my eyes
when I remember.

Why would my dad
hurt me for no apparent reason?
Nobody could help me

My life is really hard to live
Sometimes, I wish I could exchange it
for another.

But
I am who I am
and I can't do anything about it
But I can

be myself, love my friends, love my mom, keep going,

Learning to Trust Myself

Imagine Josefina Briviescas mountain climbing, hiking, white water rafting, rock climbing and rappelling. Now imagine that quiet, shy teenage girl climbing up a tree and crossing a log 50 feet above the ground, writing a poem good enough to publish, and swimming in a lake with snow still melting. Imagine her interviewing someone she doesn't really know, sea kayaking across Lake Tahoe, and reading a poem out loud to a group of strangers. Imagine that girl who goes to the library everyday during her summer instead meeting new people and trusting them with personal things. Imagine that girl pushing herself past her comfort zones and rock climbing to the top of a rock wall and back down. Imagine that girl who's afraid of heights climb up a really high mountain with huge cliffs on the sides and not panic. Imagine her saying, "I can do this!" and actually try, and not give up on something that was really hard to do like the Catwalk at the ropes course. That's me: Josefina Briviescas, a 16 year old girl from Truckee, CA. A participant in the Adventure Risk Challenge program at Sagehen Creek.

It was July 4, 2005 and we were in Desolation wilderness. I was the second person to try the rock climb and it was scary but exciting. I wanted a ladder but I didn't say anything. The hardest part was coming down because leaning back made me nervous. But when I got to the bottom, I felt smiley and proud. This summer my first fear that I had to overcome was of heights. I was really excited to try rappelling. Our instructor Katie's husband clipped the carabiner to my harness. He taught us that we had to trust ourselves and how to let ourselves down this huge 50 foot cliff with an overhang. I would never have done this before because I've always been scared of heights and I usually panic. But this time, I felt like trying it and I felt like I could do it. So I sang a song to myself, I looked out to the far away sky blue lake, and then I let a little bit of rope out at a time. I was comfortable even over the big overhang. I learned to trust myself, to relax, and how good it feels to accomplish something this big. At the bottom I looked up and thought, "Oh my Gosh!"

The other challenge that was the hardest for me this summer was at the ropes course at Mount Rose. Jenny and I volunteered to go first on the Catwalk, a log walk up in the trees. From the ground, it looked easy. I felt like going first because I had adrenalin running through me. Once I started to climb, I looked down and everything changed. I wondered, "What am I

doing?" I still get scared thinking about it. I couldn't pay attention. My mind was thinking, "I'm gonna fall, I'm gonna fall, I'm gonna fall". As I turned around to face the tree, my legs wrapped around the log, and when I stood up, they turned to jelly. I looked down. Wrong Thing To Do. I panicked, and couldn't move for what seemed like minutes. When Jenny started to move across the log, I didn't want her to wait for me too long in the middle of the scary part, so like a slug, I started moving across to meet her. We grabbed each other's hands like we wanted to keep each other safe. After we made it across, I learned to trust myself and the ARC family with anything. Most importantly I learned to accept support from others. For a little while, I was not afraid of the huge heights anymore.

I have become stronger this summer. For example, with physical fitness in the morning at 6 am everyday, I can run farther than a mile without stopping. Also hiking up a 9000 foot peak has made me stronger because it has helped me gain more muscle in my legs and helped me lose some of my squishy from my stomach. I still don't like running but I feel healthier than I have ever felt before. Another way that I have become strong is mentally. I have been pushing myself out of my comfort zone even though I used to hate pushing myself so hard. This has helped me do things like climb peaks, read out loud, teach Boys and Girls club kids, be a leader for the group, speak up in meetings, and live away from home for 40 days.

In the past, I always disliked telling people about my personal life for some odd reason. I was also too shy to read out loud to people. Here at the ARC program, I volunteer to read out loud sometimes and I feel more confident. I'm still working on feeling comfortable in front of lots of people. It has also been hard to learn about leadership this summer because I had to be on time and get things done without stressing myself out. I also had to make sure I didn't get distracted because then we would be late to class. Being a leader made me stronger because it taught me that I was good at taking care of people and that I liked it, and that leadership can be fun. Something that comes naturally to me but



I have gotten better at this summer has been giving enough support to everyone in the group when they need it, like when someone is homesick. With writing, I find I can support others editing better than I can edit my own papers. It's kind of weird because people say you have to trust yourself before you can trust someone else,

but I feel that kind of thing has always been the opposite for me. This summer I finally discovered that I can trust myself and encourage myself to push past my fears, teach other people, and create beautiful writing.

Last but not least, I have also grown emotionally. When I chose to talk about what happened in my past with my father in a group meeting, it was the first time I had talked with so many people. It is a really painful issue and it is still hard to talk about. Every time I think about what happened to me as a child it hurts, so I never really told anybody. It has made me shy. Now I feel a little stronger knowing that my ARC family knows a little bit about my life. I still haven't told them everything; some things just take a while. On day two of the course, when I threw my "shyness" into Lake Lucille, I knew I wanted to be more outgoing. This has made me a more of an open person and it makes me think that I'm a step closer to letting the pain go.

My biggest challenges for the summer were not giving up on something right away, trying to trust the people I was going to live with for six weeks, learning that it is good to have support in the group, and that I have to be the one to push myself because no one else is going to do it for me. I am a different Josie than when I first came to this program. I am still me, but I am more of me. I'm more outgoing, I joke around more, I can write better than I used to, and most importantly I can share more of myself. When I go home, I wish to keep these traits with me for the rest of my life. When I get home, I will try hard in school, follow my goals, keep trying new things, help my community, help my own family more, and last but not least always stay positive and shine in everything I do.

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Now I Am Complete

I am a 4 point 2 inspiring earthquake
That moves what doesn't need moving
As I expand,
I change what needs changing,
I force you
To think about what you and only you would miss.

I also may destroy
Or shock you
As I indeed do to myself.
You may be as solid as a rock or as stiff as a tree,
but yet you won't stop me.

