



University of California, Santa Barbara

ADVENTURE, RISK, CHALLENGE
A Summer Leadership and Literacy Program

2007



Writings of
The Shizzle Masters

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Fragile Beauty

I am a lily flower
from the mountains.
Fragile like a petal
when my parents disapprove
of my needs.
Strong like wind
when I receive good grades at school.
Weak like a branch on a tree
when my friends hurt my feelings.

Time is moving fast
no slowing down,
gusts of wind
falling water,
my teenage school days.

Life is short,
an alpine flower,
summer days.

Enjoy
the small and the big
wide rivers,
droopy Bluebells,
the burning rays of the sun,
the slimy macro-invertebrates.

I dance
to the breeze of the wind,
flow smoothly like a long winding river
playing with friends into the lovely sea.

My family always giving love,
protecting me
with their sun rays
covering me with energy,
looking after me,
taking away all the clouds
on my unpredictable path
fulfilling my growth
to success and happiness.

I need my family,
like I need
water,
food and love.
When I receive love,
I return it like photosynthesis
released from my petals.
When you talk to my petals with grace,
I return it like oxygen released in the air.

Ilse Bautista





True Reflection of Me

Before coming to ARC I was really excited and anxious. When time was getting closer and closer I thought to myself, "Do I really want to go and leave my family and friends?" Then I came to the conclusion that I would go to ARC, because my mom said it was going to be beneficial for my future. That was the hardest decision I had to make, in my young life. I knew this was going to help me be more independent and have more knowledge in English and Science. That's why I decided to join ARC.

Between being lazy at home and experiencing a total different idea in life, coming to the program was the right choice; I had challenge of leaving my family when I joined ARC. They're worth more than anything I possess; they're like a treasure to me. In ARC I didn't have them as a resource to talk to or depend on for help. I especially missed my five brothers, who helped me when my dad wasn't there. They are the ones that feed me, buy me clothes, and most importantly, they are the ones that support me in what I do. I also miss my mom who always worries for our safety. She makes sure we eat well, she prays for us, and she checks in often.

Even though I miss my family, I regret not appreciating all the nice favors they did for me, because after I came to the program, I realized how much I appreciate them and the things they have offered me. I feel terrible for the awful words I said to my mom and brothers before I came to ARC. I noticed that I had said something wrong, because of their facial expressions. That was an error that I made, because they didn't deserved those words. I hurt to not have the chance to tell my mom and brothers that I was sorry. My heart was a broken mirror: scattered, reflecting on my emotions. Over the course of 40 days, my heart is returning to its place. Now I can see the reflection of the true me: clear, with scars to be healed. I learned to think before I speak to adults. When I return I will tell them, "I love you for every thing you had done for me; sorry for the mistakes I made."

Although learned that life isn't always easy without family, I developed new skills with ARC: such as hiking, rock climbing, sea kayaking, ropes course, and surfing. I grew stronger and more confident every time I faced up to a new challenge. Each time I tried hard and risked challenges, I was afraid to fail because the adventures seemed too complicated for me. I said to myself, "Don't give up..." and I never did. I always had my family in my mind. The image of them helped me continue all the way. I had my friends by my side cheering me on, congratulating me after I finished my challenges. Each time I ended the tasks I felt relief and pride. I had a sensation like I was on a top of a mountain after I hiking or climbing it. That is the best feeling anyone can get. You feel like you rule the world, and that nothing can stop you from reaching the top.

I became stronger physically, especially from hiking and running. These activities at first were very frightening for me. I never hiked before, and I was never a fast runner. But when I practiced every day, I became stronger and stronger; I wanted to do this for myself and for my family. Now, I know I can run five miles, hike long distances, climb, kayak, and surf. I also know I can survive camping alone, and jumping from a high platform. I can take on any new challenges as if they are nothing because I believe in myself and I know nothing can suppress me.

After each challenge, I became mentally stronger. For example, when we had to write an essay about our interviewees and science project, I thought I wouldn't be able to complete them because I never had to do such big projects at school. I'm proud I learned more writing skills and ways to protect the environment. At school it was hard for me to focus on the boring classes that seemed to last forever. I felt trapped like if I was in jail, not knowing how to escape. I was transfixed in my own world. Since I came to ARC, my focus and concentration has changed, I realized that having knowledge is very important for your future. I'm going to use the skills I learned in ARC as a technique to prove to those who doubted me. I can show them that I'm not afraid to do anything; that I'm always ready to attempt something new. They can see how I transformed to be a brand new person, stronger and confident.

From now on, I will follow the correct trail, try not to stumble along a rocky way, but if I trip over rocks from the trail, I can push myself right up. I won't give up pursuing my dream to be the first one from my family to go to college. Money, race, or religion won't impede me from going to college; to help the elderly and people with special needs is what I want to do. I will continue until the very end to fulfill my dreams and objectives in my precious life.

Ana Flores

Journey Through Time

I am a mountain peak,
melting snow,
where nothing can stop me from falling,
submerged in the sky

deep into a new world of a mind shaft,
where you reach the cold depth
you feel the dry, dusty anxiety
all over my body
miners digging into my soul
to find all the gold, the minerals, they need

make me feel powerless
when everyone is telling me what to do,
I only have so much to offer them.

I try to be true to myself,
to show my sense of touch and values,
to let people know I care
how I'm going to live my life.

This can be fiercely hard,
like the granite that has built me,
but I know that I can accomplish many things
that leads me to the utmost point
of success, to grab the universe and say,
"I am powerful."
It's like creating a thunderstorm,
with my bare hands

to believe in myself can be severely hard,
but I know I will see
a group of bald eagles, my family,
leading, supporting me, as they soar above.
I am strong and can be independent,
I know what I'm capable of doing:
conquering fears of heights,
expanding my horizons,
filling my rivers with water of knowledge
flowing into my destination, college.

All I ask is not to see me
like a snowy mountain:
cold, lonely, white, a broken ridge,
I am not a joker, I am serious.
But see me as a spring mountain:
caring, lovable, thoughtful,
and a willing mountain
that knows what I am doing,
warm, blooming with life,
an extraordinary diversity of colors,
someone who will always be there
to let my snow melt so you can reach me.

Someone you trust and are fond of
when you visit me in the spring,
a journey of peaceful hiking.



Learning About Mary Jane Delgado

One of the biggest adventures of her life was when she invited two Russian orphans into her home, who were brothers in the age of 5 and 6, for a whole month. What she wanted in this she said was "to find parents to adopt them and I felt it was my job to teach them some discipline in the American culture." When it was time for them to go it was a very sad moment. She wanted them to remember her family and all those good memories that they all shared. She gave them both a little photo album, small enough to fit underneath their pillows. On the back of the pictures she wrote a note and her address. All she could do now was "Hope for their future," she said.

Seeing other peoples' challenges taught her a new way to tackle her own fears and challenges. Her challenge was to be "the best parent" and her fear was that her children would not grow up to be responsible adults. By learning to appreciate the good with the difficult lessons in life, she learned to focus on her goals. She said, "It makes me so proud, it brings tears to my eyes when I see my children, becoming wonderful adults." I learned to take a big breath and immerse my self to follow my dreams.

My True Colors

Everyone always has a different way of looking at situations. A quote that has touched me is "Can't is speech without thought, opinion without knowledge, judgement without evaluation. It is the enemy of true emotion and a clear vision of life." In the ARC program, summer 2007, I learned to overpower the words, "I can't." Now I know I am powerful, as long as I believe in myself.

As a group in Sequoia, we learned how responsibility, trust, communication and honesty are the main techniques to work as a team. Now after 36 days, "can't" is a word that has no existence in our group. Being able to do our jobs was one of the things that we couldn't really do well at first. Not being open with each other was one of the ways that made us be afraid to tell some one what to do. Can is a word easy to spell, say and do. It is also a word that the group can follow. Realizing how everyone has similarities about issues with friends, family, or school, has helped us to speak from the heart about true feelings and letting our emotions come out. Knowing that we all have things in common has showed us that were not so much different from each other.

I've discovered many things about myself that I never thought I could do, but now I know that I am capable of doing a lot of things like rock climbing. Because of my fears of heights, I never thought that I would be able to reach the top, the 90 foot rock, and want to do it again. Thinking about how high it is and that I won't be able to climb it made me want to turn my back and not complete the challenge. If I didn't even try I knew that I would regret it for the rest of my life and never have the chance to do it again. When the time came I put my harness on, I slipped one leg by one into the harness. I tightened my right one first, then my left one, very tight, just to be safe. While I was walking towards the rope, my heart was beating faster and faster. I had this overwhelming feeling, like when you go on a roller coaster, ticking, while its going up very slowly, then it drops.

I clipped my harness to the lock on the rope, and I began climbing. When I reached the middle I felt like giving up, but I stopped instead. When I closed my eyes I took a big breath and thought about all the things I've gone through, with my parents, friends, and all my experiences. I wanted to prove to everyone, my parents, and especially myself that I am not a failure, that I can start something and finish it. I remembered when they told me that I can do anything if I try my hardest, the best I can be. I imagined the top of that 90 foot rock, to be my family, my goals and dreams, and if I



reach it, that I can do anything. When I continued, I knew what I wanted and went for it. I made it to the top and realized that anything is possible if you believe in yourself. It was over and I felt so great because I reached my goal. This experience made me realize that I don't let my fears get in my way of doing anything. No matter what it is, or how hard it maybe, if I believe that I can do it, I will. Being positive and making goals for myself was very helpful for me, so that I can start something and finish it, and in the end I will feel proud of it.

Being with 10 teenagers and instructors who I never met before has impacted my life by making me realize what are things that I need to work on, to be a better person. They made me realize how one shouldn't judge a person by the way they look, dress, or what they have. Hearing their thoughts and feelings about there perspective of life made me realize that it's hard work to get where you want to be. By some of them judging me about my attitude, and actions, it didn't make me feel good, but it helped me to realized the things that I need to work on. It made me realize if I don't like their judgment, then how do others feel when I do it to them.

