



University of California, Berkeley

ADVENTURE, RISK, CHALLENGE
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Writings of
The ARC Agents

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A Rock in a River of Helpfulness

I was a rock
Who was not helpful
On top of all the other rocks,
Being lazy,
Annoying,
Shy.

While all the leaves from the trees change
Falling to the ground
Covering the surface
from a dark brown to a bright yellow,
The rock waits, always the same:
Next winter, next summer
It waits on steadfastly.

But now,
I am a rock that has rolled down
From the top of a peak.
Rain
Washing me from the dry, steep, lifeless alpine zone.
A rock has all the time in the world,
But who knows when I will roll into darkness.



A rock doesn't feel happiness or sadness,
But I do
I have suffered.
If a rock falls
It breaks apart my heart.
I run from the death of my grandparents
In Mexico
Four years ago
And when my parents struggle, argue
Working 13 hours a day, no days off
This life bringing me down,
I am shattering.

When I am falling,
Sinking under water
My heart is black,
A dark blank space.
Family and friends see me sad, alone in my room
I don't feel like going outside
but they help me
my parents talk to me
I feel loved.

I am a rock
I have to keep going, to be better
Getting pushed by the river of family and friends from ARC.
When I was afraid of Rock climbing,
They cheered me up
I felt supported
I improved.

When I am Rock
Stuck against a fallen branch,
A challenge, stopping the river.
Friends and family flood me,
They open up the river again,
I can continue,
They help me when I am running
And when I get behind,
They cheer me up.

A rock is hard to break,
But it can break into millions of pieces
I still try to get better.
The pieces of me that have broken
Represent lost family members or friends.
But, I never break all the way.

Now I'm different
I help people with their problems
Of drugs and bad decisions.
I am not lazy,
I tell friends how they can become a better person.
I'm improving my English.
I'm a rock that is no longer dry,
Wet with compassion
In a river of helpfulness.
I help others.



Before ARC

Before ARC I did not care about other people. If somebody was in trouble I would just ignore them. I was lazy and unhelpful at home. I would not help wash the dishes or make food for my family. I did not care about learning. During high school I did not study hard, so I always had bad grades. I would just go to school because my parents made me, but not to learn. At home I spent too much time on the computer. I played games, emailed, and chatted. I did not want to take challenges. When I rode my bike around town, I would take the easiest route. If the hill was too big I would just go around it instead of going over it.

ARC changed me because it challenged me and showed me how I could help other people, how important it is to learn, and how completing challenges can make me feel good about myself. One of the challenges in ARC was rock climbing. This taught me to trust myself and other people. Before I went rock climbing, I was afraid to fall from the wall, but when I let myself off the rope it could hold me. I had to trust the belayer because I didn't think that the belayer and the rope could hold me. This trust in myself and others that I learned while rock climbing, helped me on the next obstacle of the Ropes Course. On one of the Ropes Course challenges I had to completely let go and free fall off a 40 foot tree. The only thing that was holding me was the harness, and the cable. I did not want to jump off the platform, but I had to do it if I wanted to get down. There was no other way down. During the free fall I was afraid that the cable would break and I would fall, but afterward I felt very proud, because I did it and it wasn't so bad after all. In the next Ropes Course challenge,

the Tower of Terror, I really had to trust myself. On the Tower of Terror I had to jump to grab the trapeze bar and when I looked down it was scary because I could see how far I could fall if I missed. But I jumped and I made it. I felt very proud because I grabbed the bar. During the ropes course everyone supported the whole group. Everyone knew they could do challenges because we were all supporting each other. I felt like I was a part of the ARC family.

If I was not in ARC, I would not have been able to rock climb, do the Ropes Course, kayak, raft, backpack, or express myself in my poem. I would never have spent 40 days with different people that have become my family. In the last 40 days, I learned a lot about myself, others and different activities. While rock climbing and rappelling, I learned to make an imaginary chair in the air so I could repel down without hurting myself and I learned how to use my feet more when climbing because if I used my hands a lot I would get really tired and weak. When I went kayaking and rafting, I learned that I had to keep my balance otherwise, I would fall out and it's really hard to get back in the boat. Backpacking was challenging to me, because I had to stay with the whole group. I am used to hiking really fast, but we had to stay with the whole group so I had to slow down to keep my pace slow and steady. The solo was the hardest part of backpacking, because I had to save my food and not eat for 24 hours. I learned to respect food because I realized what it was like to be starving. With the outdoor experience that ARC gave me, I know that I will spend more time in the wild instead of wasting my time on the computer or watching TV.

ARC also taught me leadership skills and how to work with the group. When I was the Head Honcho (the group leader) they were not paying attention, and they thought that listening to a kid was stupid. Every ARC student had to take turns, being Head Honcho during the 40 day program. At first I felt frustrated and angry. The instructors taught us how to be patient and to listen to the Head Honcho. Each week, it got easier to be head honcho. And now, at the end, it is easier and I feel more comfortable and confident. I have more patience with the group.

In the beginning of ARC, most of the students did not know me, so they didn't pay attention to me which made me feel like I wasn't a part of the group. And we started to know more people and about each others weaknesses and challenges for life. As the ARC students got to know me better they respected my decisions and what I had to say. As our relationships grew, we began to have more fun together and we had confidence in each other. Together we learned to solve our issues without instructors. Wherever we were, whether out in the woods or at base camp, we solved our problems as soon as possible. It was important to resolve our issues so that the group could always stay together to finish without problems. From this, I learned that if I have an issue with a person or a group it needs to be brought up so we can solve it. This will keep the group together and it will help the person who made the mistake to change.

Now I will bike up the hill and always challenge myself to climb bigger hills. I will try the best with my family, solving issues and not getting into problems with other people so my parents trust me and let me to go more places. I will get good grade at school so it can help me so I can go to college, and know more about things like Science, English and more school classes so I can graduate from high school and go to college. I will hang out with new people and I can tell them how was ARC and they could try to go to outdoors programs, like ARC and Listings Adventure, or more and I will tell them that they will have fun learning new things. You get to really work and you challenge yourself.

The Real Me

Encouraging people, sheltering them
Gazed at and inspired by unique stars
Rotating around the enormous sun, that brightens our days
Fluid, always sprouting
The further out the colder and darker
Inside the milky way, with unique stars and planetoids
I am the world

I am the tough world and outlive any obstacle
Vivacious and firm, no one will bring me down
Flail with enormous, quick as lighting comets,
Recovering, mastering with help of others

I am the world
Getting trashed, struggling to pick it up
Challenged to get rid of impurities
Friends may behave in a mysterious way
To either accept them
Or distance myself

I am the world
Created by a Big Bang
Two stars glaring at me
Grown-up and diverse
Once they faced my challenges
They understand me
Protecting me from harm
Distanced at times

I am the world
The moon lights on me
She's younger and smaller
Supports and illuminates me
Worried about her decisions
Never to become vapid
Rotating around one-another

I am the world
Inside me are many things
The core, my feelings
Sadness when the moon lets me down
To tell me she will no longer be there for me
That she wished she were away with someone else
Tsunami words that destroy me
High winds, trees crushing, and families apart

I am the world
Confusion: not letting people see what I am inside
But my surface is changing, continents shifting
No longer being the judging person
Away from the crowd
Avoiding the crowd
Classmates got hurt
Nothing happened
I never happened
Rolling my eyes like a frog in the pond
Independent



Stopping, no longer following streams
Not making new trails
Separating myself through collisions
No longer running into fires, chasing storms
Creating my own self like a river,
Making new streams
Joining tributaries

No longer a doll
Painted, white faced, unnatural lipstick
No longer the Ventriloquist's dummy
Deep inside me
A solid and stable core.
The world is changing and so am I
A metamorphic rock
Through pressure and heat
Combined to make one self
When finished colorful and textured

ARC friends support me
They are my real friends!
They show they care
I don't want to be a doll in the warehouse
A Ventriloquist to control me
I want to be a changing rock
A stable path with a moving river
I want to be the real me

Opened to anyone
Ready to love
Beginning a new life
Challenging myself
I am me

My Change

“Character is like a tree and reputation its shadow. The Shadow is what we think it is; the tree is the real thing.” -Abraham Lincoln

“Wake up, its time!” My sister would tell me every day whether it was for work or school. I would respond, “Five more minutes, don’t worry,” as I lay in my bed. At home I was a girl that was lazy at doing my chores, I gave my friends and family attitude when I didn’t like something. I would sit in my room with no one around; I would feel unsupported and full of sadness. I was scared to accomplish my dreams. But everything changed on June 24, 2008.