After the boom, I might be silent
Becoming my peaceful old self

Now
I am the wind, helpful and wise
With one blink of the eye, you could see through my mind
I flow gracefully through your hair
on the way
I lift leaves that need lifting
I take them on their path
pushing them on their way to their destiny
I push
cause I know what they can become
as I am lifted and pushed by my parents
to be ready for the world.

When I stop blowing and need a break from
the business of the day,
when I have time for me and just me
no lifting no pushing no falling or letting go,
I start thinking.



Now,
I am alone with millions things running through my head
my family and friends
worrying about this and talking about that
but deep below the ground, the problems I stash away are things that
no one
knows,
the things that hide in my closet behind that
apple red door
locked, never to be opened or peeked into.
that apple red door
that I try to forget.

A Flashback of the difficult day
my brother
screaming, yelling and pushing
I was tucked in the corner
I hear my family fighting, my mom weeping
and me, trying to drown the noises away.

Now,
I think of not the worst, but the best
the present, not the past
the things that make me smile and laugh away
the long day.
A positive earthquake with new friends
who I will keep in my heart
as my summer family,
who will change my life completely.



The Leap of Faith

Before I came to the ARC program of 2005, I was like any other kid, depending on my parents when I fell or could not get up. They would always be right there holding on to me, making me feel safe. I was always in my comfort zone where no one could harm me. Here at Sagehen, I have stepped away from the protection of my family. The experiences I here have made me stronger, and now the world can't harm me, because I know anything it throws at me, I am confident, I can handle. The day I found independence was a challenging day at Project Discovery's ropes course. We braved many different elements, like the catwalk, ring of fire, balancing wire, the wall and the flying squirrel. But the last challenge was the one I was most worried about, the Leap of Faith.

I was nervous when Katie told me it was my turn because I knew that this time I would have to brave the challenge by myself. I looked up and saw the tree that reached the sky with a little plank on one side. But I didn't let my fears control me. I took Katie's encouragement with me as I climbed the tree to the plank. Not only did I need to depend on myself, I also had to trust that I could do it. I had a flashback to rappelling in Desolation two weeks before, when Katie held my hand and told me I could do it. I had done it, but I had needed someone there at my side to depend on. This time was different. I had to do this for me, so I started climbing. I had no thought in my mind but my destination, the plank and the trapeze that seemed 100 feet away from my reach. I slowly climbed the ladder and it felt like ages until I got to the top. I stood there and told everyone that I was jumping for my family because they are the most important thing in my life to me. I was not depending on anyone but myself. With no hesitation, I went for that trapeze like it was my family I was reaching for. The old me would have said that I could not do it.

I was wishing and hoping that I would get the bar in between my hands, gripping it like my stuffed animal, back home lying on my bed. I grabbed the trapeze between my hands and opened my eyes; I had done it all by myself, with no one pushing me. The Leap of Faith showed me independence because now I know that I can depend on and trust myself to do the things I want. In that exact moment, I knew I had more confidence in myself. The experience opened my eyes to my new self, a butterfly coming out of my cocoon of safety, spreading my wings, a new beginning for me. I never knew such a simple thing like gripping a trapeze would change my life

forever.

I remember what my mother had told me before I left to come to this program. She said that I would come back changed and that she hoped it was in a good way. That day at the ropes course those words rang in my ears like church bells. I couldn't wait to tell her that I had already gained confidence and trust in myself. At the end of the ropes course day, I made a commitment to myself and to the group. I, Karen Duran, would never let my fears weaken me again. I would never let them stop me from trying new things that were challenging for me. I now, at the end of the course, I have seen myself overcome all the challenges that I experienced this summer things like hiking all day off trail, kayaking lake Tahoe, white water rafting on the American river, and



giving my are friends honest feedback.

Now I wonder about my past of never taking challenges and not liking change. My friends and family always had to and push me into new things. If they weren't right there, making me challenge myself, I wouldn't do it. I notice that now I like change and challenges that push me to my limit. I have changed from a shy bird hiding, to an amazing colorful butterfly, showing off her true colors to everyone. Now I am proud to say that I like change, and see it as a fun opportunity to try new things.

If you ask me the things I have learned in this program, you should have a little time on your hands to listen. This program taught me the

importance of looking at all that surrounds me each and every day, and not taking it for granted. I learned how appreciate the amazing views and the hard work I had to do to find that perfect place to cook. I also learned how to read maps on windy cliffs, using rocks to hold them down and pulling out the compass to point our way. At base camp, I was shy to read my poem in public but I have learned that just trying will give me the confidence I need to feel comfortable in front of an audience. I also learned how to speak from the heart even if people don't want to hear. Once I began to trust my ARC family, I felt comfortable opening up and showing more of myself to them, which is hard for me because at home I am always so shy.

I have learned to appreciate my mother and father and how they encourage me to keep going and to never give up, no matter how big or small the challenge is. Now I appreciate my mom's food, her hard work around the house and her hugs and kisses. I appreciate my dad's great advice, hugs and the long conversations we have. The things in nature I took for granted are great views, and the amazing forests with enormous Jeffrey pines that stand tall enough to reach the sky. Now I spend time looking at the clouds moving from one place to another, expanding and changing.

One important thing that I will take home with me is my new leadership ability. The skills I have learned as a leader are that I need to include everyone's opinion and I need to take care of the group as if it was my family. Being the leader, I also have to speak my mind in an honest and kind way. The leader has the most responsibility and also I learned that it is important to know when to be funny and when to be serious.

Trusting in myself before the 6 week ARC program was hard because if I didn't want to do something, I simply wouldn't. There weren't many challenges in my life that I had to trust myself with. Now that the program is coming to an end, I know believe in myself, and I feel that I can take bigger challenges in my life.

