



# adventure risk challenge

## a leadership and literacy program

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[www.arcprogram.org](http://www.arcprogram.org)

## Becoming The King Of Kings

I am a light, brown lion cub.  
I came from a lioness and a king lion.  
Sometimes, I feel powerless, feeble and vulnerable  
I am not yet independent. I still need my family

When I was little  
I followed my dad everywhere  
Like a puppy  
always behind him.  
Trying to do  
whatever he did,  
Always doing his best, always working hard  
to buy me what I wanted.

He taught me everything I know  
Base, Piano and how to survive.  
Once he tried to teach me  
An old song in the piano  
But I couldn't find the notes  
He showed me where to find the notes.

When I was fifteen years old,  
my dad, my best friend, died  
In Mexico.  
At home, my sister told me  
Dad had passed away  
I couldn't think, I couldn't breath.  
Just stood like a rock.  
Not saying anything  
Just watching my sisters,  
Crying like clouds  
releasing rain.

I felt like a leafless tree  
that had fallen  
I felt like a lion cub  
abandoned.

Last year was hell  
seeing my mom,  
breathing hard,  
her face burning red,  
She stood in front of my desk

Looking at my dad's picture  
And cried.

I had to stay strong for her  
and not cry.  
walking in the park,  
Watching kids play with their dads,  
I had to stay strong  
And not cry.

Sitting in the living room  
every night,  
Waiting for my dad to get back from work  
and realizing  
My best friend no longer exists.



Now, my dad  
who I always tried to imitate  
Is no longer alive  
I have to make my own path  
To survive.

I have to learn  
To play the piano by myself.  
I have to make  
the right choices by myself.  
I have to grow up  
by myself.

From my dad, I will take  
his determination to do everything,  
his compassion for all other people.  
his courage to overcome any obstacle.

I am a light, brown lion cub  
my challenge  
is to grow up faster than I expected  
to support my mom and my sister  
without knowing how.

I want to make my parents proud  
Especially my dad  
By graduating from high school,  
By going to college  
Becoming a professional,  
And do my best in everything.

Someday I will become the lion that my dad was,  
The King of Kings.

# The Birth of Independence

During the forty days in the ARC Program, I learned that in this beautiful and sometimes hard life, things will not come to me unless I look for them. Before I just waited for things like friendship to come to me. I never talked to other people that I didn't know before. I didn't think it was important to have a lot of friends that I could trust. I realized this when I was on my twenty-four hour solo. I was writing in my journal about all that I had been through with my new friends. The ARC family and I have climbed mountains together really fast, we've shared deep feelings and experiences with each other, and we have worked as a team to accomplish all the things that we need to do throughout the day. These lessons learned at ARC have taught me to support others, to be independent and to try to succeed at accomplishing my goals and not give up.

ARC has taught me the importance of helping and supporting others both mentally and physically. Before ARC, I didn't care about others, just about myself. If people had troubles and they asked me for help, I just started walking away from them. Now, I have gained the knowledge of how to support and give to other people that need my help. Eight people showed me that if we don't work as a team, we are never going to accomplish what we want. On the second expedition, I started to see that others supported me a lot by encouraging me to never give up in

the challenge that life has for me, so I had to do something for them. I supported them back with compassion and encouragement so we could become an invincible, strong family. A lot of the times, I felt homesick and alone. The ARC family gave me a lot of assistance and I tried to provide for them as well. When my ankle started hurting a lot the ARC family told me that we could make it to our destination and they would never leave me behind. I felt important and determined. I supported them by encouraging them and giving them my best and being compassionate. In ARC I learned that by taking responsibility and helping each other, we can finish our work better, faster and safer.

To be independent, I need to make my own choices and do what I want, not what other people want me to do. My time at ARC has shown me that nothing will come to me easily and I have to



work for it. When I was at home before ARC, I always got what I wanted without doing any work. My dad always bought me what I told him to. Now that my dad is not here with me, I have to do most of the things that he used to do for me and take on a lot of responsibilities like taking care of my mom and sister. Here at ARC, I have to cook for the group and for myself instead of just waiting for the food to come to me. My ARC family has given me the courage to be more independent than I used to be by showing me my full potential. Now I believe I can succeed in what-

ever I put my mind to. I learned I could succeed in anything during the ropes course. I climbed up to the log with energy but when I was on the log forty feet above the ground, I started to feel scared because I thought I was going to fall. Even though the log was thin and it was hard to walk while the wind was pushing me to the sides and making me lose my balance, I crossed it. I did the swing without thinking about it. When I was in the top ready to do it, I started to feel butterflies in my stomach. Before I came to ARC, I didn't care about my future or education. Instead of doing homework after I got back from school, I just started playing video games and watching TV all day. Now after ARC, I realize that putting my best effort towards my education will help me to get the career that I want and to not end up doing physically hard work.