Not everything in life is easy. Everyday you will have choices to make. Some can be difficult, that can impact your life, like this experience has for me, and some can be choices that I make in my everyday life. When I get the opportunities to accomplish my dreams, I won't let it go, and I will take it, because it might be the only opportunity that you will get. To live with 10 teenagers, away from home for 40 days, is not an opportunity that comes around often. Its' an opportunity to meet new people and it's a chance to see how their lives are. We all had the chance to learn new skills like reading maps, learning how to

cook outdoors and how to set up our camp. Learning all these skills lead us to our finals.

During the finals, our group all had the chance to prove to our instructors, our families, friends and especially to ourselves that we can work as a team, and finish what we had started. We all cooked, clean, and hiked, and opened up more and got closer together. It made us a stronger group to become as one. We realized that a group is not just 10 people that talk all the time, but a group that supports, is honest, and communicates with one another. The one time when we were on our finals we all decided to sit in a circle and say one thing about ourselves that we didn't know about each other, which we promised that what is said in the circle stays between us. Also the time that we read a poem before we went on our solo, and we all shared a story that was painful to go through.

I have reflected on how my experiences have helped me now, as well as for the future. I have thought about my thoughts, feelings, of how hard it was for me to do all of these challenges and how they have change my life, for the good. All of these things have taught me to be a better leader, be more independent, and be more responsible. From this day on, I'm now the one who people can't make fun of and say that I am worthless and who is lazy. The one who doesn't know what I'm doing or what I'm going to do with my life, but the one who has made a difference in my life and in someone's else life. The one who knew that I had to change to become a better person and did something about it. Coming to this program has helped me to find my inner self. I came here as a cocoon deeply locked away where no one can reach me, but slowly after time, I emerged in this world, were now everyone can see my true colors.

Engels Garcia

Breaking the Cycle

I am an ant
I advance without knowing
what obstacles are surrounding me.
I feel incompetent
cannot express my ideas
cannot communicate.

Challenging to get along
with people who have
a different way of life,
those who only care about themselves,
wish they could be more conscious.

But from far away
the fresh wind gives breath
sharing life inside of me,
giving me energy to soar
above my obstacles.

With blistered hands
I work hard to survive,
I sweat step by step,
just like a slave
working in the grape fields
endless, eternal rows
of dusty green grapes.

If my life ends
it is not because the Age,
it is the fight against
my Predators, the destiny
trying to get out of the
cycle of slavery.

I am soul, a ghost,
unfortunately I can't survive
in this world

With pain
my work stings
without any progress,
I can't find my colony,
my home.

I am victim
to my predators
who, without consciousness,
are killing me
and my hopes to find
inner peace.



Learning About Lauran Eastman

Her name was Lauran Eastman, a young woman with a very charming attitude. She had short hair, was skinny, and had blue eyes like the sky, which matched her black pants and red shirt. She was wearing earrings and a necklace. Both of them had the same colors: red, orange, yellow, and dark brown. I realized that she was becoming comfortable with me by changing the way she sat. At the beginning, she sat as an average person would: with crossed legs and her hands over her knee, smiling half way. But after a while, she became more comfortable by sitting without crossed legs and her hands around the bench, smiling more.

When I came to the question, what was your childhood like, I discovered that both of us passed through similar experiences. I had a strong connection with her in that moment, feeling old sentiments, reminding me of those moments of fate. Hearing how she overcame her parents' separation was inspirational.



Clear Words

I am Engels Garcia, and in the summer of 2007 I had the chance to be part of ARC, a program that made me realize that taking risks is not always bad. Risks help to overcome our fears and learn how to trust ourselves. It is a six-week program where I found part of myself, a part that now makes a great difference, a program with a plethora of activities, adventures, risks, and challenges.

One of the biggest experiences that helped me to become mentally stronger was when we were climbing. Everyone was scared to climb at Gibraltar rock. I saw how others were struggling to reach the top point. I was also really nervous, but I climbed with self-assuredness; soon I got to the middle point. I looked down and became afraid because I felt the rope loose on my harness and I saw my friends at the very bottom looking like little insects. The fear grabbed me, and I was frozen, sweating and holding the rock intensely. I closed my eyes and all my fear came shooting into my mind: kids making fun of me at school, always thinking in silence and not speaking, putting my head down instead of being involved at school. I opened my eyes, and decided to overcome these fears, these silences, and these lost opportunities. I began to climb again. Instead of ignoring my fear, I looked down, forcing myself to see the height, by confronting this fear of height. I began to feel strength in myself. I reached the top without fear.

Another Powerful experience was when I felt the impact of a cargo ship personally while we were kayaking at Santa Cruz Island. I heard our instructor scream "Lean back," because the waves were increasing as my partner and I passed through a cave. I felt afraid of being crushed against the rocks and hurting myself; the waves augmented quickly because the ship was passing by. I felt like I was part of nature, part of the island. Just like the animals affected by these ships

everyday. Coming into contact with this event increased my love toward nature.

I didn't speak English very often in my school and community, especially in my classroom; students laughed about how I spoke English. I felt lonely, misunderstood, like a teenager that nobody can understand. The teenager that feels pain when seeing others suffer for being the way they are, imagining what their life is like. The little curly haired weird guy who talks about issues that nobody cares about. I was a weak guy that sometimes could find sense in his life, who though for a moment that the life was a simple accident. I was the guy who preferred to be in his room, just thinking about what he should do, trying to conceal his problem as he hears psychedelic music, imagining that he could fly away and demonstrate to everyone who he really is.

Now after forty days, I have had the opportunity to overcome my fears. I learned how to hike with my home on my back for long distances, pushing the team, as if I were the strongest in the team; where I had to push myself every day, and try to be energetic, leaving behind the weak guy that I was; where I sweated drop by drop, helping my team to reach our goals. I had to learn how to live together and respected all my team members. I had to speak English everyday, every night and even in our free time. When I had to speak up when we had group problems, when I had to say to someone I had a problem with them; when I had to make order in the group and direct them to meeting places, to be on time and encouraging them to do their jobs, I learned to use my voice as a tool to solve my problems and group issues. All these challenges have been helping me to defeat my fears, defeat the afraid toward those, those that in one moment ignored me or simply didn't understand me. Now after Forty days I have obtained more skill to deal with different attitudes. Before I



met the face of tolerance and compassion, I saw it far-off in the distance, but now I met it and talk to it. But to put on the face of these values is like taking your skin off and leave behind judgments. I am convinced that I must speak up with intensity and confident about the problems in our communities, convinced that instead of think what I want to do, I have to act. Now, I know that tolerance is difficult because everyone has different way of seeing life. But I have to respect their points of view, opinions, and feelings. And from here, we can practice living in a community together resolving issues.

Now after 40 days I feel capable to go back and demonstrate to all of them who really I am. After all these experiences I feel proud of myself. I feel able to overcome my goals and fears. I learn skills in English and leadership; I learn how to work together. Now I can come back and show to my classmate that I can participate and speak English with confident.

I want to say thank, especially to Jennifer, Katie, Morgan and Laura for all the effort that you all injected on me, all the energy that you all spend on us in those critical moments where we defeated our fears and goals; without you all support we be would be able to overcome it. Thanks to ARC Program for give the opportunities to feel the positive risks, to feel the adrenaline in my body, feel my blood run through all my veins, for first time. For visit incredible places in California, places that I could be able to visit my own. Thanks to the Shizzle Masters for those moments of happiness, melancholy and ... thanks for every single atom of energy that I receive from you all, for those smiles and the strong hand that holed me in difficult moment. When were at Sequoia National, in the evening meeting, where everyone were showing support each other, hugging each other, and telling us each other our appreciation. All these memories live in my heart, it is going to be my source of energy, my inspiration and motivation to keep struggling to reach my goals in life.



Tracey Garcia

I Am Me

I am the Kaweah River
Slowly, gently, kindly moving about.
The Sequoia's wild, beautiful, sunny route.
Oaks covering me from up high.
I reflect so many things: trees, rocks, the sky.
My mind is filled with doubt.

My future, lonely like the night sky without stars.
Uncertain as I meander through the valley of life.
My past, cold and hard as a rock,
Wondering if I lived it right.
My Present, dry like a dying tree.

People putting all their glacial weight on me
Expecting me to make their problems sink.
How can I carry their problems down stream?
When they torment me like pollution being poured into me.
People think my only problems are theirs.
People giving me their stares and glares.
Man made objects stiffen my upper lip.
They took away my natural beauty,
They had it stripped.
People leave evidence when they leave.
Some day I will be clear like the beginning of time.

Everyone takes a part of me:
They take my words and use them how they may.
Always in a cruel way.
I give them my wisdom to open their eyes.
Try to give them advice, "The world is not
perfect, I am not perfect. It's time to change."
Yet they look at me as if I tell them lies.
What is left of me keeps blowing away like during a windy storm.
But my stream keeps flowing.

The faster I go the more tired I get.
The only thing weighing me down is regret like a heavy, dirty, bumpy boulder.
Never being cold enough or never being warm enough.
The rocks make the journey rough.
People want me to be slow, to be fast.
I try to change but change never lasts.

I can never be perfect now I see.
The only thing I can be is me.
I am a gentle, carefree, silent river.
Don't care if I make you shiver.
Don't care if I meet your expectations.
Don't need to give you any explanations.
I am me and I won't change for anyone
But me
I am the Kaweah River.



Learning About Darwin Richardson

When the interview was finished, I felt relieved, not because I was done interviewing, but because I talked to someone who I could relate to. The interview was not like any of the interviews I have read in magazines. I actually learned from it. It hit me from somewhere deep down. Before, people used to tell me, if they can do it, I can do it too. But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't believe them because Darwin and I have similar backgrounds. Hearing his story and how well it turned out for him makes me believe I can do it too. His advice to me was to, "Do what you know will make you proud," "listen to yourself," and, "Think about it." Those words are words I will cherish because they have changed the way I look at things. Now that I have challenges I complete them because I know I will be proud of them.