It was a sunny and clear sky, yet very chilly on the morning of June 24. It was my first day of ARC, the day to begin my change, to face my fears and challenge myself. When the challenging ARC program began I had seven other teammates and supporters to be with me and help me express myself about my problems and fears. The second week of ARC, during the complicated ropes course day, I began to get excited about the things that we were going to do. I had been to a ropes course before, but this time it was different. I had to challenge myself in every hard-hitting obstacle a different way. The day began with microscopic trust and courage towards the team, but once I got to the catwalk it changed. I was on belay and ready to go through the obstacle when I reached the top. I was scared and looked back down not trusting my teammates to have me on belay. Once I was crossing I realized I could trust them because they were massively supporting me and listening extremely carefully to what I would say to them whether it was “slack” or “tight rope.” I recognized that I not only had trust for them in the ropes course, but throughout the whole program. When the day ended I was so enthusiastic with how many tough challenges I had faced, with the help of others.

In addition to challenging myself, I also learned many things. While on the MOKE expedition, one of the days was a SOLO time. I was truly scared because I thought, “What will I do for 24 hours, what if there’s an animal, will I be able to sleep?” Once I got to my spot, I started to appreciate the great view I had. I began to think of all the things my parents have done for me and how much they want me to grow into an amazing young woman. On SOLO, I realized that I had more potential: the potential to give to others and be a leader. When the sunset began to come out I was indeed scared because I didn’t have a flashlight and it seemed like everyone was oodles miles away. Now I understand that it’s hard to live

with no one around me to care for me. The sunset began to go away and it was turning pitch black with only the stars gazing at me, but I began to think about being strong and brave for my family and especially my little sister. When the sunrise began to come out and the birds began to sing I was excited. I was no longer the slothful person that didn’t wake up. I woke up to look at the sun rise. I saw a contrast of the sun shining a dark, red brick color on only one tree and the remaining trees stayed a dark-green. I felt honored to have been the only one to see this beautiful and colorful tree. This SOLO taught me to understand my parents and appreciate everything they do for me and how people around me help me to become a better person.

However, I have also learned to become a better leader and work well with others. Even though it was hard at the beginning to lead my teammates on an expedition it helped me realize that there are many different people out there and everyone needs different attention and support. I learned to listen suitably to my teammates at whether it was a safe route, to go north or south, and communicate. Although I was the leader of the day, I did not always have the answer and I had to get help from my peers. I learned to trust them and never give up on them, because we always need to have a robust leader, whether it’s your first time or you have already done it. Being a leader felt really good because people would follow what you say and I would know that my peers trust me on my wise decisions. It takes a lot of courage to be a leader because when my peers did not agree with me it felt frustrating and I wanted to give up. This made me stronger because I had to be tougher and not be putdown easily with the comments the team would say or do. It also made me gain more patience because it was not easy being on a trail junction. On the trail junction we would spend time looking at our maps and deciding if we were on the right path, which seemed like a perpetuity of time.

Through out the summer I have improved a lot on my communication skills and support. I believe I have improved because before coming to ARC I did not allow people to know what I felt. In ARC I was challenged to express myself to others and speak up to my own opinion. I communicated with my ARC peers whether it was in the trail as being the Great Eye: The person in the group that decided the route of the day and which way is the safest. Moreover, I communicated better with my peers by expressing myself and not shutting down to everyone. When I expressed myself it made it better for me and everyone else because we would have more fun and I would attract the positive attention rather than the negative. I also improved my communication



skills with adults because when we had interview day I had to be more self-confident and open because they were here for us and they wanted to talk to us.

Nonetheless, I will have to return home. When I return home it will be hard for me to become someone like I was in ARC right away because everyone is used to the old me and not the new me. I will try very hard to take home what ARC has taught me communication, being positive, listening, being supportive, and a wiser person. I will communicate better with my friends and family by telling them the truth and not lying to them. The positive will be shown more through out school and sports because negative only gets you negative attention and I want the positive attention. My listening will get better with my parents and younger sister because they care for me; they tell me things so I can stay away from trouble and be a better person. I will be more of a supporter with my community and friends. The community needs the support of many people to become a more peaceful and happier environment to live in. I learned from community members about the issues in our community with youth. This impacted me a lot and made me want to see a change and be part of it. I will support my friends more by not letting them go towards the bad influences, but to look at the good ones. Even though I’ve gain wisdom during the summer, I want to become wiser. I want to be wiser because I want to be able to reach all my goals and achieve everything I put my mind to. I hope to take all these stunning traits back home and use them.

In the past 40 days I learned many things about myself during ARC. I learned to be stronger like in backpacking, I never gave up. My group supported me by listening to me and not letting me give up on my four core values: Determination, Compassion, Physical Fitness, and Style. I’m excited to go home and show my peers that I have changed and become a better person. I can go show them I can be a supporter that they can trust me, and I can listen. I will not let anyone change me. I feel like I am becoming a stronger tree now not worrying about the shadow, but the real thing. Thanks to ARC I found my true values.



I Grow Like An Eagle

I grow like an Eagle
small and fragile when born
needing to be nurtured
as I developed I learned
what my parents have taught me
how to be respectful
and that has helped me discover who I am
partly shaped by my surroundings and parents.
I have been shaped to be observant and responsible

I spread my wings like an eagle
first flapping my wings wildly and trying to stay up in the
sky,
strengthening my wings so I can fly
gracefully
a little nervous
about what challenges I will face,
I fly away
from the safety and comfort of the nest
that my parents created with their accomplishments

I face the world confused
searching to figure out
what I want to do
experimenting
to see
what works best for me
while discovering
what the world has to offer
wishing for an experience
that tells me
"this is who I am"

I will migrate with all the other eagles
building on how I've already grown
in confidence
in vitality
in independence
continuing to grow
in compassion
and confidence
I will return with a different perspective on life
I know who I am.

Confidence Rising Slowly

I, Oscar Hernandez, am standing at my graduation from Adventure Risk Challenge looking out at all the graduates, families and friends that have come to support us. I close my eyes for a moment and think about what I've done this summer. First, I picture myself having an ordinary summer if I hadn't come to ARC, sitting at home being lazy. I was afraid to take risks, always a follower who has a hard time making my own decisions. I only cared about the people that were really close to me. I made the decision to come to ARC one summer night at the dinner table with my parents. I was not sure what to expect from the experience I might have during the summer. I was afraid to leave my family and friends to meet new people and live with them for 40 days. But something inside me wanted to experience new things like rock climbing, hiking, ropes course, and staying out in the wilderness for more than a day.

One of the challenges that I knew that I was going to face was independence. My whole life I have had someone reminding me what to do and when to do it. In ARC, I was taught to be more independent by preparing meals for eleven people, keeping the camp clean, journaling about the days, being on time and reading on my own. I have learned to become more independent by taking care of myself and living in the outdoors. It was hard at first, but little by little I got used to having more responsibilities. Another challenge I faced was trust. During the ropes course and rock climbing, I overcame my fear of trusting people. While I climbed an interesting chimney at 90 foot wall, I trusted my group that they had me on belay. In rock climbing I challenged myself by tying my left hand behind my back and trying to rock climb

up the a crack: it was very difficult and fun even though I didn't make it to the top testing myself was most important. At the ropes course our group trusted each other both physically and mentally everyone expressed one of our fears or challenges in life. My physical challenge at the ropes course was to climb up to a platform that was forty feet in the air, jump and grab a trapeze. I looked at the trapeze like it was one of my life goals. That's what motivated me to jump and grab the trapeze. Before I jumped I told the whole group that my goal was going to go to college and to achieve my dream of becoming an architect.