Now I help others to succeed in their goals, I'm responsible to finish my work and always make the right choices and am determined to reach my goals. I learned that being lazy is not the key to be the man that I want to be in my beautiful and hard life. Thanks to what I learned in ARC, I'm going to support others by giving them the help I can and always tell them to do the right thing. When I can not do my work by myself, I now know I will need to ask other people to help me so I can do my work faster and safer. In order to become independent, I need to start working to buy what I want and not just ask for it without doing anything. I now understand that nothing in life is free. My goal is to have a career as an architect. I want to support my mom with the money I earn. I'm going to accomplish all of these goals by putting all my determination into them. I know I can become the man that I want to be *by believing in myself; believing that I am number one in everything I do.* I can have the life I want to have if I only keep trying and following my dreams.

## Free and Independent as the Wind

I am the wind  
Invisible but unbeatable  
Nobody can stop me  
From accomplishing my goals,  
Getting good grades,  
And coming to ARC  
Sometimes I stay quiet  
And not express my ideas  
And sometimes  
I am so fast  
That I speak before I think

I am in my home, the valley  
And I am going to the top of the mountain

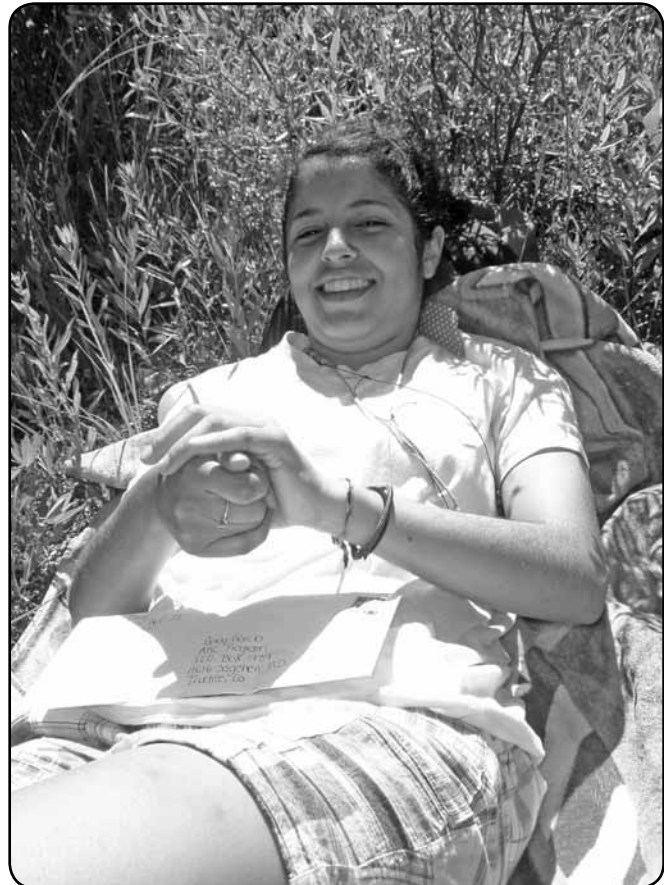
Living in the valley  
I feel comfortable with my family, the mountains  
Keeping me safe  
And giving me everything that I need  
Food, clothes, love and support  
But at the same time  
I feel stuck  
Because I don't want to depend  
On everyone around me  
I am growing up and  
I have to be INDEPENDENT  
And have freedom  
So that I can learn  
From my own mistakes  
And when I reach the top of the mountain  
I will be able to solve my own problems  
And make my own choices

To get to the top of the mountain  
I have to take on new responsibilities in life,  
Find a job, help my parents and do chores at home  
Feel proud of myself  
Show my parents  
That they can trust me  
And take every opportunity  
That life offers me.