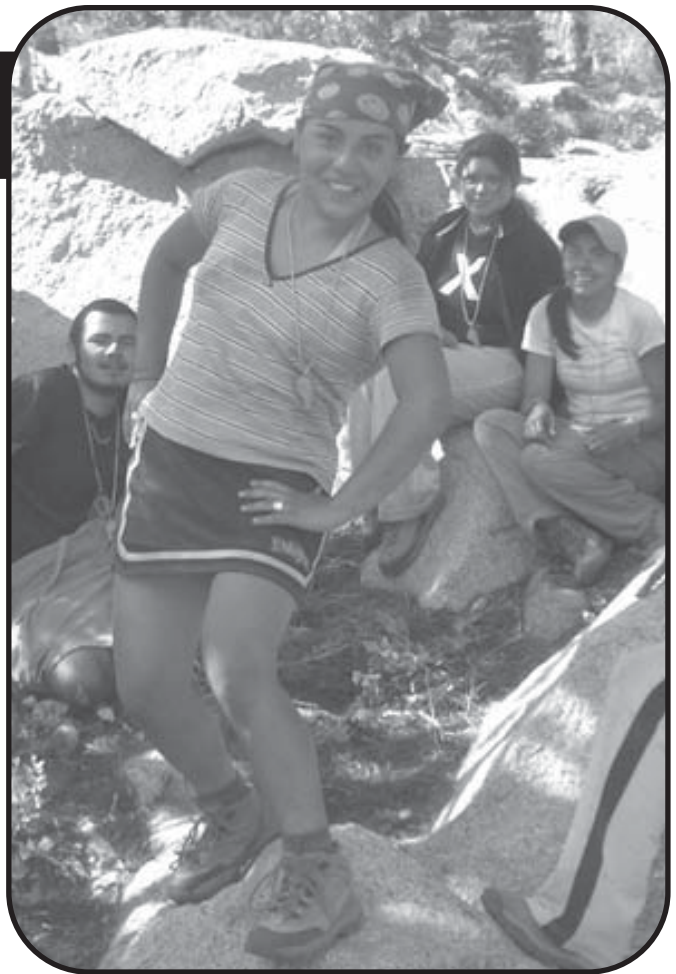
Before I came to the ARC program, I would always try to fit in because it was important to me to be liked by others. Now I realize that I should not change myself to be liked because I am who I am, and I am happy with that person. Once I get home I will tell my family about the amazing adventure I had here at Sagehen. I will help my mother more often because I know how she feels to cook all day and work. I will be myself and no

The Crystalline Granite Rock

I'm a grainy multicolor granite rock,
composed of different minerals, with small pieces of
dark,
shiny white,
and sun orange.
They prove:
my determination,
my compassion,
my intelligence,
and my laughter.
All together they build me bigger and stronger;
they create who I really am.

Sometimes the rain makes me slip
when I'm trying to reach the top
of a humongous, inclined slope.
It hurts,
as a burn
coming through my heart;
however,
I still know
I'm strong.
Nothing,
not even a mighty storm
can force me to split apart;
all my parts will stay united.

At home
I'm a diamond;
a fragile,
crystalline rock
made up just of one piece.
Not able to support
the clouds' powerful weep.



A crystalline rock,
that cannot support,
a fall
from a steep mountain.

I occupy a special place,
with a powerful value.
I'm unusual,
but
I still need
my dark,
my shiny white,
and my orange
to be completed.

Here at Sagehen
I feel
that the granite, and the diamond
were compacted,
making a gigantic explosion.

I feel like a bird,
flying all free
in the clear empty sky.
A bird,
out of the gold cage;
Who sings,
what she truly wants.

My Independence Calls Out

*"Hard things are put in our way not to stop us, but to call out our courage and our strength."
-Unknown*

Picture me: Tania Cabrera, a girl always at home, and really close to her family. Always depending on her mom. Thinking she was strong, but never proving it. Picture me, a girl who watched T.V everyday for four hours. A girl always thinking about the future but mostly not enjoying the present; always trying hard, but never out of the cage, always safe.

But now try to picture me: The "home girl" camping for 8 days in Desolation Wilderness. The girl who depends on her family, 40 days away from home. The girl that relies on her mom, now cooking for herself and others. The girl in the gold cage, leading 20 people, adults and teens, in a group game. The girl who used to be lazy, motivating others to wake up in the morning. The one who was always safe, jumping to catch a trapeze. Picture the new me, the new Tania Cabrera.

This last spring, when I heard about ARC- the Summer Leadership and Literacy program, I said to myself with an encouraging voice "This summer is not going to be the same." I wanted to try something new, try to do something different. "I can do this, I'm not scared," I kept telling myself knowing that in my inside I was afraid; afraid to leave home and terrified to not see my mom for 40 long and intense days. Although, with all these things running through my mind, I took the risk and I decided not to quit.

I wanted to meet new people, to learn more English, and to have an extraordinary experience: hiking, rock climbing, rappelling, rafting and kayaking. Now that I have done all of these things I see that they were challenging. The one that truly shook my spirit was the Ropes Course. That day I was exposed to big challenges, one of them the Leap of Faith. When we got underneath it, Katie told us what we needed to do. We had to climb a tree, 40 feet above the ground, to stand on a little piece of wood almost the size of two of my feet. I needed to stand at the edge of the piece of wood and jump to grab a trapeze that seemed 7 feet away from me. When I was going to jump for the trapeze, I was really scared, and I almost said that I couldn't do it. I told the group that I was jumping for my family and my love for them. My motivation was so big and strong that it erased the thought in my mind saying "The trapeze is too far." The motivation was so strong that it occupied my full attention, and it didn't leave any space in my mind to think about the

heights and how far away the trapeze was. My determination, my motivation, and my eyes looking directly at the trapeze gave me the strength to try it. I jumped and at the end my mission was successfully completed; I grabbed the trapeze. For my family, for me!! I realize that my struggle about missing my mom and not having her support is just like the challenge of the trapeze. I know my mom will not always be there to help me, but I have discovered that if I encourage myself to do something that seems really hard, I can do it. I can do even more with the push of myself. The ropes course made me "call out" my own courage and strength, just like the quote says. I reached out and caught the trapeze, full of pride and confidence. This moment will stay in my memory forever. It is the day that changed me, the day I learned how to be independent and do things by myself.