One of the lessons I have learned in ARC was how to be a better leader. By being Head Honcho I learned to be more compassionate and to lead by example. At the end of the day the whole group would give me feedback. The first time I was Head Honcho I wasn't very patient and some people would ignore me when I told them what we had to do next. After that I started experimenting with different methods of leading a group. Everyone supported me and the support gave me more confidence. I also learned a lot of things from my interview with Neil Cunningham. He inspired me to try harder in school and to never give up.

This summer I have also learned to be more compassionate to others. By being more compassionate I have solved some issues with ARC group members that have taught me to be more considerate about others not just myself. At the beginning of ARC I had a conflict with one of my peers. I was stubborn and I didn't want to change my ways. But little by little I started being less stubborn and I took the other person's advice.

I told the other person what bothered me. After 40 days we support each other and are better friends. Now I give advice to other people so they can solve their problems with peers.

When I get home I will be independent and do my homework without my mom or my sister telling me to do it. I'm not going to be lazy like I was before. I will do something in the outdoors like hiking or bike riding instead of sitting on the couch and watching TV for five hours a day. I will become an involved leader and help make decisions or voice my opinion in school and with friends. I am going to take more risks and always try to challenge myself because now I know that these two will help me improve in school and in everything I do.

My goal for going home is to be myself, the person I have been at ARC. In the outdoors I have learned to take risks, be more active, and be more outgoing. Throughout the 40 days each adventure has taught me something new about myself and what I can achieve I can rock climb a steep cliff. I can teach plant migration to younger students. I can cook dinner like chile relleños for a large group. I can write expressive poetry. I am not afraid to be alone for 24 hours. I can be away from my family for 40 days and still keep on growing. After thinking about what I have done this summer, I feel proud of myself. I also feel motivated to discover what else I can achieve. All this, I'm thinking while standing in front of the podium I open my eyes look out at the smiling faces of my parents and friends. I have a fireworks-like pride: confidence rising slowly, then exploding with enormous energy. I'm going to continue lighting up the sky with leadership and compassion when I return home. With the support from my friends and family, I'm excited about what the future holds for me.



I Am A Ridge

I am a never ending Ridge
With steep slopes that connect mountains
I rise to the top of the peak
And suddenly dive to the mountains saddles
With new obstacles to overcome
With frustrating craggy rocks
That deeply changes my life within
But people only see
The jubilant side of me
And the horizon above me
It's difficult to express myself
To people yet to come

I am that Ridge
That people like to form
But if they knew
How I'm feeling within
With goals
That they set for me
It hurts deep inside of me
To see in a mirror
How my life is not yet let free

If my soul
Was meant to be free
I would be
The golden rod
That people like to see
To keep my head up high
With magnificent petals
That people
Would never want to change
So I can set and plan
My own obstacles and
Goals
Without people
Telling me what to do
And without forming me
But yet
If my soul
Was meant to be free

Now ARC
Has showed me the way
To find the person
Inside of me
The tremendous granite rock
That has hidden values
Is sometimes like a shield



Preventing me
From being what I want to be
But at times, my granite shield cracks open
And reveals the side of me
That I didn't want to reveal
Deep down in me
To share feelings
And emotions
I want to do this
But
It holds me down
I know
That if I do this
People will support me
By showing heart
And be sentimental
At times
So by saying this
I know the way
To letting my soul be free

I was a winter peak: lifeless, cold, and alone. I never cared about anyone or anything. I was always bleak, I stood there cold. When people showed emotions and feelings I never cared what happened to them. If they cried, if they were sad, or if they were mad, I just stood there cold, with no remorse. I didn't care about school so I fooled around with my friends; I ignored teachers and gave them crap, and didn't listen to their advice. My parents worried about the path that I was heading in, that nothing mattered to me and that I didn't care about school or my future. When I was in middle school I got expelled for my behavior towards my peers and teachers. My peak was never summer. It had no happiness, no sun and light, and no people that mattered in my life just my family, but I didn't listen to their advice; it was always darkness.

When I decided to come to ARC I had a lot of challenges. The most challenging thing for me was to leave my family and friends behind; I knew when I came here I had a new family, I had to share emotions and feelings with them, but somehow I couldn't trust anyone in this course even if I had known them from Kings Beach. It took time to trust them, but when Benny shared his emotions and feelings in evening meeting it changed me. It was powerful! I wanted to share emotions with others too, but there were people that I didn't trust; I knew them, I talked to them, but they always changed when they were around others. I'm challenging myself to become more real with others by being honest and sharing my emotions truthfully.

The challenge that changed me the most in ARC was my Solo time: 24 hours by yourself alone in the wilderness. It made me think a lot about how I am and how I need to be. In my life it doesn't matter how you look or how you dress, people that really care about you will accept you, and still be there when you need them the most. I also thought about taking things more serious and to be more mature when I needed to be. I learned to listen more to my peers that really need my support. I also thought about me being more focus in school by paying attention to my teachers. I will achieve my goal to go to college and be a successful EMT or paramedic. I will take things more seriously by not being a joker at times when it's not appropriate. I'm determined to stop getting in trouble with my friends by not leading and following the bad influences.

While I've been here In ARC I have seen a lot of people that were coming in to volunteer to work and one that I listen to the most was Emilio, because he just gives me a lot of support with what I'm doing. He also believes in me, he gives me great advice, "Don't get caught up with your friends, do right thing, you can make something huge out of your self." And he is right. Emilio has taught me a lot about life and

what I need to do so I can make a change in our community and in my life. He also said, "Make people proud, a lot of people care about you, and they want you to see you succeed." Emilio is a great influence in my life. Also Victor, from the interview, gave me great advice. The thing that will always stay on my mind is to, "Take every opportunity you get, and to stay in the structure, that there a lot of time for homework and school, to not get involve in gangs and drugs." He gave me great advice and I think I really got along with him. He is a positive influence in my life also because I can see what he went through. He knows what he's talking about because he went through gangs and violence and I understand

why he is trying to help me to do the right thing. I will always listen to Victor's and Emilio's advice ARC transformed me a lot because now I know that you can do many things in a short time. I have become more active and less lazy around the house and outdoors.

I'm going to be more active at home by doing my chores; I'm also going to be less gushy because many people are sentimental. I'm going to change with my actions that I take in the streets and in school, also at my home. Now my peak is all summer full of light, full of joy, full of life, full of trustworthiness, and I'm releasing my trust to others, releasing my compassion, and releasing emotions.



I Am Desolation Wilderness

I am Desolation Wilderness
With everything to offer you.
Inside my boundaries I discover moments of peace,
A sense of accomplishment on my peaks and
The confidence of strength.

I am a Mountain Hemlock Tree,
Medium and strong
With a branch to offer
My family and friends
and at the same time
Reaching out for what I want.

I am a creek,
Starting small, but becoming
A river.
Becoming stable each time
I end up at the lake, because
That's my destination.
Nobody can stop me.

I am a Mosquito
Pleasant to have around
But at the same time annoying.
People abhor me,
But that's who I am and nobody can change me.

The sun is my comfort, always by my side, supporting everything I do.
When I am sad, her energy gives me strength and
Reminds me to look at the bright side.
She gave me life.

The moon is always by my side
Protecting me and guiding me all the time.
Even though I do not see him until the sky is dark,
His reflection makes me feel his presence.

The stars are the people I care about the most
And they care about me as much I care about them.
My celestial siblings make me laugh
And make me feel like I am not alone.
Always by my side supporting me,
Just like the sun and the moon,
Their brightness makes me smile.