I am the wind  
Giving fresh air of  
Love, support and compassion

To the mountains around me  
And only blow hard  
When I need  
To defend myself from my enemies

I am the wind  
Searching for the best route  
To the top of the mountain  
I don't know when I will find my path  
Today, tomorrow, or another day  
But I am going to  
Reach the top of the mountain  
While I look for my way  
I have to turn my whistle into English  
Get good grades at school and  
Learn from my own mistakes  
So when I reach the top  
I will make my parents proud  
And I will be as Independent as the wind



# My Adventurous, Risky and Challenging Life

Mount Tallac was a high and rocky peak. As I hiked to the top my feet were stumbling over the huge rocks that I crossed. I started asking myself, "When are you going to reach the top? It's going to be worth it to hike this peak?" while I was asking this questions to myself, I was watching behind and in front of me to see if all my team members were doing well. Finally when I reach the top I saw a wonderful view of Lake Tahoe. I could feel the fresh air refreshing my warm body after a long and hot hike. I realized that Mount Tallac was worth it to hike because it symbolizes my present and future life. The bottom of Mount Tallac represents my present. Right now, I am learning about my life and becoming more independent. My future is the top of the peak. Every time that I work hard and listen to my parents' advice, I get a step closer to the top of the peak. This mountain in my future is my career as a sports caster or a nurse. My future is still far away but if I keep getting good grades, staying away from drugs and listening to my parents, I am going to reach the top of Mount Tallac or maybe a higher peak. The most important thing is believing in myself and not giving up in the middle. If I keep going, I will reach my future. For example, I will have a successful career and buy a house for my parents so they don't have to work and pay rent anymore. I faced many challenges in ARC, like hiking this mountain, that helped me to believe in myself and that I will accomplish my goals in life.

The challenge of sharing forty days of my life with eight strangers helped me to become a free individual. These people that I had never met helped me to become more independent. Everyone was responsible for different jobs everyday. I realized that my mom wasn't here to do my chores, so I had to be independent and do the chores by myself. I also realized that my hard working parents were always making the best decisions for my brother's future and my future and we never realized that everything they have done is just for my brothers and I. My ARC family members taught me to be compassion-

ate and care for other people, especially when they weren't feeling well or they were having a hard time. I realized they are like my brothers and sisters and I have to take care of them. They always trusted me, believed in me and took care of me. For example when I was the headhonorcho, the leader of the group, or the great eye, the one who always knew the route that we had to travel, they knew that I was going to make the right decisions. This made me independent by making good choices on my own that were good for the group. All the values and events of this course helped me to become more independent. Now I like to do things by myself and not depend on other people because now I am different and independent.



The twenty-four hour solo helped me to believe in myself and overcome my fear of being alone. Before I came to ARC, I was very afraid of being alone. When I was alone at home, I felt like ten minutes was one hour. I couldn't find ways to entertain myself. I was desperate and bored, sitting on the couch, watching T.V. and waiting for my family to come back home. When I was on my solo I thought, "What am I going to do here? Am I going crazy?" After a time, I realized that I didn't have to be afraid of being alone because it was just one day of finding the true "Gaby" inside of me and nothing bad was going to happen. The true Gaby is not the one who was sitting on the couch or using the computer because she didn't have anything interesting to do. When I lived in Mexico, I was very active in sports and when I came to the U.S., I quit. Playing soccer is very important to me because I am good at it and I enjoy it. Quitting soccer has made me feel sad because I am lacking support from my dad and my team. I decided I will start playing soccer like I used to so that I can be true to my self. Being true to myself also means surrounding myself with people who care about me. I found out that is better to be alone than to be with people who don't care about me. I don't want to surround myself with people who are bad influences and put pressure on me to do things that I don't want to do. The twenty-four hour solo

helped me to discover the real girl that is inside of me and I know I am ready to overcome my future challenges.

Succeeding at the challenge of speaking English for forty days helped me to become confident to speak up. I discovered that I am no longer the girl who was shy about speaking English or saying something wrong. Now I am more confident and I believe in myself. I discovered this by thinking about the 2 years of my life that I have been living in the U.S. At first I was really shy and I didn't want to speak English because I thought people were going to laugh at me because I have a "Mexican accent." In the very bottom of my heart, I wanted to practice my English to show my dad that I was learning and that I wasn't shy like he has always said. Now I feel that I have found an enormous part of me that I didn't use that often: confidence. Now I feel that I am more fluent because I speak more English than before I came to ARC. ARC has helped me a lot with my English skills, because now I can say that I am bilingual and confident.