Unwritten

"Come on Tracey you can do it! You're almost there!" screamed everyone. I could barely make out what they were saying because my hands were sweating, my left knee was on top of the pole while my right foot was resting on a staple, and other than that the forty foot pole was shaking with every move I made (not like I could move much in the beginning). "Oh my God, Oh my God. What was I thinking when I got on this pole?" I told myself as I looked down. I used my knees to help me stand up, my harness practically lifting me. When I looked down again, I saw little ant like people holding my life and trust. I whispered to myself, "Piece of cake." I was doing this for the people I loved, but mostly for the people who didn't believe in me. Counting to three out loud, time seemed to be going in slow motion. I took a deep breath and jumped.

Weeks away from home can make a person crazy but strong. Imagine a girl who had never left home for more than three days now in a forty-day adventure program. A girl, who used to walk half the mile in PE, is now running two miles with a sprained ankle. I was someone who would get a \$200 bill on text messages alone, and didn't think much of it. This someone was lost without her cell

phone which she has known longer than the people around her. She was a small town girl who would look at an insane roller coaster and say, "Hell no, am I ever going to get on that." Well "that girl" is now a completely different person. That girl is now rock climbing, backpacking, facing her fear of being in the ocean and jumping off a forty foot pole and doing things she wouldn't have dared to imagine herself doing. It all made me realize that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. It is amazing what you can accomplish when you're away from home.

This has been an experience like no other, a lesson in life. I learned to never give up. If I give

up on a challenge, I will not only let myself down but I will never find out what I am capable of. In the end it is all worth it; when I overcome my fears of the ocean, of heights, and of sharing personal feelings, it all feels rewarding. I feel proud that I know I tried: rock climbing, surfing, kayaking, backpacking, and interviewing an adult who I didn't know. The only person that can get through to me is me; no matter how much people support me, I am the one who has to do it.

Coming to ARC was one of the hardest decisions in my life, leaving family and friends behind to join nine other teens that didn't have my same intuitions. At first, we all had different

minds, different voices, and different futures. A challenge was to see how ten worlds can become one family. I always thought that happened in movies. "No way," I thought, "am I going to consider nine other teens as my family." But half way through the course, I saw our friendships developing through my own two eyes and it made me believe. Sharing tears, arguments, and passions for our lives brought us all together.

It was the twenty-ninth day of ARC when we left for our solo. At first when I found out about solo, I felt the feeling of panic. "How am I supposed to spend twenty-four hours alone?" I thought to myself. The most I have spent alone was five hours and that was with a TV, cell phone, iPod, and a computer. But as we got closer to the day of our solo, I started to relax. I had spent practically every waking and sleeping moment with everyone. So time to myself and sleeping didn't seem so bad. When we were on solo, we had two assignments: a two page apology letter to the group and four pages worth of self reflection. At first it sounded easy, but when it came down to

do it, it wasn't. These weren't topics I could easily answer; I actually had to reflect on them. Those twenty hours alone made me think more of my family and what they were doing. All of a sudden I started to think of everyone in ARC and what they were doing. That's when I noticed that I started to consider Ana, Angela, Cindy, Ilse, Kenia, Engels, Gerald, Juan, and Luis as family.

Being alone made me think about my family and how lucky I am to have them. It's hard to know what you want; it's harder to know what you have. I knew what I wanted from my family but I had never noticed what my family had given me. My mother and father work day and night to give me things I don't need, but want. A couple months ago, I made my mother, a strong woman, cry when I told her I hated my room. My father, who I have never showed much emotion to, told me his days will be empty without me. Thinking about my little brother, who I always yell at, made me feel regretful because I left him alone for 40 days. I have never thought about the way I treated my family before; it took me ARC to realize what I have been truly missing.

All of us in ARC have made changes in ourselves. I have learned to better myself and not just settle for average but to push myself to the limit. For example, when I thought my poem was done, my instructors and friends pushed me to improve it by adding more details and more expression. In the end it became stronger. I learned to be who I truly am and not let my past come back to haunt me, not let those mean words "you'll never be able to do that" make me quit. We all have those voices that tell us to be quiet and not to even try. The reason why I reached the top of that 40 foot pole was to prove to all those negative influences that I can do what I want, that I do have a say in things. But mostly, I jumped for me, to tell myself not to let those voices bring me down.

Now in the end of our course, when it's time to determine if the time I spent at ARC was worth my while, I learned to be more independent and to work together with the group. I don't have to depend on my parents for my future decisions. This summer I have learned a life time of lessons. I have made a new group of friends, who I care for as my family.

We are all brothers and sisters who have learned more and more about each other each and everyday. We have been through our ups as well as our downs but I'm glad we have gone through them together. But this isn't the end of Ana, Angela, Cindy, Ilse, Kenia, Engels, Gerald, Juan, Luis, and me, Tracy. The rest of our future is unwritten.



The Animal Inside

I am a black bear,
big, brown, strong.
I live in the Sierra Nevada mountains
deep in the forest,
in the grassy meadows.
Searching for food,
hoping to survive everyday life,
staying in school,
not putting in all my effort,
getting bad grades.

Sometimes i feel like i want to give up
when school is so hard,
seven classes everyday.
I feel like I'm never going to make it
to college,
like a bear always searching for food
never knowing if I'm going to find it.

Sometimes I feel failure
wanting to drop out
to help my family,
but I remember what my mom says,
a momma bear always supporting her cub
telling me I need to go to college.

I can be a rainstorm of violence,
ferocious wind, water, and heavy thunder.
when people hurt my family or me,
those three falcons who tried to hit
my brother, the eagle, my role model
--never lets me down
watching out for me in the sky above
always looking out for the dangers ahead--
I grabbed a bat and swung it wildly
they flew away,
I chased them like a bear.

When I fight,
I don't respect even myself,
it's like something inside tells me I need revenge,
that person is my double,
it commands violence and
tells me to fight,
to destroy other animals' belongings.

In the moments after I lose control,
like when the storm blows everything away,
the storm is over,
I tell myself,
"let it rain,
be more calm,
let the sun come out."



Luis Guerra

Learning About Mike Delgado

As a result of talking to Mike, I learned if you have someone in your family that is very successful in what they are doing, that motivates you to do the same thing. One thing that I will remember for the rest of my life is that you may not always have your mom with you and you should show her how much you care about her. He also said that I needed to stay away from bad influences so that I can make my goals in my life to come. I really respect Mike a lot because he never has given up for what he wanted to do in his life.



Challenging Summer

Here is me, Luis Guerra, a typical teenager before I decided to take the risk to come to the ARC program. I was involved in gangs; every day was a fight to live, never knowing if I would make it to the next day. Always worried because I knew my rivals could attack me anytime. I knew I had to stop fooling around with gangs, smoking, and drinking. When my friend died in a car accident, I began to change my attitude, my work in school, and the way I see life. When I realized I didn't want to live my life the same way as my friends, I began to be more responsible. I don't want to do the same thing to my mom. Choosing to be in the ARC program shows that I'm starting to make better decisions in my life. I'm going to leave my old life behind when I return.

Even though my mom has always worked very hard for me, I didn't respect her. Every time my mom tried to talk to me, I didn't listen. I thought she was crazy. But she continued to support me. It didn't matter how cruel I was to her. Now that I'm away from my mom, I understand how cruel I have been with her. When I was alone for almost 24 hours on my solo day, I reflected about all of my life, like looking in a mirror. I woke up around 5 in the morning and while the fog was on the top of the mountain, I took my journal and started to write my apology letter to the group. Suddenly, I heard my mom's voice calling, "Luis." I turned around thinking that she was behind me but there was only the shade

of the tree.

Then I turned back to my letter but instead I looked up at the gray peak in front of me, with red and orange streaks of light coming down. Pictures came to my mind, one after another, like a slide show: My mom and I were in the back yard; she was sitting at the table; "Luis," she said, "the reason I'm here is to give you a better life. If you don't do better in school, we will have to go back to Mexico." I shook my head and looked at the ground. Remembering this, I started to cry. Picture after picture of the words I had said to my mom came into my mind. I grabbed a rock and threw it at a boulder in front of me. I was very angry with myself. I couldn't understand why I have been so cruel to mom. When I get angry, a voice inside commands me to be cruel and disrespectful. It is like I have an angry double inside of me. At this moment, I felt like I couldn't continue to support these feelings. It was holding me back from enjoying life with people that care about and respect me.

I remembered being in the garage with my brother Omar and how he cried when he said, "Bro, going to the ARC program is going to help you for the rest of your life." He is only 21-years-old but he has been the father of the family since he was 17, working full time. He is my role model, always there for me. Thinking about him helped me to calm down and reflect on the things I've done, and try not to make

the same mistakes in life.

I felt alone. I had been alone for 14 hours. Lost Canyon Creek rumbled just below me, and I could hear birds singing. The solitude made me understand that I have to be a better son and brother. I won't always have my mother with me. I want to make my brother proud to honor his sacrifice. I don't need a special day like Mother's Day to tell my mom how much I love her. The first thing I want to do when I get back to San Jose is to tell my mom I love her and that I'm very sorry for saying that she was crazy. From now on I will try to be a better son, respectful, responsible, and I will help to cook and clean the house. I also will start to respect my brother, and I won't talk back in an angry tone. I will always listen to him.

Two days after my solo day we climbed Black Rock Pass without our instructors. It took us half an hour to get to the top. From there I could see lakes, rivers, mountains, and lots of fog. It was like a dream because it was so beautiful, and I will never forget it. I can close my eyes; I still felt the cold, wild wind and humidity in my skin. The experience of being on the top of the pass helped me to see that life has a lot to offer me. It helped me to understand that I don't need to smoke or drink to enjoy the people that are around of me. Respecting myself is something that I am proud of; respect from others makes me believe I can be a better person.