Now after these six weeks, I have discovered that I have grown physically and mentally. My mind has changed in many ways; it's totally transformed. My mind is like a bird's mind, trying everyday to keep flying and still going higher and higher. Now I expect to do things by myself, don't wait until somebody comes to help me, and remember to do things for others. I have learned how to manipulate my fears when I need them to go away, how to concentrate on what I'm doing and still have fun at the same time. I have learned how to control my feelings, for example, to cry when I need to, to tell my body that I'm not tired and to tell my mind that I can do more when I am running or hiking. This helps me to not feel the pain that can come between me and fun hard experience. Also this summer, the experience of being a leader has made me more responsible and more mature. I have tried to be a good example and to keep everyone happy. Leadership is difficult but with practice, I have learned not only to be independent, but how to motivate other people.

I think when a person's mind changes their body changes too. Maybe not as much as their mind,

but they might feel the difference. I feel the difference. My pants fall every time I walk, and my shirts are loose. I feel that I can do more things faster and easier than before. I have more balance and my energy has increase by the passing of the weeks. I think that this change is a reminder of how much I've changed this summer.

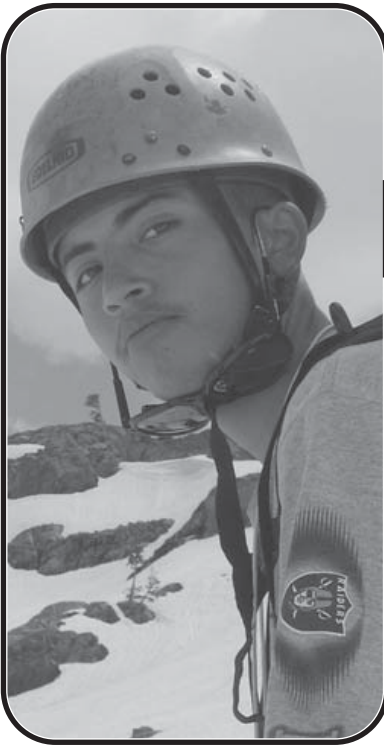
A weakness that I used to have at home was my laziness. When I was at home I mostly did nothing, sitting on my couch and watching TV or doing homework. During the weekends I would wake up at 11:00am, do my chores slowly and messy and only do them until I wanted to finished. I was almost never outside, too lazy to walk to the store. Right now laziness is not a word in my vocabulary anymore. I realize that being lazy just keeps me away from doing fun stuff. I have changed and I hope that the big thick wall called laziness cannot block the way of my new active life.

Before coming to this program, I saw life differently. Now being here, in the ARC program help me realize that life is harder than what I thought. I knew it was hard, but I had never experienced a really hard moment. Here I have lived the beginning of real life; looking at the difficulties coming directly at me without having my parents here to solve them for me. It's just me to solve the problems on my own. Just me, trying to climb a mountain, careful not to fall. I learned how to appreciate all I have, living and enjoying every second of my life, and loving every minute with my family and friends.

Now picture the new Tania Cabrera, the one who learns how to overcome her problems on her own. The one who now is able to organize a whole meal for 14 people without difficulties. A girl who can teach a group of 4th and 5th graders a whole science class. The one who can lead 7 back packers into the wilderness with a map dangling around her neck.

Then picture me at the end of the summer at home, showing my own independence and leadership abilities, solving my problems on my own, and helping others with theirs. I am the one who can run seven miles without stopping, and who is no longer lazy to go and explore the world. I'm now a girl who will reach her dream to be the first in her family to go to college. Picture





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I Was Born to Live

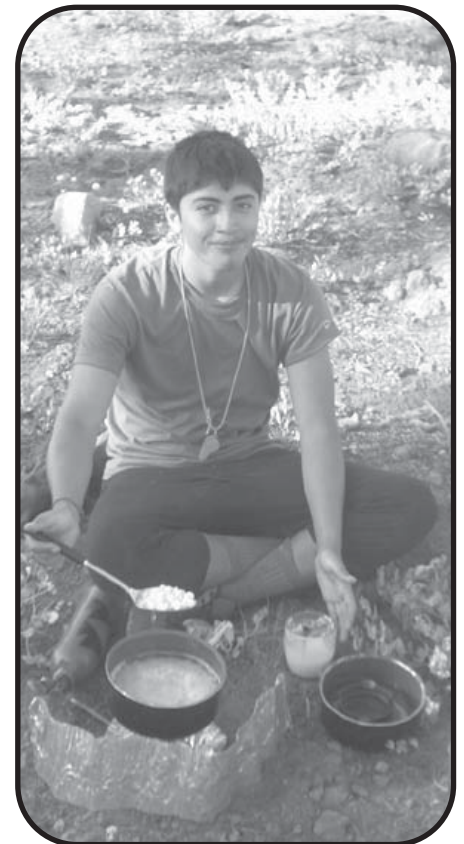
I am a mountain Lion,
 Waking up every time
 The bright yellow sun rises
 Ready to learn new things,
 Ready to start a new smooth day,
 And ready to be the same as yesterday.

Pouncing and pushing myself at my own risk.
 But with my strength I'll sprint the whole world
 to show this challenging land what I can do.
 Being careful as a mother giving birth
 I will take care of my life and
 Tip toe where ever I go (Responsibility).

I am quiet and fast like a lightning strike spreading
 out.
 Strong and alert like the lion king
 With my eyes wide open as a bald eagle looking for
 food
 When I move, I move
 I'll teach you what I know
 With my stealthy strength,
 My compassion

I am a mountain Lion.
 Challenges I'll wipe out,
 to be victorious in life.
 As my family is there for me
 I will hold them in my heart and never
 Let go.

Sometimes, I am lazy, lying in the shadow shade,
 Still, all my strength is waiting to strike again.
 A lazy day won't stop me.
 I can keep up with many days like these.
 As strong as I am now,
 roaring what I know.
 Talking heavy
 so all can hear and be surprised.
 I might be as wrong as you,
 But when you hear me, you will listen,
 open wide.
 I am quiet as nature can be at night,
 free like a bee
 with positive energy, a rock climber
 at Eagle Lake
 with determination and style.
 In Desolation,
 I am strong and sneaky,
 ready to discover this beautiful, big, enormous world.
 No one might see what I can see
 What I am doing or what I have done.
 I might die or live
 in this gigantic world.
 But I will take a risk
 and prove my own self.