The adventures that I had in ARC helped me to believe in myself and not be afraid of life. This forty day experience changed me a lot, physically and mentally. When I go back home, I will thank my parents for everything that they had done for me and my brothers. I realized how much they do for us and how much I can help make their work less. Gaining independence is going to help me to not depend on my parents like before. Now I am confident and independent and I can help my family like they have helped me. Being with myself has taught me who I really am and what I really want. I am not afraid to be myself and ask for what I want. I want to play soccer again and I want to practice my English. At school, I will practice my English with all my friends and ask questions to my teachers when I don't understand something and not be shy like before. Just like gaining independence will help my parents, it will also help me to aid my community. I will do community service and volunteer in ARC because this is a program that gave me a lot of knowledge and helped me to find who I am in reality. I hope I can achieve all my goals in my future and help my community especially ARC.

## Releasing From the Eye of the Tornado

I was a cloud  
Trapped high in the sky  
In a net of fear and RRRAGE!  
Surrounded by my enemy  
The AIR  
Blowing as strong as a tornado  
Destroying everything in his path  
My father  
I do not want to pronounce his name  
It's not in my vocabulary-  
Made my childhood a HELL  
Getting  
From school  
Trying to defend my mom  
From his fist.  
Yelling at me  
Hitting me.  
My mom couldn't do anything  
Cause she would suffer too  
He did not let us go out  
From the bedroom  
Not even to the kitchen  
He was the air that we breathed  
Every second  
Holding us back  
Me, and the three parts of my heart  
The sun, the moon, and the stars  
Trying to protect them  
Shield them from the future that we  
Don't want  
Suffering the rest of our life

I was a cloud  
Only moving in one direction  
Trying to stop  
The hate that he blew against us.  
Especially me  
For protecting my mom,  
For putting my SELF  
In the eye of the tornado  
Blowing around us  
The Air  
Trying to go through my wispy white arms  
That I couldn't stretch wide enough  
To protect the three parts of my heart

The sun, my mom  
Who gave me the fire to fight back  
The moon, my little brother  
The protector that I never had  
The stars, my little sister  
That I love with all my heart  
They are the ones  
That give me strength

To keep going.  
Our enemy the air always found his way  
To hurt us  
And to show that he was a man,  
Not knowing that a Real Man  
Is someone that doesn't hit his wife  
Or his children

I was a cloud  
Always shifting shape  
It is hard to concentrate  
Neglecting  
School, home, friends, and myself  
No time to do anything  
But think  
About what would happen to me  
When I got back from school.  
I could see the air coming  
Towards us  
With a ton of energy  
Blowing ripples across the water,  
Our tears that we wept, rain storms with  
each other  
I had to run to protect  
The sun, the moon, and the stars  
I open my wispy white arms  
To try to stop the angry gust of wind  
Blowing our way.

I am a cloud  
Six years ago  
God helped me to get our enemy,  
The Air,  
By sending us an angel to take  
Him away  
Everything changed  
I became a cloud  
That can flow around freely  
The sun warms us with love  
The moon and the stars  
Began to glow as never before  
Even though it has been

Now  
Even though it was  
A hard time  
I thank my dad for treating me that way  
He never meant to give advice  
But I learned from his acts  
To be careful  
About who I want to spend  
The rest of my life with  
And find the Right path

For me.

I am going to  
work hard  
Educate myself  
Become a nurse,  
Lawyer,  
police man,  
Or an FBI agent.  
Make my mom's dream come true  
Give her a better life  
The life that air never allowed her to breathe

She always put us first  
Making sure we had eaten  
And then eating what was left  
I will carry her problems  
So she can take a break.  
Buy her all the things she never bought  
herself,  
Because she wanted the best for us

I will help my brother  
To not become a tornado  
Hurting the people that love him  
Not making that love go away

I will give my sister  
The Gift  
Of not going through the same  
Thing I did

My biggest goal is to show the air  
That he was WRONG  
He said one day:  
"You are not worth anything."  
But I am worth much more  
I am worth MORE than him

God, life and my mom  
Has taught me  
How much I'm worth,  
And that  
"I CANNOT do it"  
Doesn't exist  
In this world  
Because we can do anything  
Bad or good,  
We have the choice

Finally I have ESCAPED from  
The net in which  
I was trapped.  
I am released from the eye of the tornado.