On this program, I have learned that I need to express how I feel with someone, instead of letting my anger out. I need to conquer my angry attitude and think twice before I do something or say something that I will regret. Before I changed, I used to get angry easily without any reason. Now I realize if I continue doing this I will not get along with anyone and it can get me in trouble. I know that it does matter what other people think about me. I need their support to continue doing well in life. Here is me after 40 days: more confident and strong in what I want to do in my life. I want to say thank you to Mike Delgado because all the advice he gave me to be a better person. Talking to Mike really helped me to see a different way of life. He taught me that it is better to have fun without smoking or drinking. I have learned that my true love is my mom because she is always there for me. I won't need a special day to tell my mom how much I love her. My first goal when I get back to San Jose is that I going to be a better son and brother. I will make them proud. Now I believe that nothing can stop me in life from doing what I want to do, finish high school, attend college, travel around the world, create my own construction company, and raise money to bring soccer equipment to kids in Guanajuato. I can't wait to start my new life.



Juan Hernandez

Legacy Carved in Stone

I am a Glacier
Bound by no laws,
No Rules,
Free to see the world,
Strong & True.

I am a Glacier,
Seen no more,
But still here
A ghost,
Watching the world go by,
Washing the stain of blood shed past,
The blood and memories of those who
fought and died for us:
My world, my rivers, my land, the earth
beneath me.

Transformed by time,
Melted away in the world,
All you see:
Oceans,
Streams,
Rivers,
Plants,
Everywhere and anywhere you see.

But I have been forgotten by the world,
By the lies that surround me,
and by the lies I have created,
Lost in time,
and lost to the World.

Gentle at times,
Happy and smiling,
Always changing,
My thoughts, my mind & my emotions,
Always growing in size and in shape
transformed,
Getting stronger in mind and spirit,
Always learning,
About myself and the world that surrounds me,
Wanting to change the world,
waiting to give shape to this world of
disappointments and regrets,
In anyway that I can,



Shedding my emotions to the world
every drop of rain,
Showing my worth,
Letting people see who I am,
My good,
My peculiar enthusiasm,
My bad,
My serious nature,
My flaws,
My beliefs,
My HEART,

Those who choose to believe in me,
The mountains and rivers who choose
To love and care for me,
To teach me...right from wrong,
to hold me...when I get fearful
or terrified,
And those who choose to bring me down,
Will only make me stronger,
For I am a Glacier, powerful & majestic,
I move with the might and the strength
of my family behind me and no one will
stop me.

I am a Glacier,
Looking toward the future,
Making my own path...and leaving my
legacy carved in stone,
Seeing the world for what it is,
Cold & hard,
But at the same time...inspiring,

The world is changing,
Always,
Never stopping,
And never will,
But I will leave my mark on this world
and into the next,

My words,
Stained with my Truths and the Fears of
this world,
Echoed in the wind.

Failure to Comprehend

When I came to ARC I thought that it would be easy to do, and 40 days without my family didn't seem hard. Since my mom and I always fight a but the smallest problem, maybe being apart will make our relationship stronger. At the same time I would think of horrible thoughts of what could happen while I was gone; earthquakes, floods, a drive-by, just about anything that can put my family or friends in harms way.

On the first day, the five hour drive to Sequoia let me think of my friends. Right now we would probably be in S.L.O just looking in at our favorite stores and having fun. I wondered if I would make any connections with anybody here. Since I never was in a group I never had to depend on someone or to be depended on for something. When I first met Ana, Tracy, Cindy, Ilse, Angela, Kenia, Gerald, Luis, and Engles, we were all so different from each other. I really thought we weren't going to get along, especially with me, but I open up to them even though we just met. With other teenagers who don't even know me. Who haven't been through the tough times. My friends at home and I are so close because we've been through so much together. We've been through happy times and very sad and traumatic times but we're always there for each other. I really didn't think I would make the same connection as I have with my friends that I've know for two years. When we began hiking it was really challenging, especially since I've never hiked before this. We supported each other even though we didn't know each other at all. On the very last expedition in Sequoia, I would give up my life for any of them I know their flaws and perfection's, I saw different ways of life from each one of them. We understood, trusted, believed, and forgave each other; we learned from one another.

At home people would stare at me or just give me mean looks, well I didn't care. It just that people make assumptions, they believe that I am worth nothing or just lazy. I am sometimes, but people don't really give me a chance to prove I'm more than what they see. Here at ARC I've done things that I didn't even dream about because I don't know any one who would hike for 8 days in the wild. The wild for me used to be going to the zoo, being around the wild animals that were in cages. On my first expedition I was terrified, but at the same time excited to be in the true wild. It was one of the hardest things I have experienced; no toilet, shower, and no electronics. The hardest part had to be waking up and start hiking again at least 3-6 miles a day! It was hard but if those people were there they would have see me in another

perspective. I know I still have to grow in some areas, but I learned so much more about myself. Even tough I could careless what people think of me, next time that I go somewhere. If I get those looks or stares, I'll know that I have proven to myself and others that I am more than what they think of me. I do hope that people won't judge me just how I look but for who I am. I know that these challenges, once people see what I've done, their views of me will change.

My family, I always wondered what they were doing without me. I always wonder, especially my mother, she is always there for me. I've grown so accustom to see her, and to fight with her, it's a mix of two feelings. I love her, but there is the part of me, where I can't stand her. I wonder what she beliefs I'm doing here? I wonder how she is doing; her health, her lively hood. I remember when my mom and I would fight about the smallest things. I know that I was a bad son. Even if we would fight she'd always be there for me. Always supporting me in what I do and in anything I want to do. She works so hard to let me succeed and I just barely realized it. She would always tell me "Yo siempre voy astar orgulloso de ti." Life is cruel, and my mom has been through so much. She said that she would work for to the bone to provide for us to give us what we need. I never really appreciated what she's done for me, but I hope once I get back I will be able to make her proud. To let her see that I do love her and that I do appreciate what she's done not only for me but for my little sisters too.

I think to myself how stupid I've been. It's taken me 40 days to appreciate my friends, my family, and most of all, my mother. The adventures we have had let me see what I am made of. All that I have accomplished; rock climbing, ropes course, Kayaking, hiking, CPR, Surfing, interviews, 24-hour solo, the final run, and teaching kids from the Boys and Girls Club. With the challenges that I accomplished I discovered my good and bad sides. I'm funny, it's easy for me to make everyone enjoy themselves. I easily can connect and talk with a person. Just chill-back and fun basically. Yin-Yang for good their must always be bad, for me I always thought I was "positive" but in the time I've been here I discovered that I am selfish and lazy. My lies and truths have come out. Emotions that I thought I have locked up and would never have to bare again. All of this has changed me, It has challenged me mentally and physically, but not only that emotionally too. The 24-hour solo was the scariest and most eye-opening experience. I found myself alone,

because I knew that the truth in myself would come out, I reflected on the 28 days I've been with ARC. I thought about it for a moment and thought of all the experiences that I had; Rock Climbing, Kayaking, all of that. It made me stronger. It changed me for the better. I shouldn't give up, I should push myself to my limit, and even beyond it.

Here at Sedgwick I learned to be persistent to challenge myself. I have seen and experienced the beauty of the wild, to appreciate what it does for humans. To have met people who fight for the survival of it. I have a different view about nature and life. Life is different for everybody; no one shares the same path. Some people have their life laid out for them; others work toward the life they never had. ARC has let me see what I am capable of doing. It has shown me how much we have to work to reach our goals. For the last 40 days we have all pushed ourselves to our limit. Trusting others and ourselves, being Independent. Letting new people into my heart and souls opening our hearts to one another. Shedding tears of joy and sadness. Even after the 40 days are over we will still be there for one another. We have been born again. Seeing the world in a new way, with a new sight. We will live with these experiences, and we will live with the love that we have been surrounded with. From the fears and challenges we all had to face, and conquer. We will all go forward together as a family.



Angela Lopez

Waters of Grace

I am Moose Lake
crystal azure, abysmal
firm.

I am Moose Lake
bringing excitement with my beauty,
watch the breeze move my water.

I am home for hikers,
nature's gift.

I am hard to reach,
between the mountains
rocky spaces, high, cold, lifeless
but when you get there,
I fill you with excitement, enjoyment,
hope to keep going to your destination.
Relax on the shores of me,
talk to me.

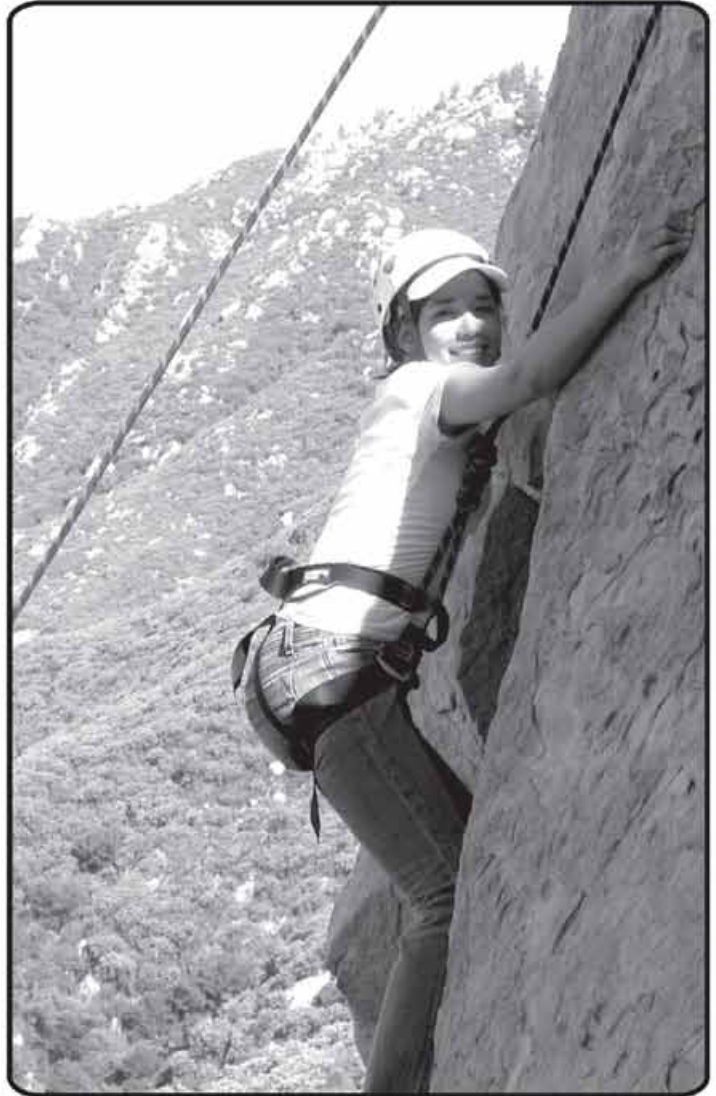
My personality is undefined,
mysterious like the universe.
At night, the stars reflect on my surface
childhood coming back to mind,
vacation on the beach
with the ones I love.