I am a Golden Rod
Always standing tall
Pretending like nothing is wrong.
But at the end I will always shine like
The bright beautiful flower I am

I am a new person
These past forty days



I don't care
How I look
I don't care
What clothes I'm wearing
All I care about is
Being Loud, and
Expressing what I'm thinking
Happy and Proud
Of what I have accomplished
Controlling myself
Without getting angry
Thinking about others and
Giving them
A strong Friendly hand
I've learned
Never give up
And just
Keep on trying till the end
I've discovered the
"Real Luminous Me"

I am Desolation Wilderness
With lots to offer,
Yet with lots of things
To discover in life.

I Am A New Person



This was a once in a life time experience. The date was June 30, 2008, the seventh day of our first, long, tiring expedition. When we woke up and walked to the 90-foot wall, I thought, "This will be really fun. Just get there and start rock climbing." I felt confident and safe because I thought Katie, Aaron, Morgan and Deborah were going to belay me just like the day before during rappelling. When we finally got there, I noticed the ropes and harness lying on the ground. Katie and Aaron circled us up and told us to put on our harnesses because we, the teenagers, were going to learn how to belay each other. As soon as I heard that I became nervous and scared because I began to think: "What if my belay team drops me because I'm pretty heavy?" Once we went over the commands, we were ready to rock climb. I watched Hugo and Benny, my belay partners, climb up and come down without any problems and thought it would be a piece of cake. Finally, it was my turn. I felt confident, but then I got stuck. I couldn't get up. I was tired. I felt weak and just wanted to give up after 30 minutes of trying. I decided to come down and I changed my shoes.

Before I came to ARC, I was a girl who helped around the house by not just cleaning her room but the whole house. But at school I supposedly tried my best but my best wasn't enough and I knew that. I was just too lazy to give it a 110% effort. It's hard to be the best and to give it 110% when other kids are smarter or more physically skilled than me. That's why I gave some effort sometimes but not all the time. Instead of going out with friends to have fun, I preferred to stay home and watch soap operas for three hours. Worst of all, I did my homework, with laziness because I had stay up really late to do it. I was always getting angry and frustrated for many different reasons. I just wanted it to be summer so I could get a job, have money, and buy anything I wanted.

Then one day at school, they called all the Hispanic girls in my grade to a classroom. A nice lady named Katie showed us a slide show about a program called ARC and talked to us about it. I applied hoping I would get accepted. Weeks later, they called me and told me I was in. I was really happy. I just couldn't wait for summer, so I could have fun, fun, and some more fun in ARC. At the same time, I felt scared to leave home for 40 days because I would miss my family.

When I got off of the rock climb on day seven, I took off my hiking boots to put on some rock climbing shoes. I thought they would help me climb better. I started to rock climbing and, at the same spot where I got stuck the first time, I got stuck again. The feelings came back to me. I felt weak. Because I spent another 30 minutes trying, I just wanted to give up. I looked down and heard everybody supporting me, "You can do it! Take your time!" They were guiding me. Then, I took a big breath and said to myself, "Como que no vas a poder, si si puedes." Which means, "What do you mean you can't, you know you can." I grabbed on tight, made myself stable and strong, and pulled myself up. I climbed the rest and reached for the carabineers. As soon as my fingers touched the carabineers, I felt proud of my big accomplishment. I felt supported by my group and thankful for them because they continued to cheer me on from down below for an hour and a half. In that instant, I knew I had a new family and friends to support me till the end. That is when I knew that the 33 days we had left together was going to be about supporting and caring for each other. I was willing to do it.

As the days went by, we fought and laughed like brothers and sisters. During other expeditions we progressively learned more about each other. Most importantly we learned how to care for each other,

support each other, and to work as a team. When final expedition came, we knew we had all the techniques to travel safely in the back country by ourselves. However, the group wasn't communicating to each other honestly when people's feelings were hurt. Even though we had our issues, we resolved them under the dark sky. As we giggled and cuddled together, I looked up to the sky. It was luminous and shining of happiness, and I knew we had resolved our issues like the real brothers and sisters we become in the past 34 days. I thought to myself that I should never take anyone or anything for granted because I will regret it. I can have a nice simple life with out all the comforts I have at home and still have fun as long as I have friends and family at my side.

Now thanks to ARC, I'll go back home to thank and appreciate my mom, dad, two sisters, and brother for always being by my side and supporting me. This summer ARC also taught me and inspired me to go return to school and give 110% effort. I will no longer let smarter or more physically skilled students keep me down because ARC taught me to never give up. I want be interested in school and to continue reading books, running, helping the community, being a leader, caring about others. I want to go back home and care less about how I look and more about learning so that I can look at the world from new perspectives. I'm an ARC graduate, and now I know why I shouldn't give up halfway to a peak even though it gets hard and tiring. I have to get to my destination because that's where I want to be: on the top with an amazing view of what I have accomplished, a reward that I deserve for my hard work. This summer I transformed to a new Beverly Olivares and will always give life and school 110% effort.

Leaving Soft Signatures

I am Fontanillis Falls
the river that tumbles and flows
down from Fontanillis Lake to the Velmas.

I sprint
carving through the granite
leaving soft signatures behind.

I get stronger and stronger as
little creeks join me,
my family supporting me
their cheering makes me run
faster.

Their love and trust makes me feel
invincible.

Together, we descend a mountain
Narrowing like a funnel.

I am challenged by trying to speak English,
a slow eddy going back upstream.

My current is Spanish,
fast, swift water.

I don't want to be angry,
splashing all over the place.

I want to be comfortable
in both currents.

I learn to go the right way
by making mistakes,
like getting suspended in 7th grade,
being rude to a teacher.

This trouble
helped me make good decisions.

I was bored at home, missing my friends
while they were at school learning.

I am a caring river,
nurturing fish, my two brothers and six sisters.

Our happiness keeps our water

Clear

our food is laughter,

a splashing river

smashing over two granite rocks

my parents, my mom Evelia

my father Jose Luis,

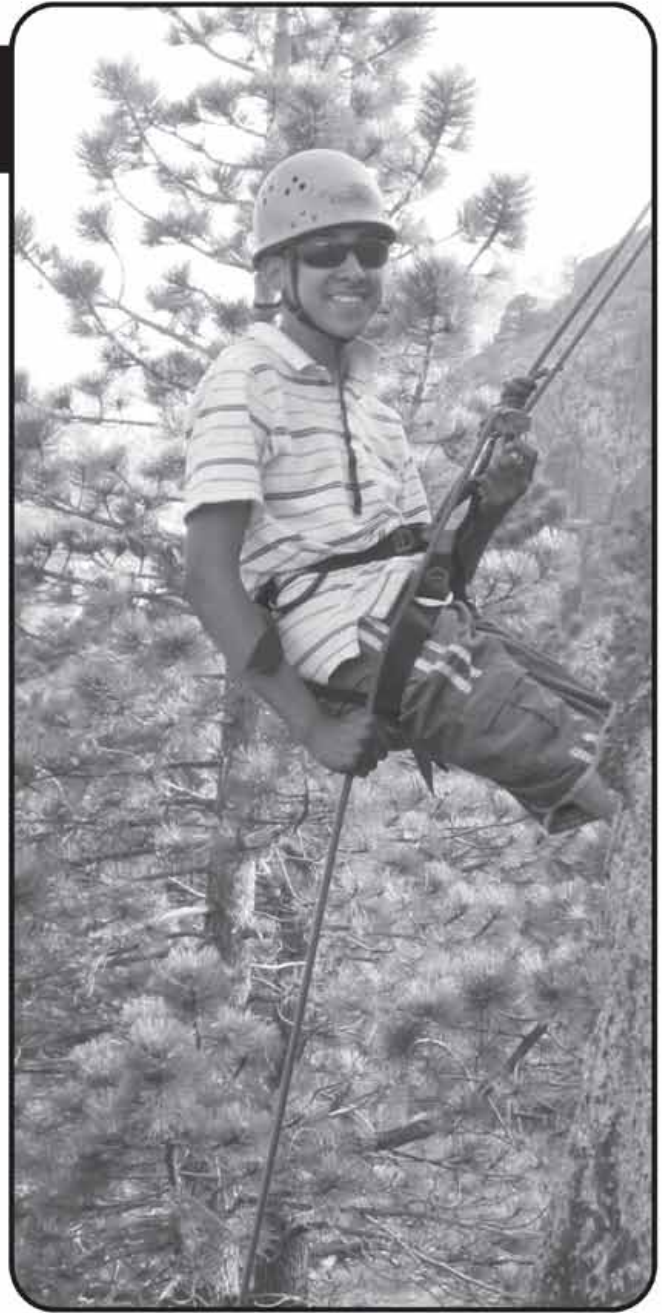
help me go after what I want.