# I Found What I Was Looking For and Now I Am Headed to the Future

The most important thing to get where you want to go is to have support and trust in yourself and those around you. I realized this over the past forty days at ARC. I thought I was not going to make it by myself; the program seemed very hard and also it seemed that I was not going to be able to be away from my family for a long time. During these forty-days, I created a second family. With them I have learned how important it is to trust myself and the people around me. This first became apparent with rock climbing on the first expedition. When the harness was strapped on tight to me and tied to the rope, it seemed very hard and I did not think I was going to get all the way to the wall because I didn't trust myself, my group or even my family. Those were enough reasons to stop, but I had to go on. I started climbing. The first part was easy but when I approached the middle of the climb, it became harder and harder. Soon I was unable to find a route. I told myself, "You can't do it. Just go back. You are not going to make it. You are just wasting time." So I decided to tell them to let me down. "No! Imelda you can do it! You are almost there!" yelled Wendy. Her voice was full of support. Then the rest of the group screamed at me to keep going. I did the correct thing by listening to them and going on because I completed all of the activities we had to do during the forty days. As I reflect on the ARC program, I say to myself that over this summer I have learned to trust and support myself, my team and my family.

After forty days I have learned to trust and support myself. I never imagined that I was going to find the real me and change so profoundly. I stayed quiet for years. I did not want people to know that I did not encourage myself enough to keep going without giving up at the first boulder in my way. After helping and caring for my ARC family and having big responsibilities, like being the head honcho, I understand that if I believe in them, it will be easier to believe in me. I took them on the correct trail and on time to our destination on the expeditions. They showed me that they felt safe with me. I know that in trusting myself, I will be able to make my goals come true

and take on big responsibilities. Trust and support is the key to life.

Having the trust and support of a team not only makes me feel that I have another family, but also that together we can be proud of our achievements. During the climbing adventure, I realized what wonderful people were around me. They showed me that they wanted me to keep going and they helped me to not give up easily. That was enough to understand that the team was like a family. All of their support was a key to open my mind to understand what supporters they really are. While I was walking on my path in ARC, they showed they trusted me by telling me personal life experiences that made me reflect. When they told me about their real life, I told them about my real life, in how much I struggled in life because of a person that made my childhood a hell. I realized those words that I was hiding from everyone. Since I trusted my new friends, I let them fly through my mouth. They paid so much attention and felt what I was feeling. They respected me while I was talking and gave me love, love that I was seeking for a long time. On our third expedition, I was not feeling very well. I was sick. I wanted to throw up. I got dizzy and I couldn't keep going. The team tried to do their best to help me and to make me feel better. They took some of my stuff that I was carrying and told me to go to the front. They checked on me all day making sure I didn't need anything. I reflected and changed my idea of thinking that nobody cared about me and that I was not going to get love from anybody.

All that my ARC family has shown me, I have realized that having the trust and support of my family is the best gift in my life. That's the key in my life to follow my goals. Before the solo day, my plans were that while going to college, I was going to get out of my house and be living alone. As days passed approaching the solo expedition, I wanted to go running to be alone. But when the day finally came I experienced that being alone is a horrible thing. I real-

ize how important my family is for me and that I really don't want to be alone. It is a very scary thing that I really don't want to go through. If the solo day expedition had never happened, I don't think that I would have ever imagined how much my family has done for me. Rock climbing also really made me think about how much my family supports me and trusts me. I was scared and I had fear. In the rock climbing I was scared to fall and not experience it completely. After I made it to the top of the rock I realized that if I could trust my team, how come I wouldn't trust my family. I know that they would give their life for me and that they will do a lot of things for me. I also realized that nobody will forgive me if I commit a mistake. If my team showed me this support and trust, my family will do it more than anyone else.