The islands are my heart.
My family is the smoothest and largest island,
they watch me freeze, melt,
and freeze again.
They comfort me, eternally there.
My friends,
another gorgeous island,
abundant love,
keeping me cheerful and entertained.

I let the blue sky
charge my inner depth,
ready to give my waters away,
ready to be helpful.

Storms disturb my water
fears of dying,
a record snow year,
flooding waters,
losing my family,
losing myself

I am Moose Lake
Daughter
Sister
Friend
A lake full of
waters of grace...



Alive, Satisfied, Proud

Be somebody. "One of the greatest diseases is to be nobody to anybody." -Mother Teresa.

The old me: A lethargic girl who does not do anything to help others. Always on the couch watching TV, or in the room chatting on the computer. A girl who did not push herself to be better and putting effort into her life. Besides being selfish and carefree, I was a sack full of fears. I was nobody to anybody...

The new me: Angela Lopez- energetic and helpful. A girl who can run 5 miles in less than an hour, a girl who can walk 6 hours with a heavy backpack, a girl who can defeat the nervous feelings and the words "I can't." Now I realize that nobody will love me as much as my parents. I leave fears behind and make life fun, interesting, and adventurous. In the last 40 days I learned I can be somebody.

Spending 20 hours in the wilderness by myself made me consider the new Angela Lopez is stronger and smarter. I saw the rocky tall mountains around me, the green and brown old trees, and the small and clear creek near a big rock, and they make me wonder about me. My past, future, and present were all mixing together. I was thinking about questions I never asked myself before. For example, "How do my parents feel about me?" "When I am really trying, am I trying my best?" but the question I had more trouble finding an answer was: "Who am I?" Fortunately, I found the answer...

During solo, in the middle of the night it started to rain. I grabbed my sleeping bag and moved under a tree. I could not go back to sleep, so I started to think about all the things I have done here in ARC. One of my dreams was learning how to surf; it came true. The day was sunny and hot; perfect to swim in refreshing and strong waves. Another dream was going kayaking under caves; it also came true. The ancient, dark and cold caves gave me curiosity to discover the diversity of wildlife that lives in them. I was also was thinking about other challenges I had not done. Something I never thought I will do is to climb a 40 feet pole and jump off. The task was called "the leap of faith" and it consisted in trusting your team because they are the ones holding you. When I was up I could hear everyone cheering, telling me not to give up. Even though I knew I had harness on, I thought I could fall and tears of fear came out. I could

not relax until I heard my sister shout, "Quien eres?" (Who are you?). I answered, "Soy una mujer viva, satisfecha y orgullosa" (I am an alive, satisfied, and proud woman). I kept repeating that until I believed it, I stood up and jumped. Now I know who I am.

The solo ended and everyone went back to camp. Being all the night awake made me understand that every little detail I learned will help me to be a leader, starting from how to cook for 12 more people, to making decisions as a group. I learned that is difficult to try to make everyone on time and everything well done when you are in a team, but it is not impossible.

In the last week, I gave the best of me. In the five mile run, I stopped short times and I proved to my self that I can go beyond my body limits. When the run started, I was tired right away but I told my self, "it's all in your head, your body can go until your mind tells you." Suddenly, I could not feel my pain and I kept going until there was a steep down hill. I went down slowly, and I

decided to finish the run for all the sacrifices that my parents have done for me. I finished the run in 57 minutes. I thought of my parents and the old me. The old me would not even dared to start the run.

I think I could not have made it these 40 days without the support of everyone. Thanks to my instructors, Laura and Morgan, because they shared their brightness and energy with the group. Thanks to my new family, Cindy, Engels, Ilse, Luis, Ana, Gerald, Tracey, and Juan, because they support me and protect me like a mother bear to her cub. Thanks to my sister Kenia, who is also my team member, because she invited me to this program. Thanks to Katie, because without her the ARC program would not exist. Thanks to Jen, because she was like a mother, trying to give us the best. A "thanks" is not enough to show how grateful I feel about the ones who believe in me, but I feel is the least I can do. I was nobody but now I am somebody. I am alive, satisfied and proud.



Kenia Lopez

Open Your Eyes

Meadows that used to be lakes
remind me of the past,
memories that used to be wet.
I am a high summer sierra peak,
tears now dry.
The sunlight wakes me up
every morning,
and the night
covers me as a warm dark blanket.

The beauty of the sunsets
make me look like a Shooting Star,
A gigantic Sequoia pine tree,
strong, always alive.
A quiet butterfly,
shyness hugging me.

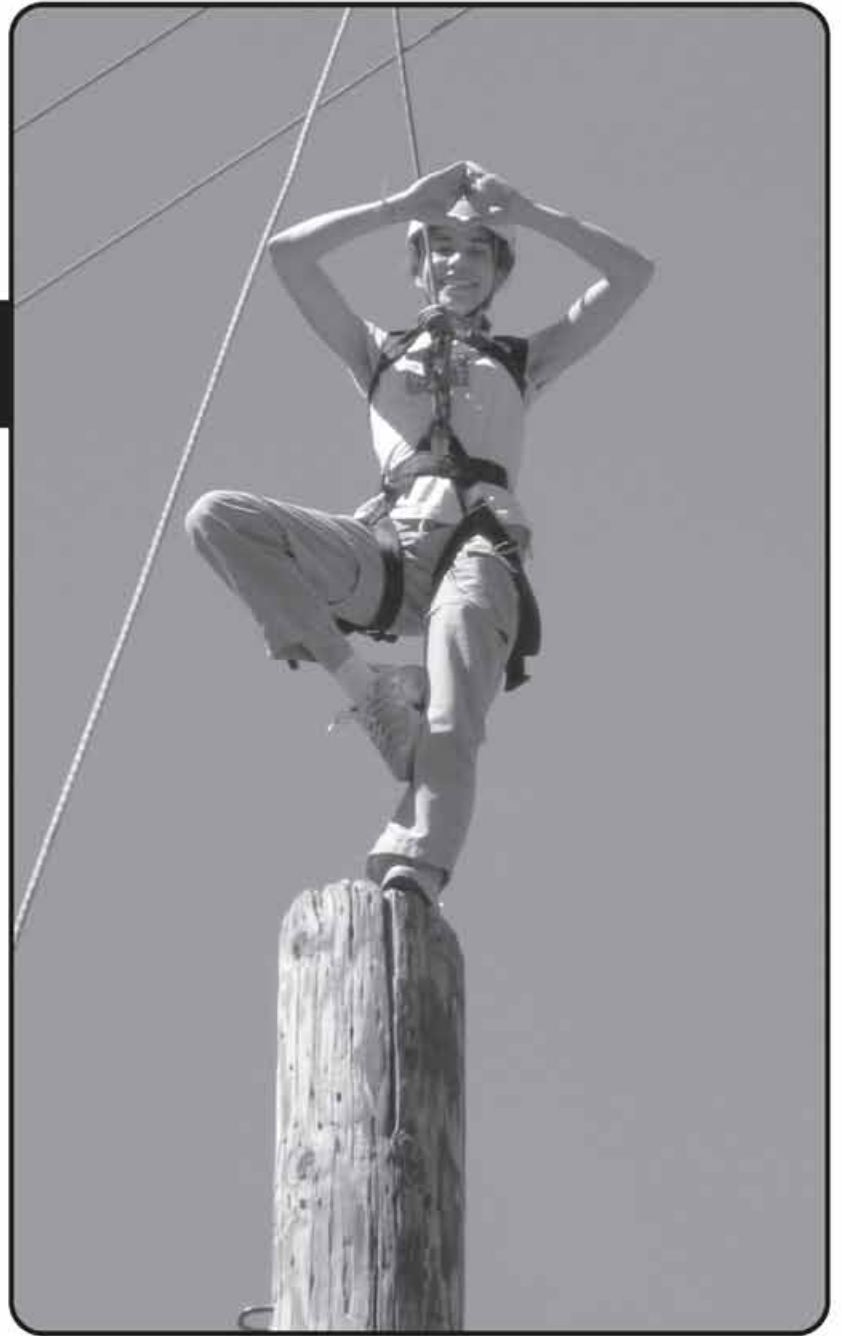
Horrible moments,
as black storms spread over my ridges,
flood my rivers,
my madness
hailing on my sisters,
sinful problems:
cold, black robes.

Magnificent as a high mountain,
strong, peaceful blowing winds;
calm as clouds;
and quiet as a rock.
Fresh, crystalline water against my skin,
free movements, dancing gently
gives me life.

My parents,
white glaciers,
enormous protectors,
educated me, supported me,
warned me, formed me!

My delicious landscapes,
the fragile and delicate
mountain Bluebell flower,
leaves like porcelain,
but strong enough to say, "I love you."