Learning about Tad Kitada

I learned from Tad not to give up; he keeps going even though he had hard times in his life. I also know that there is a lot of racism everywhere. He gave me some good advice. Don't ever loose your dreams, be positive, finish high school, hold your dreams so you won't loose them, and make baby steps for you can accomplish anything.....

After my inspiring talk with Tad, I truly believe I will accomplish anything that I want to do.

Treasures to Remember

My feet were shaking and were stuck in one place, shaking like two trees tumbled by an earthquake, landing like a big rock in the middle of my path. My stomach felt empty, filled with fear, holding everything below my ribs. Each time the wind blew my arms trembled each as if they were not mine. I couldn't feel the rest of my body, I was stuck in shock. I could only think about getting down. Eventually I started making little steps as if I was a little baby that needed help. I had already climbed a fifty foot tree with my friend Izzy up to where a log was waiting for me to cross. I felt tons of pressure on me. Resting each moment and taking big deep breaths when I had the chance, I looked down and felt how high I already was. I listened to my ARC family cheering me on, thinking deep inside my mind "they must think this is easy" My fear didn't want me to hear them; I just wanted them to be quiet and leave me alone.

Minutes later I stood facing the log with my fear darkly whispering to me and my nerves pulling me down. I had to walk across a two foot wide log fifty feet up in the air from one tree to another tree. The wind was blowing harder as I started inching my way with no balance and my entire body shaking. I was focusing on every single little step I made, and thinking "What if I fall? What if I don't see my family again? What can I do? Should I keep going?"

"Yes!" my feet were telling me.

"No," my dark mind and my belly said, but I had to choose yes.

Every single step meant everything to me. Each step meant my life, my confidence, and trying not to let myself down. Finally, confidence defeated the fear in me. I had reached the other end and was ready to be lowered down. I looked around, smiling about what I had just done and realized that my ARC family had been there for me since the beginning by telling me, "You can do it!" At first I didn't want them to cheer me on, but when I was at the bottom, I realized that they were doing it for me. Their cheers gave me the confidence I needed and courage which I did not know at that time would help me throughout the course. Now I have the ability to encourage myself.

That day I discovered that the Adventure Risk and Challenge program 2005 has taught me a lot of things. What I have learned about myself is that if I don't try, I don't have the chance to prove what I can do. Being afraid of trying is just what can happen in life, but it won't let you achieve your dreams. I have confidence after finishing with this intense program. Now I can say "I won't fall." I have been given opportunities to trust other people no matter who they are, and now I can see them as my friends. My

confidence defeated my fear of heights by walking on the impossible log. The taste of success tastes like my favorite food, my Mom's enchiladas. I taste fulfillment and happiness. I have done just what I wanted to do, push myself to the limits.

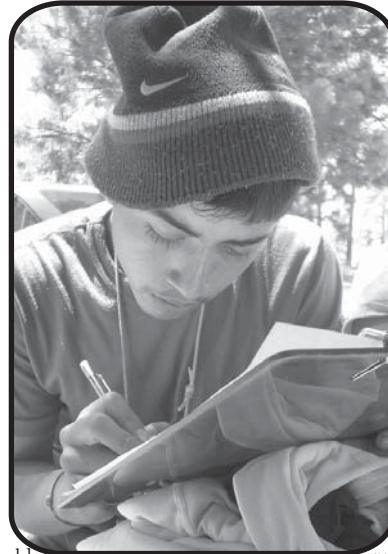
To not be shy and speak out about what I have learned is one of my biggest challenges. For example, the poem "I Was Born To Live" that I wrote and read aloud to others was an obstacle for me. I feared being the center of attention and felt like the ARC students wouldn't like my poem, and they would judge me. I tried anyway, and the act of trying helped me realize that it wasn't as hard as I thought. The group's positive feedback gave me the courage to say I shouldn't be shy to read my poems aloud. Again, encouragement gave me the confidence to defeat my fear.

Another thing I have discovered about myself because of our daily runs is that I am physically strong. Hiking in Desolation Wilderness and not getting tired while the rest of the group was not feeling well, and carrying a 40+ pound backpack up a steep hill over snow, I felt proud. As I watched myself climb over boulders, scramble up big, steep slopes, looking for a trail so that the rest of the group could travel on safely, I knew I loved this. I enjoyed hiking because I knew what to do.

Back home, I remember sitting in science class struggling while my friends helped me out with difficult and frustrating information, believing the entire time "I can't do this alone." Sitting in a chair and watching the teacher talk about electrons and neutrons made my frustration with science worse. However, this summer, being in the forests measuring trees with tape measurers and researching fire for a science project, I saw myself succeed in science for the first time. My fears with science slipped away after I saw the poster I had worked so hard to create, and I felt confident in my ability to learn in science. I realized that science was interesting to me because I was able to let go of that fear once again.

As my friends encourage me, my family does too. Being away from them so long is making me think about them and miss them a lot. I can see what my family wants for me and what they believe is best for me and them. My parents are always looking out for me by wanting me to succeed at everything I set out to do. They work almost every day with my success in mind, and give me great advice by telling me "Si se

puede! Solamente has lo mejor que puedas, no te des por vencido." My family believes that some day I will accomplish my goals, and they don't want me to have to work as hard as they have. They encourage me to be the best I can at school and warn me against hanging around with bad people. My parents tell me to be determined at everything I do and that I should accomplish my dream of being a designer or an architect. Now I see how hard it is for them to take care of me, I see them struggle. My brothers encourage me just as much, and even though we may fight and argue we are a strong family that encourages one another.



When I talked to my family about the program, they urged me to go if I felt like it was the best thing for me. Even though it is hard for me to be away from them, we all know that this is the opportunity to start the things I want to achieve. With ARC I can become strong and confident enough to achieve my and my family's dreams. When I go home, I am going to apply everything I learned in this program. When a difficulty comes my way, like it did so many times during the ARC

program, I will remember how well I overcame that feeling of "I can't". Rappelling, walking on the log high up in the air; and reading my poem aloud were all difficulties I faced and overcame this summer. Now I have the confidence to push through difficulty and try my best. I will remember how much I missed my family and the promise I made to myself to appreciate them more once I am home. I will be more open to talking with them about my problems, help them with chores at the house, and work as hard at home as I did in the ARC program.