They help me with sports and school

showing me the right path,

giving happiness to all around me and a

fragrant smell.



I am a free river,
that's going far away
fighting through tough times,
a river that wants to be heard

I am a happy river
succeeding in college,
endless possibilities,
lots of sunshine in my soul.

I am Fontanellis Falls
the river that tumbles and flows
down from Fontanellis lake to the Velmas.

I sprint
carving through the granite
leaving soft signatures behind.

I am a river.

A Deep Change

“Determination, Patience, and Courage are the only things needed to improve any situation.”--Unknown

On my first day of solo, I felt scared and missed my family. I had 24 hours by myself near Needle Lake under Granite Chief Peak. Thinking about my family made me miss them even more. I sat next to the creek on a clump of grass looking around. A tear slid down my cheek. Through my melancholy tears, I saw a grove of Mountain Hemlock trees nearby. I didn't know what to do with my sadness, so I got up and started to count them in order to distract myself. I kept thinking about my family. As I was counting, I thought of an idea; I would go sit down, and create a family tree. As I said each of my family members' names, I realized there were 35 people in my family tree. And there were also 35 Hemlock trees. This helped me feel safe, believing that my family was there with me.

Before the Adventure Risk Challenge program, I was an unappreciative boy who wanted all the new electronic trends. I never thanked my parents for buying me everything I wanted. On my solo, I realized that I don't need to have all of my electronic things to be happy. Family and the natural world are most important. I can be creative with what I have. During my 24 hours, I built a slingshot and had fun for hours. At the beginning of the course, I didn't want to go on solo because I was scared of being alone and faraway from my friends. But now I feel proud of myself for accepting this frightening challenge. There were a lot of challenges this summer, like rock climbing at 90-Foot Wall, backpacking through the wilderness for 8 days, writing essays and poems, waking up every morning at 6:15 am, teaching younger students about the Rufus Hummingbird, reading my poem in front of strangers, and sharing my feelings with the whole group. I have learned how to trust myself and friends this summer. I have more courage, especially from sharing my deepest feelings with other students.

At home, on the outside, it seems like everything is okay with me; I go to school, I run cross country in the fall and joined track and field in the spring, and I ride my bike around town. But there has also been this deep depression inside of me filled with murky and loathsome tears. At school, there were always other kids calling me names and making fun of me. In middle school, I began to think that I shouldn't be alive, that nobody wanted me around, and that I was useless. I would cry, and I would escape to my blue room, sit, then eventually fall asleep. I felt alone. I didn't want to tell my family. I sometimes didn't trust myself. Whenever I would fail in class, I would stop trying. I wanted to be something in the world. I tried and tried to make new friends, and

find a new happy life. But sometimes, I would say to myself, “why go to school and try, if I am nothing?” so I would shut down and not talk to anyone.

This summer, I just needed time away, not away from my family, but away from school, away from my messed up mind. I wanted to come to ARC so I could think about how I could change, how I could ignore the negative (bullets) coming towards me, and how I could feel more happy. Now that I am here at Sagehen, I feel safe sharing my life, the good and the bad. I have learned that the bad in myself isn't always as true as I think it is. Actually, there is nothing bad about me. Now, I can trust myself and other people, like my new family at ARC. I know how to appreciate people that do something for me, especially my parents who have been fighting for a better future. I want to thank them by making something out of my life because I know I have more opportunities than they had.

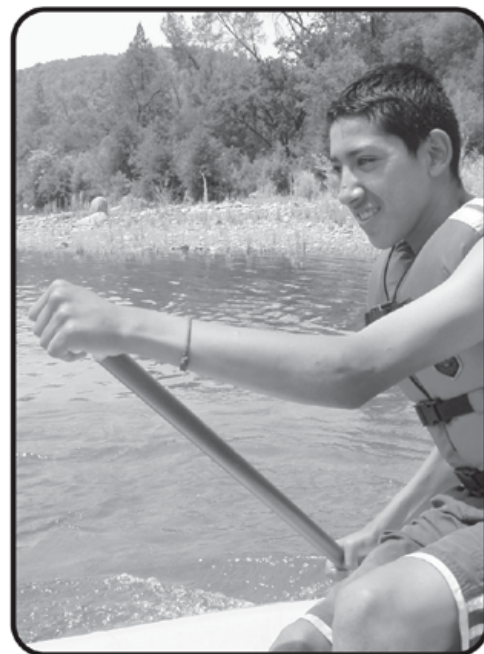
I remember the day when I got to the Ropes Course. It was a sunny morning, and I felt a happy nervousness; the ropes from the high catwalk were hanging down like a spider web calling to me. With my partner Franco, I climbed up the tree to reach the log that spanned 25 feet. Afraid of falling and my belayers letting me go, I looked down forty-five feet from the air, my body like steel; I was nervous, I asked myself, “do they have me?” I carefully started walking towards the other side, but Franco had to meet me in the middle. “How would we pass each other?” We hugged and twisted at the same time. We did it! I realized they had me, I could trust them, and I could do this. Now I could trust myself.

Now that the 40-day course is almost over, I want to make some changes when I go home. I will look out for others by helping them, giving them advice, telling them what's right and what's wrong. I will also help out around the house, help my parents more often, and think of others not just myself. I will try to ignore everything negative and stay positive and confident in myself. I will keep in touch with my ARC instructors and my good friends and talk to them when I am feeling sad. I won't let myself think negative thoughts about myself. Because I have learned that people that make others feel bad, only act mean because they feel weak and want to feel stronger. In the future, I will try to talk to them, and maybe show them this essay. I know this is going to be hard, and it is going to take a lot of courage.

I chose this quote “Determination, Patience, and Courage are the only things needed to improve any situation.” because this is what I went through in order to complete ARC. On the catwalk, I learned that I had to be determined in order to cross the log without falling and I had to try different movements. I was scared but determined. As the Leader of the Day during the

program, I learned that I had to be patient, because a real leader always has to deal with people who don't listen. At the beginning of the course, when I was Head Honcho, nobody listened. Like I used to do at home, I shut down and didn't do or say anything. But one day, Deb, one of my instructors supported me and helped make a circle to get everyone together and tell them how I felt. The circle of my friends who apologized also helped me learn patience, because they told me to keep trying. I worked on changing my tone of voice, my attitude and become more courteous as a leader. I changed for the group so we wouldn't fall apart. I also became more courageous and I learned how to share deep feelings with strangers, who became my new ARC family. Franco, who by the way, gives great advice, seemed as if he was the one with the same problem. We have talked a lot and he has helped me to understand that everything happens for reason. I know now that every situation becomes easier when I show Determination, Patience, and Courage.

ARC has changed me deeply. First, I have decided I'm not going to isolate myself in my room with sadness and bad thoughts. I'm going to share my feeling with some one who I know I can trust and will understand me even if I don't want to talk about it, I will push myself to share. Secondly, I actually had fun with people that became true friends. We went river rafting and splashed water all over the place like little kids. We laughed at each other as we played, and we laughed at the things we used to do when we were little kids. The last thing, was that I learned to feel secure in ARC, because there was no peer pressure and judgment. It didn't matter how I acted, what clothes I was wearing, and if I was clean. I feel wanted and loved here no matter what. And that made me succeed.