The winter dresses me
with white freezing dresses.
Summer dresses me
with green pines and white firs.
Life is dressed beautifully
as long as you open your eyes.



Not A Perfect Girl

"It's going to be difficult," I thought to myself, "But I can do it and it's for a benefit, it will improve my English." I have just finished high school and I wanted to come to this program called ARC. I was really excited because my dream of doing many challenging tasks could become real. The day before we started ARC, as my sister and I were flying from Mexico to the U.S., I thought, "I don't want to go to the program anymore, I want to spend more time here with my family and friends." But it was too late; I was already committed to ARC.

As I reflect on my experience, I feel that I made the best decision of my life. When Jen started introducing us all that cool activities that we were going to do, I was thinking, "Oh my gosh! What an amazing chance life is giving me. I feel like I don't deserve this, because all that kids in the world with out food or a place to live." I grew enormously, not only physically but mentally. To spend 40 days with 9 other teenagers that I didn't know was a real mental challenge because I had to learn how to work with other people. Working as a team was not easy because real frustrations came to light. I got impatient when things are not being done right and fast. I recognize that I was not a very patient person, but working on it every single day, I improved. This summer I learned that "slow is good and good is fast." For example, when we were hiking in Sequoia, for our first expedition, I used to get desperate waiting for slow people. Then I realized that going slow you get fast and safe to your destination.

Also, thinking about my family almost everyday was as painful as a bee sting on the back. I learned to appreciate more of my life, because makes me think about those people that don't have anything to eat or a place to sleep. This makes me realize how much my parents work to have us in the best conditions that they can. Opportunities do not always appear and when they do you should go for it. I never imagined that I would do something extremely complicated, but as awesome as ARC. Furthermore, another challenge was my solo day. It was late afternoon when Morgan and Laura were taking each one of us to our solo spots. I was excited, but also nervous. While we were walking to our spots, I was quiet, and concentrated in what I was going to do when I arrived there. One by one, we were being placed, and when it was finally my turn, I was shaking. During the solo time I enjoyed the view; the creek next to me, the landscape, the animals, and even the mosquitoes. I also observe a bunch of ants walking around; at

that time I wrote and slept. At night, in my sleeping bag, I fell asleep watching the stars and the beautiful bright moon. Later on, when it started to rain lightly, I moved under a pine tree because I felt protected by it; I went to sleep again.

I reflected about what I performed right and wrong. I discovered that I am a person who is intelligent and capable, strong enough to survive alone, and achieve what I want. I also discovered that I get mad and frustrated easily, but I have learned the skills to control myself and to communicate my feelings. The day before our last day of finals in Sequoia we got lost, and that made everyone angry and irritated. I, chosen as a Guardian Angel, who was the only person that could talk to the instructors during the finals and chosen by the whole group, was a huge failure. Another boy and I were the guardian angels because our abilities to do things. The day we got lost, I felt as a great failure. I felt so bad that I wanted to scream, forget about guardian angel, don't talk anymore. I cried for the first time in the entire program. I am a very reserved person and I don't like people to see me crying, but when you can hide those sentiments anymore, let them flow. Then I calmed myself and I continued doing my job. After couple of hours of frustration and tension, I realized that it wasn't only my fault, it was everyone's. Later when we got a campsite I started laughing and joking again with every person. I also learned from that mistake. I find out that I am not a perfect girl, and that mistakes always teach us something new.

The experience that impacted me the most was swimming in the cold, dark, enormous ocean. When I did my swim test, it was a big distance. The deep part was cold and got me nervous because I couldn't see the floor. But I did it, because I always try to do my best and never give up. Another experience was when the whole group talked with Jen and we resolved all the issues that we had before we started our finals. We all took off our superficial masks and showed the real personalities. I learned that by not speaking and not sharing my frustration or opinions I would not get anywhere.

Another challenge was hiking as a group, with those heavy backpacks. It was hard to wake up early and start doing our chores. There were times that I wanted to stop and throw the backpack away. For example, in our final expedition, my back got a huge bruise, and every time I put on the backpack it hurt so much I wanted to stop. But I feel proud because I didn't give up. Like I always say, it was hard, but not impossible. We did it and we



completed our finals.

To conclude, my goals are to continue studying at Allan Hancock community college this fall, planning to transfer to a university after two years. I will become a doctor, starting with being a paramedic, to help people. Now, my greatest dream is, after I finish my career, go to Africa and help those people that really have needs, help them and feel better with myself. I also want to thank every person that made this opportunity real. Thank you for create this program Katie. Jen thank you for always give us your attention and for the advice. Instructors, Morgan and Laura, thank you for giving all that suggestions to make us better persons. I also want to express my gratitude to all the volunteers that help us during our hard times. Finally, I would like to let everyone know that I improved my skills in everything, like my English speaking, grammar, understanding, and writing; my independence from my family; and my ability to be a leader, to be responsible, and to share my emotions with the group. Forty days ago, I was shy and afraid to open up to other people. Now I feel more confident about myself. My future is always in my mind, my goals and dreams to pursue.

Cindy Rodriguez

Defined By Nature

I am a mountain
frozen like snow on the peaks
waiting to melt and have freedom,
to let my love flow
from my enormous
heart and mind,
to do good to others.

My family,
we are like birds singing always
making music everyday:
Mariachi, Banda, and Rancheras.
We dance from one tree to the next.

Under the wings
of my parents
protecting their eggs
working hard
every morning they had to wake up
like the singing birds
at the first winter twilight
giving me the light of life.

The mountain lions,
my three brothers:
Ismael, the older one,
the crystal water of the lakes,
Honest, robust, athletic,
moves as freely as water;
Joel, the middle one,
playful like a cub in a bush of berries;
Cesar, the little one,
growing up
skinny like a new tree,
bright green leaves, his roots are small,
the closest one to me.

I am a mountain
with waterfalls of work,
cleaning my house,
studying at school,
useful to all.
Living the life,
trying to survive.
Rivers are my tears
moving my slopes.
The storms from the sky
my biggest fears of not being alive.

My inside feelings



have strong scents,
like the smell of a bear
trying my best,
challenging myself,
feeling happy,
smiling
like a colorful Alpine Buttercup,
giving oxygen to all,
opening toward the sky.
Sometimes lonely,
the driest of dirt when the sun sets,
to not feel the love of my parents,
like the marmot alone in the mountains.

My mountain is unique with style.
Trees are my earrings,
sharp, dark green cones

triangular and huge.
Granite rocks are my sturdy feet
strong heavy steps.
Aspen leaves flicker in my hair.
The animals covering my body,
walking, tickling my skin.

Body doesn't change,
always the same,
like the Sequoia trees,
always in one place.
Happy, with whom I still am:
unmovable, rooted.

I am a mountain:
I hold the forest,
and the forest is alive in me.

The First Step

Forty days ago, I was a girl with fears, especially with water and heights. It was hard for me to speak with different people that I didn't know. And I was a girl that couldn't say; "I love you to my mom, dad, and brothers." But now, with all of what I learned in the Adventure Risk Challenge Summer Program, I found the words to say it. Why? Because being without my family, taking risks, learning how to leave my fears behind and becoming independent makes me realize how hard my life would be without my family.

My parents have showed me how to grow how to take care of others; they give me a home and a big family, but their love is missing. I can't feel their love because we never truly talk. I have never told my parents about my feelings because they are always too busy working. Being here in ARC with a new family of friends makes me realize that I have never said, "I love you," to my family at home that I have known since I was born. I also have to add the words risk and challenge to my life because those words show me the light of life.

The first time I realized that I need more of my parents love was the day of rock climbing at Gibraltar Rock. I was climbing a ninety-foot rock wall, totally scared of heights; my whole body was shivering. In the middle of the rock, I was so scared that I gave up for a moment. But I told myself "this is not what you want to be. If you don't try your hardest, you're never going to be someone in the future." So, I pushed myself and I knew that my family would be proud if they saw me climbing a big rock. I pictured my family on the top of the huge rock with a smile of satisfaction. I pushed myself and I made it to the end. This means that I can reach my goals easily. When I was on the top, I knew that my parents were not going to be there. This made me proud of myself and that makes me strong and independent.

Another thing that I realized from the experience of rock climbing is that I should tell my parents how much I love them and that I am proud of having them as my family. Now I know when I go home, we need to change; I want us to spend more time together and to show each other our love. I hope we get closer because being up there on the rock wall made me see the big world, knowing that life could be short. I was shivering, with sweat running everywhere, I was scared to fall and afraid of dying, and worried that I might not have the time to tell my parents thank you. Who knows how much time we have together?

Solo day impacted my life because I had time to think that I need to enjoy every moment of my life. When I get home I have to do the first step like the quote by Epictetus called Step one; Step two: "First

tell yourself what you want to be, and then do what you need to do." This means that I have done many challenges by taking these steps and I have seen a progression in the past days. I learned about myself that I was changing in different ways. At the beginning, I was negative and scared of doing all of challenges and taking the risks, especially being alone for almost twenty-four hours in the wilderness with nature sounds. Now I know that I can control myself when is needed, and knowing that the noises aren't real. I notice right now that I am a new person, I let my fears fly away and try to be positive all day.

While I was running the final, five-mile run, I was really tired and decided to stop when I was at the third mile. The third mile was the hardest part of the run because it was uphill, the trees covered the sun's light, the grass was dry and yellow, the road had holes, and it was dusty and uneven. It was dry and lonely; no one else was around. I felt cold and alone. In this sad moment, the words, "give up," came to my mind. I saw the rest of the uphill looking long and intimidating. I told myself, "I need to keep going for my family." But I realized that I was the one who was running and I began to try for myself instead. I continued to run, and I didn't stop until the finish. I even ran back to support the other runners who hadn't finished. I know that I should be proud of myself for what I have achieved. It's important to challenge the myself for others, but they will not always be there for me. I learned that I have more energy when I'm doing challenges for myself.