Now, if I went back to that same log at the ropes course, standing on the log I would walk it like it wasn't any trouble. Now, this log would probably seem as enjoyable as hiking through Desolation Wilderness. I won't forget I was scared, but if I had the chance to try it once again I know it would take me less effort. My fear of heights is not with me anymore, and my shyness and frustration with science are almost gone. My feet ain't shaking anymore and my body remains strong. If you could see me on the log now, you would see my legs moving like a mountain lion, with confidence, strength, determination, style and compassion. My eyes remain focused to reach my goals, and I can face any problems that come my way, now that I have control of my fears.

SUMMER AT SAGEHEN RESERVE TRANSFORMS TEENS THROUGH PROGRAM OF ADVENTURE • RISK • CHALLENGE

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Few teenagers willingly get up at 6:15 each morning to exercise and go for a run. But that's exactly what eight teenagers were doing on an early August morning at the NRS's Sagehen Creek Field Station in the high Sierras north of Truckee. And while we might have expected to hear prolonged groans and complaints, in fact the cool morning air carried giggles and laughter through the trees. Even by the end of the run, this group of kids glowed with accomplishment and self-confidence. At the program's start, they ran two miles; by its end, they covered seven.

This is ARC - Adventure o Risk o Challenge - an intensive six-week program that combines outdoor adventures and leadership activities with English and science classes. The program serves eight to ten, incoming 10th- and 11th-grade students whose first language is Spanish, and who are potential leaders in their communities, actively seeking new challenges and opportunities to improve their English skills. In its first two years, ARC has demonstrated to be effective in improving the students' language skills, while also building self-confidence, leadership, and environmental awareness.

ARC is the brainchild of Katie Fesus, a dynamic, thirtyish woman whose dedication to teaching is as intense as her blue eyes. "Our focus is on kids on the cusp," she explains. "Some might not be able to graduate high school because they can't pass the English proficiency test. Others have tremendous drive to excel, but still are struggling. A main strength of the program is that there are not many such intensive programs - and none locally - for motivated students to study and improve their English during the summer." An avid rock climber and backpacker, and an Outward Bound instructor since 1992, Fesus developed her educational vision while working on her master's degree at Stanford University in Palo Alto. At the time, she heard about a New York City Outward Bound

program that took inner-city students into the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York for outdoor education combined with academic study. These Outward Bound students raised their English proficiency by one to two grade levels. Not a bad way to spend their summer vacations.

These results confirmed many of the ideas that Fesus held. After she received her teaching credential from Mills College in Oakland and taught in San Francisco Bay Area schools for two years, she traveled to the East Coast to work

two-year plan for getting her program off the ground. She would spend the first year planting the seeds: designing the curriculum, identifying potential funding sources, making contacts with local educators, and getting to know prospective students. Then she would pull everything together in the second year and launch the program.

Fesus knew one of her biggest challenges would be finding a facility where she could house the students. "You can take the kids into the backcountry for adventures and leadership," she explains, "but they need to have a place to come back to for the academics. You can't do the whole program in the backcountry. The students can't focus. They're not comfortable. They need to take a shower and eat a good meal."

A friend suggested that Fesus talk with Jeff Brown, energetic manager of the NRS's Sagehen Creek Field Station, administered through UC Berkeley. After one conversation with Brown, Fesus found herself with both a base camp and an accelerated one-year schedule. Brown recalls his decision to support the ARC program with Sagehen's resources as a "no-brainer." He explains: "One of the things Beth Burnside [UC Berkeley's Vice Chancellor for Research] told me when I took this job is that we need to find ways to keep young students

interested in science. So, when someone like Katie, who obviously has the energy and drive and skills to make it happen, drops a program like this in your lap ... from a selfish perspective, this place had a whole lot to gain from what she was offering."

And Sagehen Creek Field Station had a lot to offer ARC as well. First, there were the facilities, from the computer lab where the kids could work on their writing projects, to a kitchen, showers, and a laundry. Second, there was the commitment of Brown and Sagehen's assistant manager, Faerthen Felix. Both Brown and Felix



**Climing these mountains
Is teaching me
That every difficult obstacle can be overcome
if I believe in myself**

- Israel Carrillo

for the same New York City Outward Bound program that had impressed her while she was a student at Stanford. A year later, in late 2003, she returned to California, determined to establish a similar program back home.

Of the many places that Fesus has lived and worked - including not only coastal California and New York, but also Colorado, Montana, and Texas - Lake Tahoe is her all-out favorite, and she sensed it would be the right place to make her life's contribution. When she arrived in the area, therefore, she began at once to develop a



I am a girl who jumped onto a trapeze high up in the air, missed but did not get discouraged, and jumped again - a girl who made it the second time.

- Jennifer Martinez

can do it. During the trip, they set up their group culture, so when it's over and they come back to base camp, everything seems bright and new - the showers especially!"

are experienced wilderness guides who love taking challenges head-on. For example, after ARC's first year at Sagehen, they decided the program should have its own dedicated "campus" at the reserve - so they built one, installing temporary tent platforms, complete with bunk beds, near an isolated cabin.

After her conversation with Brown, Fesus had to move fast: raising \$40,000 from local businesses and foundations, hiring staff, recruiting students, and organizing the outdoor activities. "We were both naive about how much it takes to pull something like this off," Brown admits. But they did it. Nine students from local school districts took part in the program that first summer. Katie and one other teacher, Victor Inera, handled both the classroom instruction and the adventure activities. Brown recalls the results were worth the effort: "The first year's success was dramatic. Watching the kids change and grow was inspiring."

Fesus also calls attention to the fact that the students' post-program, English-proficiency test scores improved significantly - by 10 to 18 points out of a possible 100. She continued to meet with the students throughout the next school year to monitor their progress. Four out of five students who were eligible to take a proficiency test did in fact pass it.