No Matter What

I am a tree of a mighty Red Fir
Patterned with snowflake needles
In life I always grow
I branch out for new information
Listen to the creeks and the wildlife
Birds always cheer me up
My branches reach for the warmth I long for

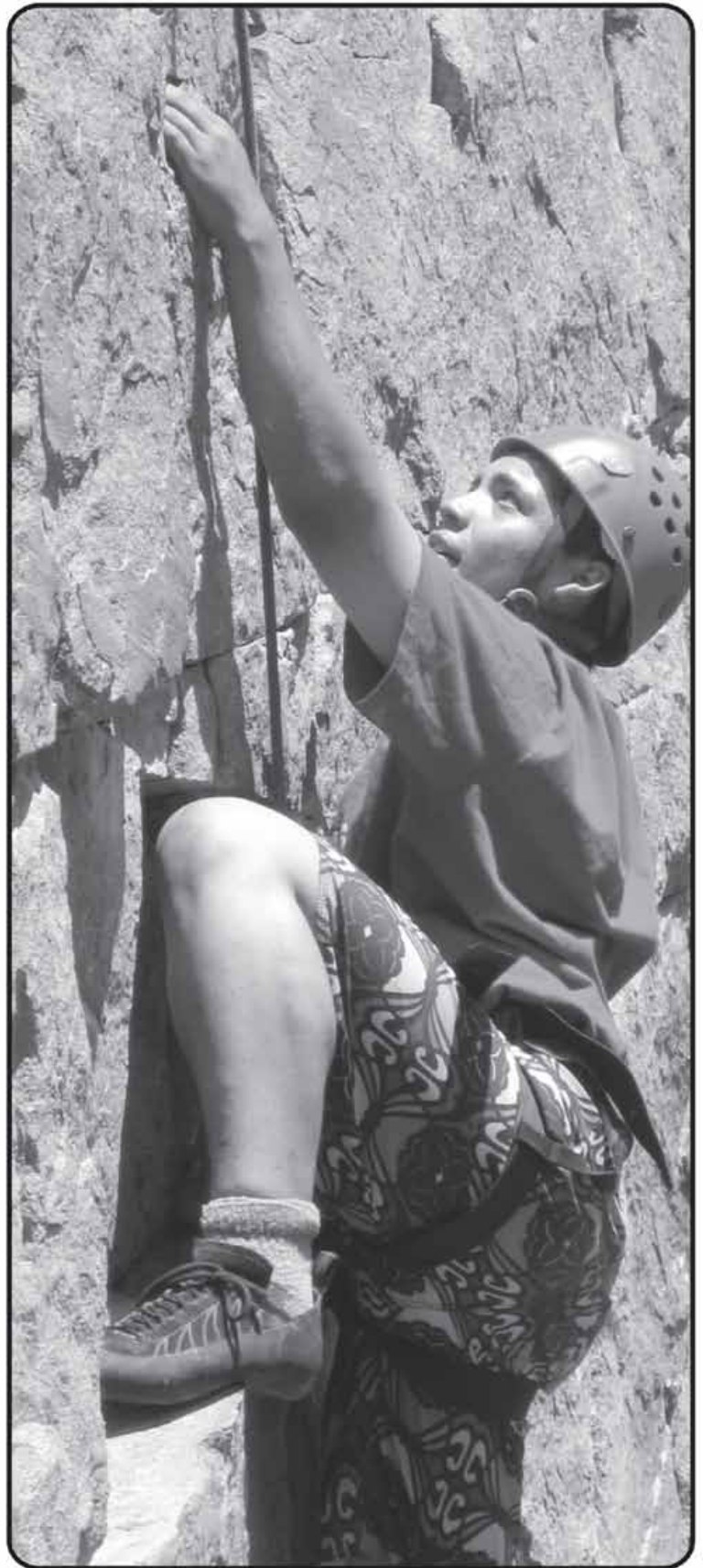
Lightening took my top off
It fell long and hard
It happened in a blink of an eye
The lighting sizzled through my trunk
I was as confused as if I was in a maze
The burning sensation just wouldn't go away
It shocked the life out of me
I felt scared and helpless

It was hard to keep growing
But I reached into my roots and held strong
Not wanting to give up
Because if I fell
It would have been the end of my being
And a sadness to mother earth and father sky

The days went by and by
The rings started gathering up
I grew wiser and stronger
Knowing my top fell off
I had to try harder to stay strong
By not growing the same as others
But differing from the other taller trees

Without my roots
I wouldn't be able to stand
They give me strength to keep going
They feed me what the sun doesn't provide
They give me nutrients and water I really need
My roots mentor me to never give up
No matter what happens they protect me
No matter what happens they help me succeed

As I reach for the sun
I collect sunrays and carbon dioxide
I get offered bad or awful carbon dioxide
With all the sunrays I collect
I just photosynthesize and forget them
I turn carbon dioxide into refreshing positiveness and honesty
I never forget who I am
Or what I believe in



The New Benny

Before this whole new experience, I was a troublemaker. In school I would be asleep in class, never paying attention. I was the class clown and would fool around, not caring. I wanted to make the teachers mad which made me lose participation, lowering my grades. I wouldn't pay attention to my mom or my sister; I would make them mad and upset. I would tease my sister till she exploded and just laughed about it. I caused trouble with my friends, which fueled my mom's anger. By coming home late and not returning my mom's calls, I made her worry about me. I was making difficult the lives of the people I love. But luckily, on June 24, 2008, the first day of ARC, I began to think of the way I've acted and treated my family.

A big challenge I had in ARC was teaching the kids from the Boys & Girls Club. It was hard to be a serious teacher. The worst of it all was turning into an adult, like a butterfly coming out of the cocoon. At times, I just wanted to be a kid like the rest of them, running around and having fun. But I knew that I had to keep teaching so they learned our topic about Mule Deer. I had to figure out how to have the information stick in their mind. It was hard to keep them from playing or fiddling with each other and interested in our topic. At times we had to be discipliners, which was no fun, but we had a purpose. At the end of it all we felt accomplishment. We all gathered up in a circle and talked about what we learned. It felt great when the kids explained how much they loved our activities and lessons, and even adults thought we did a good job. I learned that I'm a natural teacher and many people like the way Ruben and I taught the Boys & Girls Club students. Especially when we played the deer migration game they all understood and loved it and learned a lot from a simple game. I learned that I can teach well, by playing fun intriguing games which just made all the kids more interested in our Mule Deer poster. It seemed after each game they got more and more interested in it after each activity.

I learned many lessons that I will take back home, but to me the best lesson I learned was in rock climbing. I went into rock climbing scared and nervous only relying on myself. On the first climb I was going up the wall easily until I found myself trapped on the face of a rock. I wanted to jump but if I were to slip off I would surely die; well that's what I thought. But when I did fall my team stopped me from falling even though my heart stopped for a split second. After that I started to listen to my group more and try new obstacles even if I fell. I knew my team could

sustain my falls no matter how big or how small. I learned a lot from this new experience like teamwork but one lesson I learned from my ARC family was trust. I know how to trust people now and give support. It really taught me how support can help and improve people's successes and I will take this lesson back home and use it when I can.

Throughout my whole ARC experience I've been a good supporter to others by being the first person to open up to others about my family and the organization that helped my family out of a hard situation. This caused everyone else to open up. For example, Edgar consulted us about his family issues and cried and articulated his love for his family. Morgan opened up about his mom's diseases and shared how it makes him feel. Everyone is really supportive of our problems no matter what they are. Apparently I've been a good leader and supporter and it made my team choose me as their guardian angel. They felt like they could trust Beverly and me to take care of the group and to have the final decision on any issue during those four days on our final expedition.