The last hard challenge was jumping in the ocean. It was a big risk for me because the deepness of the

ocean and the amount of water around me. I was balancing in a small kayak with two seats, a paddle, and my partner behind. My face turned white like flour. When I saw that my classmates were jumping into the water, my eyes covered with tears. I was suffering from inside trying to calm my nerves. It was time to jump. I was praying, I jumped with my eyes closed. In the water, I was breathing so fast, I felt that I needed oxygen. But one of the instructors helped me by swimming with me, breathing with me, and holding me with soft hands. She gave me some lessons of how to inhale and exhale, to breathe better. Later I was getting used to it. I learned from myself that I have to take risks in life because it opens up more opportunities in the future. I can also take other type of risks. Now I can go to the ocean to enjoy the dolphins and the fresh air.

Without the help of my instructors, classmates, and the volunteers it wouldn't be possible. My instructors showed me how to be independent, to make group decisions, and to be a strong leader. They also taught me about grammar, pronunciation, and the meaning of many words. In Science, I learned about watersheds, pollution, and wildlife. They gave me chance to challenge myself and take risks. My classmates were always there. They supported me, gave me advice for jobs; protected me with my feeling, pain, sadness, and happiness. The volunteers got along with us and shared their lives. I want to say thank you to all of the people that were with me in these forty days. I recognized that it was really hard for me to be with people that I never met before, but now I know them like I have known them forever.



Geraldo Toledo

Listen Closely

I am a special varied thrush,
small, hidden head, a hint of spiraled orange in my tail
I am a small, inquisitive bird.

I'm always flying around
discovering new friends and horizons.
My best friends:
the tree that supports our nest,
the creek and grass
always waiting for my unique songs.
They are necessary,
they are part of my family.

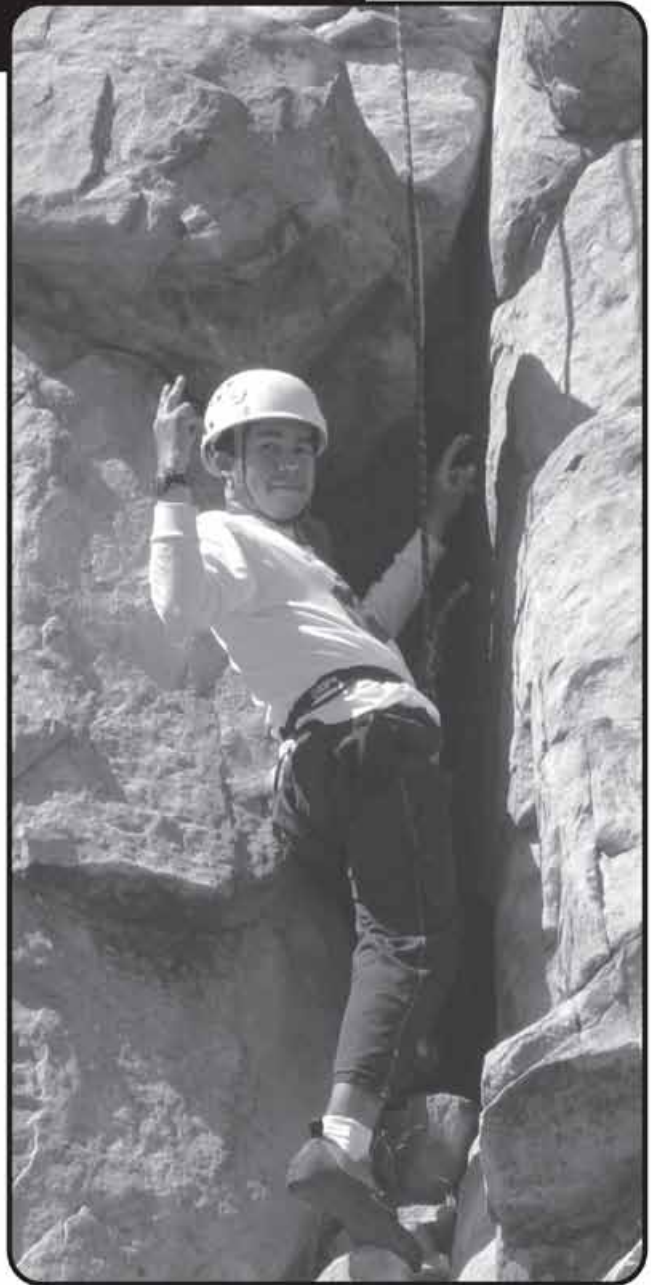
My songs are the signals of happiness.
The delicate sound of my songs
like the colors of a rainbow.
My songs are the way I communicate
ideas and feelings.

I'm always trying to share my serenades,
Chip, chip, chip...
you can hear me singing from sunrise to sunset,
because I have time to play
jumping from branch to branch.

I'm small, but I have a big spirit.
The spirit transforms a normal person
into a special one.
My spirit is always helping me to project forward.
My spirit is wide as my shiny wings.

I'm small, but you can feel my changing moods
with my varied songs.
I'm a young bird, and I have problems too.
I have territorial disputes with other varied thrush.

Whose feathers are left in the nest?
I miss my whole family.
Especially my mom's love and care.
My nest is special because in each tiny stick
I can find love and memories.
In every single side of my nest
I can appreciate the delicious smell of the food



my mom prepares for me and my brothers.

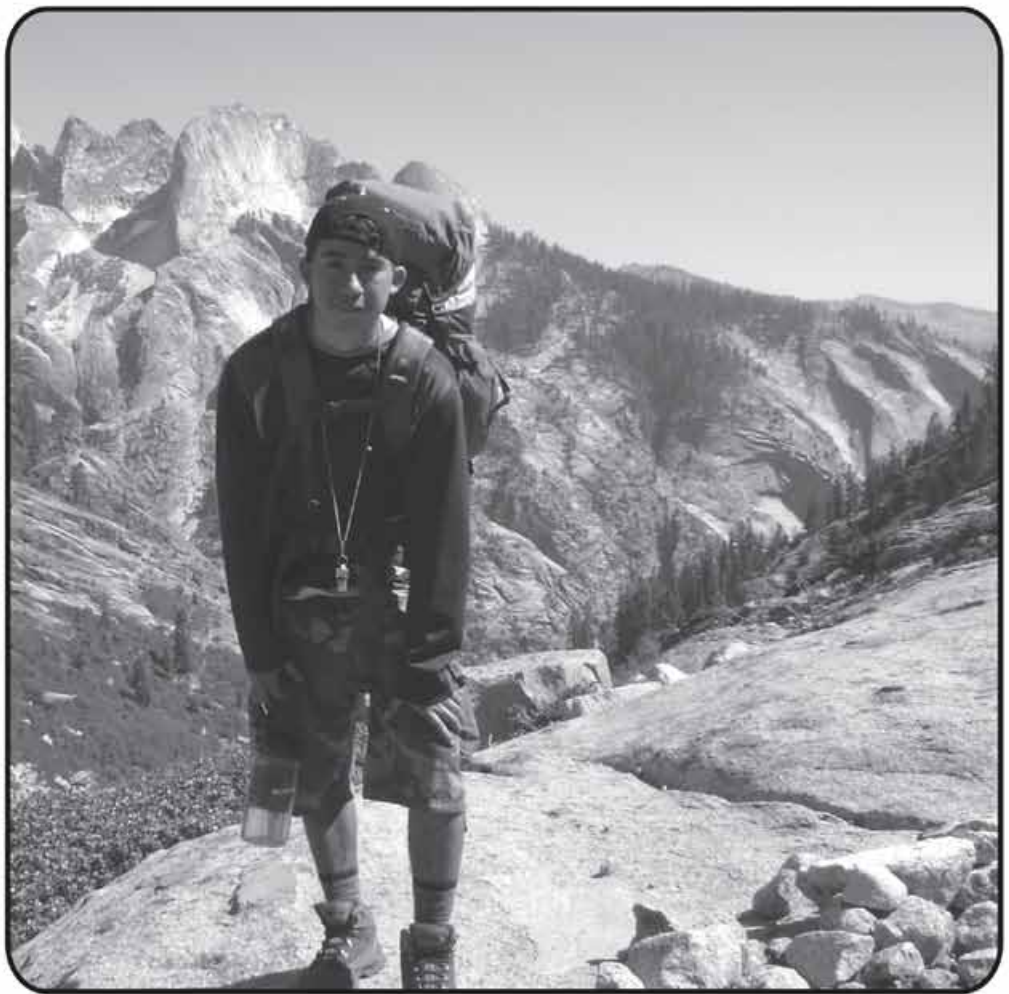
Do you want a better world?
I'm a friendly bird
trying to make our environment a better place to live.
I always share my ideas with my friends and family.
I use my songs when I'm helping others,
solving problems and singing my ideas about
how to make our world a peaceful one.

My New Spirit

I remember clearly our Rock Climbing day, on Saturday July 7, 2007: the temperature was extremely high. There was no wind, and everyone was sweating. I'm never going to forget that specific morning. Everybody was ready to start climbing; we were waiting our turns. I was ready to go, to try to reach the carabineers, the group challenge. Then, Jen said "Gerald, it is your turn." I was excited, hearing everybody's cheers. I started climbing the rock, and the beginning was easy. Suddenly, I noticed that I was stuck. There was no rock or hold for my feet or hands to get sufficient support. I tried several different ways, and it seemed it was impossible to keep going up. I was very frustrated and tired and decided to give up, but I heard one of my friends say, "Trust in yourself, you can do it." Immediately, I entirely changed my mind. My mind decided to keep going and touch the carabineers. An encouraging force was pushing me up; at that moment I started to believe in myself. Minutes later, when finally I reached the top, I discovered that if I trust in myself everything is going to be easier. My final decision was to show everybody who I really am and what I can do.