Now that I am headed toward my future and after having this wonderful experience over the summer, I learned how to trust and support myself and those around me. I have found trust and support in myself because now I do things that I would have never done before. The trust that I have found in myself will allow me to be available to those that need me, most importantly my family, friends and community. Now that I have the support and trust of others, I am available to address the problems that we have in my community. For example, I want to involve more Hispanic people in programs that will help them with their future and to prevent them from committing a mistake that they will regret. Also, I want to get involved with my school leadership to make money so they can continue to have the special events that we have each year. I consider my community my biggest team. They support me as much as my family. I discovered that my community has offered me their help a lot of times but I couldn't see it because I just did not care about it. I am determined to be involved with them to help them to overcome the problems they have. They are working on the same problems I am interested in. Being away from my family, I want to go back and show them that I really trust them and that now if I have a problem, I know who to go to. I will have the support of them more than anyone else.



## Friendship Goes On

I am the fire, blazing eternally  
Nothing can cover my light.

I am the song, surrounding your soul  
Sometimes low and sad, sometimes high and exciting.

I am the stream, crossing through your heart  
Not so fast, but smooth and peaceful

I am the guiding light, shining at your road  
Maybe not so strong  
But it's enough to lead your way

But the fire wasn't always warming.  
It burned.  
I remember the time that I couldn't comfort you when you  
cried in front of me.  
I could hear the sound of your heart breaking apart.

The song wasn't always praising.  
It teased.  
I remember the time that I kept picking on you when you did  
something wrong.  
I could see the tears almost dropping from the corner of your  
eyes.

The stream didn't always flow softly.  
It flooded.  
I remember the time that you got into trouble when it was my  
fault.  
You got insulted by all your friends except me  
I didn't help you out but just watched because of my fear.  
I could feel the pain all over your face.

The light wasn't always reliable  
It disappeared suddenly.  
I remember the time that I saw your anger explode in your  
body when you argued with your classmates.  
I couldn't show you the way to rid yourself of it but just  
ignored everything.  
I could see the sadness in your eyes.

But friends

I will warm you up when you are alone in the storm.  
Can you recall the moment that I stood up and took the pun-  
ishment for you when the teacher saw the broken window?  
Could you see the determination in my eyes?

I will provide solace when night is approaching.  
Can you recall the time that I stretched my arm out to you  
when you fell down in the rain?  
Can you feel the confidence between the droplets on our  
faces?

I will nourish your dry mind when you get lost in the desert.  
Can you recall the moment that we put our heads together  
when you were sobbing in my embrace,  
trying to comfort you of the depression from failing your  
final?  
Can you feel the hope from my arms reaching out to you?

I will light up the darkness when you are going forth into the  
murk.  
Can you recall the moment that I blocked the fist from your  
enemy when he was punching you?  
Can you hear the strength splitting the wind by the sheer  
force of my knuckles?



Friendship goes on  
Never being separated or desolated  
No matter whether I am fire, song, stream or light  
No matter when we left, where we go, what we do  
No matter what we had in the past  
We were  
We are  
We will be  
Friends forever.



# Sunset Shining Eternally

The solo day was the day for me to stay alone and think of myself. I sat on my pad in a nice spot, listening quietly to the creek beside me smashing the rocks in its path. The warm sunshine covered my body and I melted myself into nature. It was such a comfortable feeling that I never had before in my life. How charming the sunset was. It was already dusk. Although the sunset is a normal event and there are many views greater than the sunset in the world, it never looked the same as before. I began to notice that I missed my community in San Francisco a lot. My experience at ARC has changed my attitude towards my community, and has made me think of what I was before, what I am right now and what I am going to be when I finally return there.

I was not appreciative of the comfort provided by my community before ARC. I started to recall the first time I put on the thirty pound backpack on my back. It had been twenty-five days already. I was trying to think of the things I had gained and lost during the challenges.

Feeling alone at this moment, I started to miss my family, my parents, my friends, my teachers and even my school. I left them behind in San Francisco. In exchange, I have new friends from the Tahoe area, new instructors and eaten new types of food.

The ARC program was the busiest schedule I have ever had and was filled with tough challenges. I had to acknowledge, at this moment, I truly missed my community in San Francisco. I even recalled my life

in China, especially my childhood. I started to understand the importance of my family and my friends back home, and how easy my life was. I also understood how silly I was in the past. By the time I began to treasure them, it was too late. Unfortunately, I had to wait until finishing ARC. At the same time, I was extremely worried about something suddenly happening and taking them away from me. If so, I would regret that I never treasured

them and live in sadness for the rest of my life. Sometimes when I noticed some familiar scenes in ARC, I would recollect the same scenes in the past. Sometimes I released a little tear from the corner of my eye.