My ARC family taught me something new, to be a leader. They always told me how to improve even if I had done really well the whole day. I always stay calm so my whole team stays calm and I try to help when I can. Even when I'm not the leader I try to motivate and push my team. They can be stubborn or lazy but if you stay calm they will eventually listen to you. To be a good leader you often have to take one for the team. Even if you're not a House Mouse (the group members who cleans dishes) or a Kitchen Walla (the group members that cook) you might find yourself helping so you are able to stay on sched-

ule. I think a good key to being a leader all around you must be calm and help to do other jobs or even solve problems that were bringing the group down. We all started as dreadful leaders but at the end everyone became a magnificent and prosperous leader through learning by trial and error.

Back at home I'm passionate about changing my ways for the better, like I learned at ARC. I will be more independent and try to do things by myself. I will help my mom to do laundry when she's tired and even cook dinner. I will go outdoors more and be more active rather than sitting on the couch. And I will try to continue my exercise routine I have here at ARC. I will get my friends to go camping or hiking and see how long they can stay out there. I will challenge my friends and myself to be more active and see how much fun we can have outside of home.

"Men do less than they ought, unless they do all they can," said Thomas Carlyle. I will try my hardest to practice all the new things I learned. When my parents come home dead tired I will help them with dishes and laundry and they can rest. I will take and apply all the advice to the fullest and be responsible by picking up the trash lying around. I will work my hardest to achieve my goals in school, like how I tried my hardest at the ropes course. On the Tower of Terror I climbed all the way to the top, but I didn't just stay and rest. I looked over as I saw Beverly coming up, and I helped her up the platform. We stood shoulder to shoulder, looking at the petrifying trapeze. I didn't just step off. I leaped all that I could, and grasped the PVC pipe as hard as I could. Like at the ropes course I will leap in academics instead of just walking off, as I will do in every other goal I will have in the future.



Always Floating

I am a creek,
Created by snow and sun,
Offering the universe water, energy and life.

I slither
Down to the lake
Fighting my obstacles and
Accomplishing my goals.

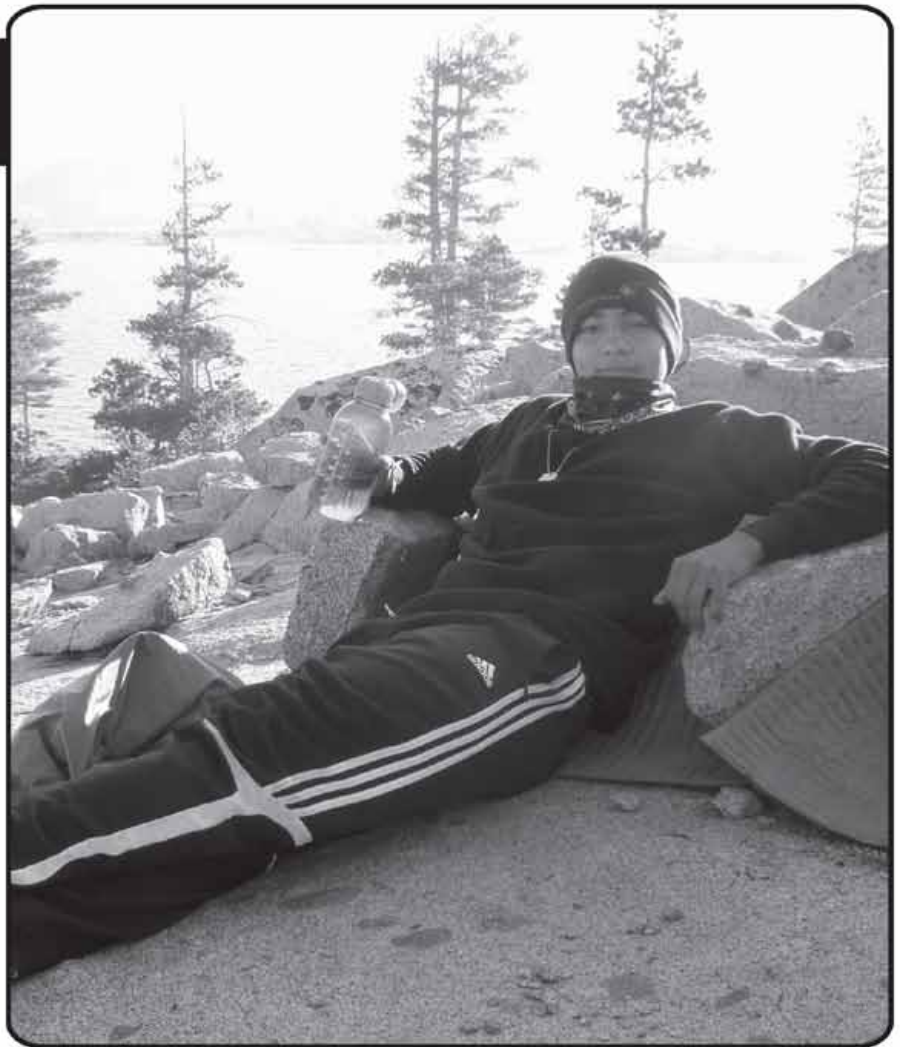
My life isn't easy; there are a lot of shortcuts
But only one way will work,
Keeping my self out
Of drugs, alcohol
And bad influences
That's how
I will reach my goal.

I am the smartest one.
I decide which way to go and be safe.
The deer, bears, and Indian paint brush.
Just see me from the outside.
Not from the inside.
Unless I discover the strength
To talk
To them about my life.

The characteristics
Of snow and sun are intrinsically
Within me,
Without these two elements
I wouldn't exist.

My enormous bright yellow star
Is always there
When I require her.
Acknowledging her, thanking her for teaching me
How to respect and be helpful
She has given me great style.
I shimmer
And she smiles.
This makes me brighter,
Safer and warmer.
Burning energy with infinite strength.

As I flow to the ocean
I know
When I get to the Gulf of México.
I will try to forgive him,
Make my anger disappear,
Give him a second chance,



I will float
Be proud of what
I have accomplished,
Without
His support.
What doesn't dry me out or evaporates
My confidence
Makes me stronger.
I begin quietly at first
Then I become a river
Because I am
Supported by Sun, Summer Search and ARC
Becoming more determined with other creeks.
Always saying to my self
Everything that happens
Happens for a reason.

Being two people-
The one that's on the surface is happy,
Joking, goofy, smart, and friendly,
Being like
A parrot never stops talking
The deeper one
That is hiding my dark,
Black anger

And the sadness
That no one really knows
Because I never show it.
The deeper one is always facing the problems
And never giving up.

I always look down,
Trying to change the subject,
Start being quiet
But that
Has changed now
Am raising my head up,
Being proud of who
I am
What I have accomplished.

I am a creek
That will never dry up,
A creek that will never vanish
For choosing stupid
Decisions,
Fighting always to survive.
To have a better life and
To keeping my self always flowing.