During that wonderful morning, I realized that my future challenges will be easier for me after this program. We, the ARC Shizzle Masters, are able to do a lot of things now. Sometimes people decide not to make their dreams real, because maybe it is too complicated or hard. I am different. I learned that I need to take positive risks to learn more about myself. Rock Climbing was one of these positive risks. Thanks to that morning, I discovered that I need to trust in myself because my future challenges will be like rock climbing. Sometimes, I might not find support around me, but I know that I need to continue searching for good rock that can support me and also I need to find my internal strength and stand up. If I fall, the rope and the belayer will catch me. I will be hurt, but I will try again.

In this exceptional summer, I have experienced my changes and transformations. I have approved many challenges, like hiking with a heavy backpack in the heat, like jumping off the platform thirty feet above the ground and like running our final five miles; each challenge told me how to overcome the next one. Also, each goal reached is a trophy for me: the final run, teaching Boys and Girls Club kids, improving my English, my finished poem, my science project, and this final essay. My mind has transformed like when a caterpillar changes into a colorful butterfly. Each of the challenges during this summer began easy.



We had energy at the beginning, but after awhile, hiking, rock climbing, writing becomes slow, complicated, and harder. I was tempted to stop and find a good place to rest, but I decided not to give up. After a long effort, when the challenge ends, I feel great, incredible with a happiness spreading throughout my whole body.

All of these challenges and responsibilities are making me stronger and are preparing me for the future. My body is stronger and more flexible, but I still think that my mind is stronger than my body. I also experienced the feeling of being away from home. I learned how to appreciate my life and my family. During the solo day, I was thinking about the things that my parents have done for me. I started to realize that my family always is taking care of me unconditionally and I never have the time to say thanks. Working as a team, cooking for other and taking care of each other made me comprehend that I'm important and I need to appreciate my life.

Consequently, I'm starting to realize that life is not easy; we need to push ourselves to reach our goals. For example, during our final five mile run, it would have been easy to stop and start walking. But, I decided to take the challenge and feel the

extreme pain in my chest. Something in my mind told me to keep going. At the end when I saw the finish line, I felt proud of myself and happy at the same time. I felt an energy celebrating through my body, because I did it. This program is teaching me the right way to achieve an objective.

Now, during the last week of the ARC program, I am a new Gerardo. I'm a person mentally and physically stronger. I want to say thanks to the ARC program and everybody that made the existence of this program possible. Thanks to the people who shared their knowledge with us. Working as a team with all my ARC partners was a spectacular experience that never I'm going to forget. I really appreciated being here in ARC. This experience is going to remain in my mind, but especially in my heart.

This experience is going to be reflected in my actions and thoughts. My life is not going to be the same one, because now I'm a different Gerardo. I will treat my family with more respect and appreciate my parents' advice, cooking, love, and hard work. I will be the first person in my family to go to college. I will study electronics, because this is subject that I really like. I want to make my family proud of me and show them what I can do.

THANKS ARC!!!

Community Interviews

On July 17th, halfway through our summer course, ten community members volunteered their time to be mentors for our students. These are excerpts from the narrative biographies the students wrote about their partners.

Learning About Fabian Ojeda

Fabian told me that his family is the most important thing in life. In the same way Fabian's mom helped with his cancer, she also sacrificed to give everything to him and his siblings. Because his mom didn't have insurance, she quit her lower paying job, and she decided to work cleaning houses to pay Fabian's cancer bills. He had one sister and one brother and when they were children his dad seemed to like his sister and brother more because his dad realized that Fabian was gay. But now, they are friends and have become closer. He loves his grandfather unconditionally because he told all of his grandchildren that they were the best ones in everything and gave them presents and candies. Now, he is really close with his sister and sister's children; they spend time together watching television and they love each other.

- Cindy Rodriguez



Learning About Kori Soltz

When Kori attended Berkeley College, she had to work during that time to help pay her bills. The only person that helped her with these things was her dad. What a great role model he is for her. Her dad once told her "Focus, be patient, and manage your time." Also, he said, "Don't give up." She followed these words all the way until she reached her goals of becoming a resource for people that need help. Kori loves Spanish and that's why she works with Spanish speaking people. The reason she went to Berkeley was to learn Spanish and social work. I am glad that she likes to work with Spanish speaking people, because some people aren't like that. A few are racist. She impressed me that all Americans aren't racists.

- Ilse Bautista

Learning About Tina Hasche

Although Tina has a lot of challenges, one of the most difficult is her job. Tina, the owner and creator of Skin Deep Beauty Salon, has spent 26 years working extremely hard. "I love what I do," she added with a delightful smile on her face. I bet she does because she spent 10 years working everyday, but now she takes two days off to relax in her garden, golf or surf. She has no kids, but she considers her thirty employees her family. I think Tina is a very clever woman and a hard worker. I received wonderful advice from Tina, but the most important was not to fear and "Make fear your friend not a bad man." Everyone has fears, and a technique to defeat them is to take risks. According to Tina, "Taking risks handles fear," and I believe her words because the only way to control fears is to take the risk of overcoming it. Tina taught me a great lesson of how hard life can be. However, we need to keep living and enjoying life. She is my motivation to follow my dreams and my fears to the side, just like she did.

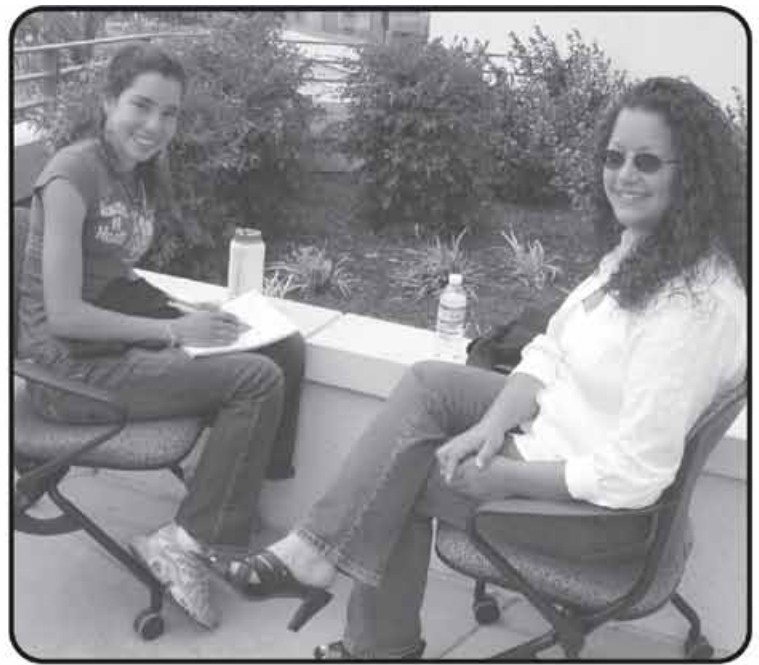
- Angela Lopez



Learning About Leslie Koda

Leslie had many challenges growing up. Getting into college was one challenge because she first started in a community college for two years. Then she decided to apply to the University of California at Santa Barbara and to the University of California of Davis. After a lot of hard work, she got accepted in both, but she chose UCSB because she followed her instinct. Immediately after she described college, Leslie inspired me in the way she got into college because I had planned that for myself as well. She told me that following your instinct, always dreaming, keeping hope, having faith, and accepting support will help me succeed. As a result, I am going to follow her steps. Her professional life is exciting because she is a director of an academic preparation program. She started it with other professional people that helped her continued it. Now, she works with American Indian students from kindergarten to high school. She is a counselor and makes sure that these kids are taking the right classes and their families are talking to them about college and also supporting their education. Her work is amazing supporting all these children because, how many kids would like to have that same opportunity? It's great that she cares and feels all that passion for those children.

- *Kenia Lopez*



Learning About Brian Rapp

Brian is a positive person that always sees a new day as a goal, because he learned how to appreciate life. He inspired me because he worked very hard to reach his dream. Brian always tried to do his best job. Even though he is from a older generation, Brian shared his opinions, ideas and solutions with younger generations. His solid idea to help others is already part of his personality. He told me that I can reach my dreams if I want, no matter what. He explained to me that they are helping us, so in the future we could help to others.

- *Geraldo Toledo*



Learning About Matt Jordan

I was stunned when Matt told me he traveled almost everywhere in Europe. This trip changed his view of life. Matt started off in New York, which was something new, since he's only been in California. From there, he said that he went to France for a week, then the South of France for another week, followed by a cruise in the Mediterranean, where they toured Rome and Naples. He was also able to see The Leaning Tower of Pisa. I was awfully jealous, and I was happy that Matt was telling me about his experience. The trip for him was a total wake up call. It opened his eyes to new surroundings and cultures; "It let me see how life is different all over the world, and it was just cool being in another culture, another way of life," he said. Hopefully, I will get to see the world in my own time, a trip that will inspire me.

- *Juan Hernandez*

Que Haríamos Sin Nuestros Padres

Papá! Mamá! Fuerón nùestras primeras palabras que aprendimos a pronunciar. Ahora que hemos crecido podemos observar las responsabilidades de ser madre y padre. Por que hemos crecido en diferentes circunstancias hemos llegado a tener diferencias, pero al final siempre terminan teniendo la razón. En el campamento de Aventuras, Riesgos, y Riesgos, aprendimos una variedad de cosas por ejemplo como poder sobre vivir por nosotros mismos y aprendimos a tomar las mejores decisiones como grupos. Estas habilidades van hacer una diferencia para nuestro futuro. Nos dara la oportunidad de sobresalir en nuestra sociedad, donde no solo se habla el Español, si no el Ingles mayormente. Hemos dejado nuestra vieja personalidad por un nuevo "yo" un ser con nuevo conocimiento y experiencias que haran una gran diferencia en nuestras vidas. Todo esto no hubiera sido posible sin ustedes. Gracias por avernos dado la oportunidad de poder participar en este gran programa. Los queremos.

~ Presented to the parents by all of the ARC graduates. ARC Graduation Ceremony, August 2007.



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