The Program

This year Fesus and two teachers, Beth Gross and Colin Carpenter, worked with eight students from both the Tahoe area and Petaluma. Once again, the program presented formidable challenges, both physical and academic. It began with an eight-day backpacking trip into the Desolation Wilderness. "That sets the tone," Fesus explains in her matter-of-fact way. "Eight days is no problem. I can guide the kids, no matter what their experience (most have none). They

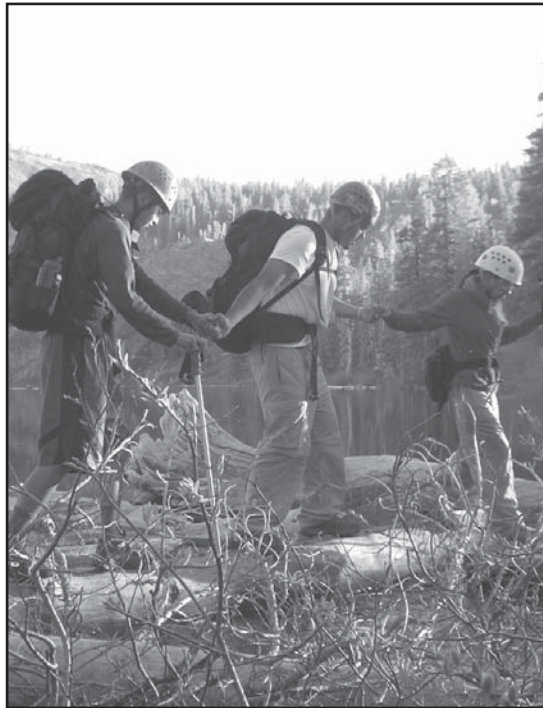
During this trip, the students took their first steps on a steady journey towards self-reliance. In addition to learning backcountry camping skills, they began to take on group tasks. Each evening each student got a new assignment. One day a student might be the "Top Banana," making sure the group stays on schedule and on task. The next day, that same teenager could be "House Mouse," leading the camp clean-up and making sure no gear is left behind. Other jobs included the "Great Eye" (handling the compass and maps), the "Prolific Pen" (journal keeper), and "Kitchen Wallah" (preparing meals). The names were fanciful, but the kids took their responsibilities seriously, because they knew the group depended on them.

Tone-setting continued during the first stay at Base Camp. Each day started with an early morning run; camp chores continued to rotate among the students. Fesus refuses to be amazed by the students' unflagging enthusiasm. "They love the exercise," she states plainly. "It's a tangible goal. Many of them have never run, but it gets easier quickly. They're doing 20 minutes now, but soon they'll be doing 35. It's a goal they can set and achieve."

Right after breakfast, English instruction began with "Grammar Blast," an hour focused on spelling, grammar, and common mistakes that

trip up English-language learners. A two-hour writing class took up the rest of the morning. After lunch, the students read aloud from the now-classic fantasy by Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, a novel Fesus selected for its imaginative content and sophisticated wordplay. Oral reading was followed by a science class that continued until the time came for dinner preparations, which the students helped with. After their meal, when the dishes have been washed and put away, the students got a bit of free time to themselves, as individuals, before they met again, as a group, at seven o'clock. During that group meeting, they reviewed the day, shared concerns and accomplishments, handed out daily awards and job assignments, and talked about upcoming events. By 10:15 p.m., everyone was in bed.

The weeks were filled with a wide range of adventures - rock climbing, a three-day kayaking and camping trip on Lake Tahoe, whitewater rafting on the American River, a day-long ROPES course, a second backpacking trip that included the option of a 24-hour solo camp-out, and a final off-trail peak ascent. On each succeeding trip, the students took on



more and more responsibility for their own experiences. By the program's conclusion, they handled their own logistics and hiked on their own - finding and keeping to the trail, selecting campsites, preparing meals - while their teachers followed at a distance.

Just as these outdoor activities were planned and scheduled to gradually teach leadership and survival skills, the complementary academics built step-by-step to a cumulative event that carried the students far beyond what they had thought was possible. The science program, for example, began with a simple research project - this year's topic was forest health. The students produced bilingual posters, which were installed at intervals along an interpretive trail (and Brown plans to make these trails a permanent feature of the reserve). The students then hosted a visit from local Boys and Girls Clubs, at which time they

The English program built in a similar way. The first assignment began on their startup, eight-day trip into Desolation Wilderness, where teachers encouraged the students to observe nature. "It's great," Fesus says. "Almost before they know it, they're writing poetry about the things they're seeing. And they're proud of their poems, so this gives them confidence as they move into the next assignment."

The next writing assignment was more complex: each student interviewed an adult about his or her life experiences and wrote a narrative biography. Their final assignment was a self-reflective essay on how the program has changed them. "Kids like writing about themselves," Fesus explains. "They use all the descriptive writing techniques they learned from the first assignment, the organizational structure they learned from the second assignment, and the self-reflection they've used in the journals they keep, and tie it all together in their final testimonial. It's exciting. The kids are invested in every writing piece, and they have a lot to write about, so they care about it, and what they write actually expands what they've learned." The students also read much of their work aloud, first to each other and then, as their confidence grew, to the public and to their families at graduation. All their poems and testimonials are published in a final ARC publication.

Most outsiders don't immediately see a connection between outdoor education and English proficiency. For Fesus, it's obvious. Although most outdoor education classes include a verbal debriefing about what participants have learned, such lessons can soon be forgotten. By encouraging students to write about their experiences, however, ARC presses the learning to a deeper level. As Fesus explains: "It pushes their thinking, because we ask them how the lesson might apply when they get back to school. And once they write it down and we publish it, it becomes more than just something they said. It becomes something they're going to make true. That's where literacy and adventure education really link."

The program's tight group dynamics are another reason for its success. "English teachers often try to create a peer feedback community in the classroom," Fesus continues. "With ARC, all the adventures and leadership curriculum create that peer feedback. The students learn how to give feedback every night. It becomes part of their culture. So when we start doing poetry readings, the kids trust each other. They're taking risks in terms of what they say to each other. They're already set up to make that an effective part of learning."

As the weeks pass, Fesus and the other teachers observe the students closely. "We look for the spark in each of their eyes and the moment they push themselves beyond their comfort level, whether it's in a writing assignment, or on the ropes course, or on a sea kayak - and we've seen every student do that. I think that's why they all leave so much stronger. They're all taking risks. They're all pushing through fear. They're all committed to transformation and growth."