The New Beginning

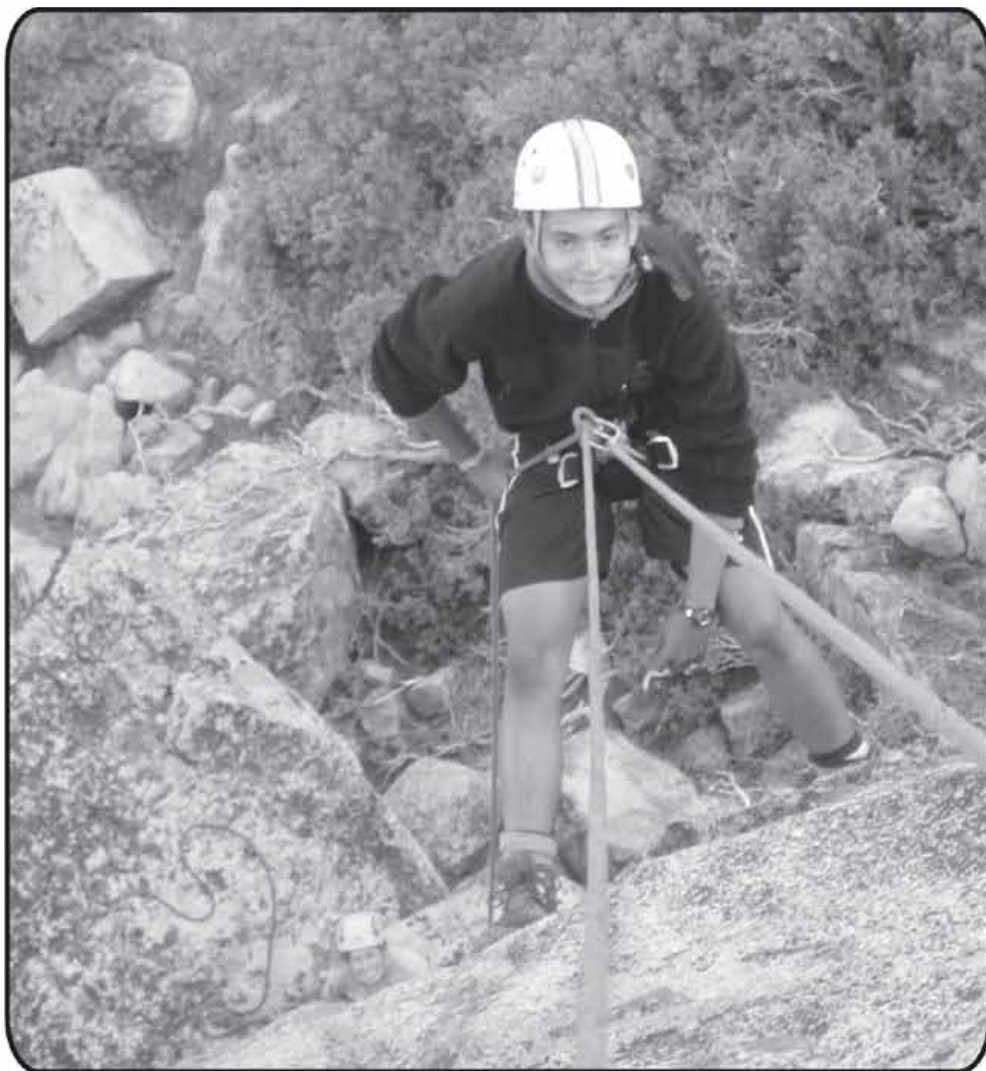
Imagine me: Franco Sanchez a soccer player and a competitive person that always wants to win. A boy that used to care just for himself and no one else. A boy that used to be strong on the outside, but weak on the inside. That's why I gave attitude to people, so they didn't see my weaknesses. I even gave attitude to the person that I love the most and loved me the most: my mother. All of that has changed now.

Now I am a boy that cares for everyone in life. Some young adults in ARC think that I am like a counselor because I listen to their problems and give them valuable advice. I give them positive advice that helps them see how much they are valuable. I have proved to them that I could be trusted because I listen to them. I am serious when they talk. I have eye contact with them and I put myself in people's shoes. Now I can care for my mom and I am sorry for what I have done to you. When I see her am going to tell her, "Mom, I have changed. I miss you and now I can give you less attitude and change my tone of voice."

First of all, coming to ARC was an arduous adventure. Riding four busses and one train was confusing and scary. That was my first time riding public transportation. When I got to Truckee it was difficult for me, I didn't know the place. I felt like I was lost inside a jungle. When I got to meet all the boys and girls in the program I started to get nervous and afraid to talk. They all talked to each other as if they were all friends, knowing each other for a long time. I was quiet and I didn't know anyone. When the activities came I was nervous. I didn't know how to do them; this was going to be my first time doing the ropes course, rafting, rock climbing, sea kayaking, backpacking, swimming and rappelling. I felt challenged.

After two weeks, everyone knew me like if I was an old friend. I wasn't quiet anymore because it seemed that everyone had interest in me. I had something to offer the group that they might like. Now I talk to everyone in the group, I can't stop talking. I am not nervous anymore. I like being here in Sagehen. Everyone is supporting me now in every activity that we do. I feel mostly supported when I was backpacking in the finals. I was feeling sick and my friends told me to drink water and take off some layers. My ARC family is always helping me. One person that is always there for me is my friend Ruben. He supports me. Ruben supported me by being in my side in ropes course when I was going to talk about my personal issues.

One activity that pops into my head the most is the ropes course that we visited in the second



week. A lot of things happened that day. "What is your greatest fear?" was asked by Katie inside the circle. We started talking about our personal problems that we usually would never tell anyone. When my turn came, I was resistant. At first I didn't trust them. I wasn't sure if I should talk to these people about my life. They supported me and motivated me to tell them. Then I found the strength from the bottom of my heart to talk to them about my father. I showed my weakness to other people. They gave me advice and have empathy with me. I'm now stronger by doing this. I felt proud of myself. I did something that I have never done in the past. I felt more confident with these people. Now they are my family. After the circle was over we were getting ready to do the Cat Walk. The Cat Walk was my favorite activity in that day. "Trust men and they will be trust to you; treat them greatly and they will show themselves great," once said Ralph Waldo Emerson. This quote makes me remember that I had to trust my companions on belaying me. Our lives were in each others hands. I felt secure with my teammates that if I fell they were going to keep me safe. The confidence I had on my teammates led me to do the Flying Squirrel and the Tower of Terror.

During Arc I learned to have determination. I

have determination in finishing my job of being a Kitchen Walla, House Mouse, Head Honcho, Great Eye, and Prolific Pen. I also had determination on writing really good essays. I especially had determination on finishing my poem. Another example is when I got stitches. I had determination to stay on the program and go hike the next day. I was really determined. Now I want to start an Envirovolution program in my school which focuses in environmental solutions such as green building. Green building is using more energy efficient methods of building.

Now imagine me: a person that cares for everyone. I am not lazy to wake up at 6:15 to go run and follow a heavy schedule. I listen to everyone in the group and give them valuable advice. I want to take the challenges as they come and never say "I can't." I thought I wasn't going to have a good time because I didn't know anyone, but the truth is that I did have one of the best times and hope to do it again. When I go home I will be the same person that I am in ARC: I have Compassion, determination, and helpfulness. I will show my compassion to my mom and friends. I am going to be determined to follow my dreams and go to college. I am going to help out my community starting an Envirovolution group.

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Gracias por darnos la oportunidad y confianza de participar en el programa de ARC. Sin su apoyo no estaríamos disfrutando las oportunidades que nos dan aquí. Queremos expresarnos para decirles que estos 40 días sin su apoyo no han sido fáciles. Ahora que los tenemos enfrente, queremos decirles cuánto los hemos extrañado y los queremos. Aunque fue difícil dejarnos ir, van a estar muy orgullosos de la persona que nos hemos convertido. Durante las últimas seis semanas nos hemos convertido en unos estudiantes de confianza, responsables, y jóvenes adultos. Hemos tenido muchas aventuras y responsabilidades como cocinar, limpiar, e incluso lavar nuestra ropa pero lo más importante de todo es que no nos dimos por vencidos y luchamos hasta llegar al final. Cuando regresemos a la casa van a ver una transformación grande. Durante los últimos días hemos ido a campar, escalar montañas, y quedarnos entre nosotros. También hemos escrito ensayos y poemas de nuestras transformaciones durante los últimos días. Queremos decirles que los hemos extrañado mucho, un poco también ustedes a nosotros. Gracias por venir a esta ceremonia tan importante para nosotros y gracias por apoyarnos desde el principio.

El programa ARC está comenzando su quinto año de servicio en la región de Tahoe-Truckee. Este es un año muy importante para encontrar fondos a largo plazo, para poder continuar operando los programas. Si usted tiene alguna idea, contacto, o recursos para compartir, favor de ponerse en contacto con Katie Zanto a klfeus@yahoo.com o al teléfono 530.205.5649.