Today ARC is supported largely by the vision and energy of Fesus, Brown, and a small group of volunteers. All the support staff are volunteers. The teaching staff is temporary. The funding is year to year. Fesus must be planner, fundraiser, teacher, backcountry guide, and administrator. But she's determined to build on the program's two years of initial success and secure more funding, sufficient teaching and support staff, and stronger links with Spanish-speaking communities in Northern California. Fesus sees the connection with the Sagehen Creek Field Station and the University as a major step in this process, because the association between this NRS reserve and ARC "opens a million more doors in terms of where we can take these resources and ideas, and ways to support staff. For the students, having [the name of] UC Berkeley on their high school transcripts can really help them when they want to go to college. The model is structurally sound. It's designed to make an impact on kids, so now we can look at expanding it to other NRS reserves, or adapting it to different populations or different cultural groups. There's tons of potential." - Jerry Booth



> Uj]Yf'9gd]bcnU

My Soul

I am a river
Conceived by snow and sun rays
I can be a clear calm stream
Or a roaming, rough, white waterfall
I am a river
Illuminating your way
A wild river
Surging, searching where I belong.

I am a river
Who doesn't know what's going on?
Why is this happening
To me?
Why can't I just be free?

When I'm at home
I am alone
A tree
Just there, where
Nobody notices me.
I am a tree
When the wind blows,
He
Is not there to comfort me
I am dry,
My leaves cracking constantly,
Dying - can't you see?
But I decided I don't need
Your water
To give life to me

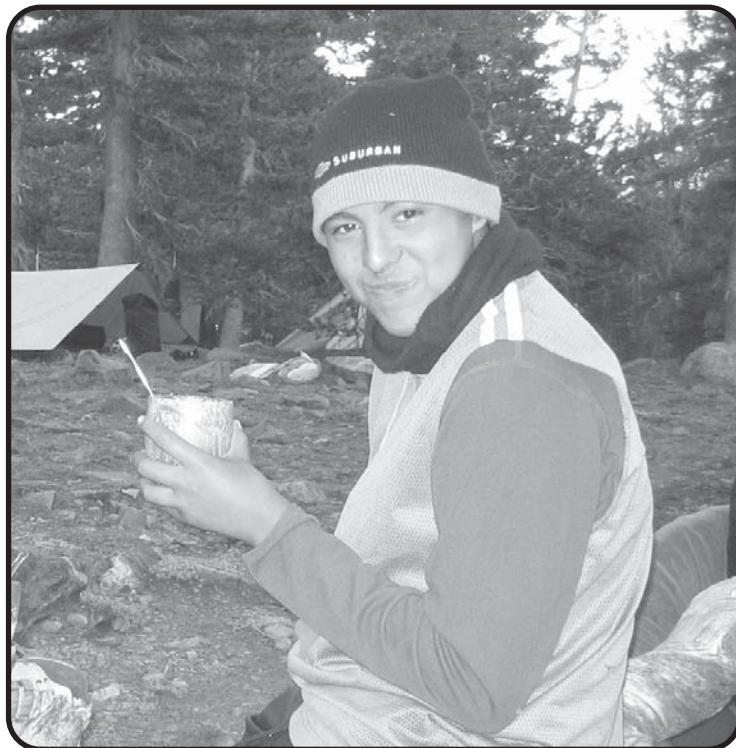
Here, in Desolation Wilderness
I am a river, hearing the
Wind's howl.
Cascading over rocks,
Negative energy shoots out of me
Sometimes, I want to quit.
The birds are mocking me
My anger is controlling me
My blood pumps so rapidly.

Now that it's all over
Can't you see?
Now I have friends to comfort me
Our friendship will grow
As thick and thin
Our bond is growing strong
Like a lion heart

I am still here
Working on my positive energy
The wind is talking to me.
I have compassion deep and full in me
My soul is happy.

Now I see, there are other
Rivers, streams, rocks, to help me
Be free
Now I am cascading
Into a wonderful crystal blue lake.

This makes me want to be a river
Restful to people
Without any doubt
Sure to get where I'm going,
And I won't want to go anywhere else.



Learning about Margarita de Nevarez

I really loved interviewing Margarita she made me laugh and it helped me talk to her about some personal things. She is a very sweet lady with a sense of humor I had a lot of fun with her. I was so sad that she had to leave after lunch, but I loved the advise she gave me at the end of our interview which was " Always reach for the moon so you can touch the stars."

- Josie Briviescas

Learning about Suzy Cordero

To conclude, she said something truly wise: that life is a hard race with big obstacles. She looked me in the eye and pointed "It's going to come all from you." I learned that all the strength that I'll need in life is already inside of me. But I also know I'll always have the support of my family and friends..... During the interview I felt like I was in another place, almost like flying.

- Tania Cabrera



Agradeciendo a Todos los Padres

Padres duenos de nuestro nacer.

Desde que sus dos almas se juntaron a crear una nueva persona que somos nosotros sus hijos por vida.

Alver nuestra cara nos dieron el nombre de la vida.

Supieron que hacer y como cuidarnos.

Al empezar a caminar estuvieron apollandonos con sus manos de amor sincero.

Al empezar hablar estuvieron con nosotros y tuvieron paciencia.

Nos han mantenido desde el nacer.

El primer día sin su amor conociendo nuevas caras, ustedes nuestros padres estuvieron con nosotros y nos caminaron al mundo del conocer.

Estamos creciendo y todavia nos estan apollando y nunca nos desapartaremos de ustedes porque ustedes son nuestro vivir.

Al hablarles de este programa ustedes nos apollaron como lo ha hecho desde el principio de nustras vidas.

Les agradecemos que nos soportan toda nuestra vida y haciendo nuestra vida como es ahorita, llena de alegria, y con ganas de conocer.

Siempre pensaremos en ustedes y nunca nos alejaremos de ustedes.

*~ Presented to the parents of all of the ARC students
by Yoshio Del Villar
ARC Graduation Ceremony, August 2005*



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You have all helped to build a brighter future for the English Language Learner students in the Lake Tahoe Community and beyond.