ARC has helped me to get along with a new group of people. I have enjoyed the time I spent with the other members here since they treated me like one of their family. I had a good time with them, no matter if it was class time or free time; even the times we had troubles. I am very glad to share responsibility with them, solve problems together and also celebrate the effort we made. When we had an argument, we all tried to use a peaceful manner to discuss together. Sometimes there would be instructors helping us and showing us the methods. Sometimes we had to deal with it by ourselves. I really appreciate that we never became unhappy because of that. Instead, we became stronger, more independent, and more thoughtful from working together. We became more and more familiar

with each other, no matter that we came from different places. From the moment I started to miss my community in San Francisco, I suddenly understood something really moved me. I finally put all my feelings down on the paper with a shaky pen.

Spending time at ARC, I became aware of the shame of not treasuring my community and started to appreciate them. My family and my

friends in San Francisco are with me most of the time, but ARC is just a forty day program. How come I felt more comfortable with them than my friends and family I have always had? And here at ARC I even tried what I never did at home, such as sweeping the floor, washing dishes, cleaning my bed. Why would I feel annoyed when my parents shared more information with me? Why I could not really listen to them like I did in ARC? At that moment,

I was so confused I lay on my pad staring at the blue sky before my eyes, listening quietly to the chirping of the birds, feeling the softness of the ground. I suddenly came upon a strange term: true self. I began to consider the problem was whether I was brave enough to present my true self in front of my family and my friends in San Francisco. My first answer was no. I tried to convince myself: Yes I did. But I knew it was not true. I was not being myself in my community. At that moment, I suddenly understood the meaning of friendship, relationship and being part of a family. I wanted to cry, but I couldn't cry because my silliness was not worth my tears. My heart was sobbing inside. I felt so pitiful about the valuable memories when I was with my family and friends; they had sneaked away in the past.

I started to think about putting myself into the shoes of the people around me when I return home. I recalled an ancient Chinese saying my mother used to tell me: "Treasure the person in front of you." Now I finally analyzed the meaning my mother tried to deliver to me. Until the time you are old, you will be depressed about why you did not treasure the time with your family and friends when you were young. If they have gone, they are gone. No matter if you sigh or cry. I recalled the time my mother was standing at the bus station, watching me on the bus until she became a little dot, then disappeared. At the time, my mother told me to take care of myself. I complained that she was too nosy, but now it was the most beautiful memory I ever had.

My parents loved me, my friends loved me and my community loved me so much before but I didn't know it before ARC. Now it's time for me to pay them back. There is a new sentence that reflects in my mind that I will prove in my actions: don't ask the world what they have given you, ask yourself what you have given to the world. If I can sacrifice my heart, I will really appreciate what I receive in return from the world. My community is caring and giving. I am going to give back to them by showing them my true self, think of them and care for them. We should forget the things that happened in the past, no trace could be found. Now the sunset has gone, and I have woken up, ready to chase the sunrise tomorrow. I will be there when my family needs me, help when my friends get confused, try my best to give out all I have to support the people who call for me. I will do this no matter how hard it is going to be or what risk I am going to take.



## Nothing Can Hold Me Down

I am a granite rock.  
Sitting on the edge of Lake Tahoe  
Admiring the beautiful emerald liquid beyond me.  
Wondering how I  
Will reach my goals.

I used to feel selfish and useless.  
Running away from my responsibilities  
Lying down on the couch  
Never cleaning my room  
Displeasing my hardworking parents  
Thinking that everything will be done for me.

I was an ungrateful little rock  
Making bad choices and following bad footsteps  
Going out with friends thinking  
That alcohol will solve my problems.

Distracting worries at home  
Losing my friend's trust over rumors  
Being lied to by boys  
Hurting the people I love  
Made me think  
That I  
Didn't deserve their love.

My parents,  
Constantly worrying about money  
Stressed out and not knowing  
How to make ends meet.  
Could I help?  
Should I work and  
Help my parents make money?  
Will I lose my family if I don't?  
These questions terrify me  
And lead me to stupid actions  
That I'll soon regret.

I don't know what to do  
But I do know  
That all they want  
Is the best for me.

I am a granite rock.  
Slowly moving on

Thinking twice about what to do.  
Taking advice from bigger rocks.  
With help and support  
I can make it to the top of the peak.  
People say it can't be done  
But I know  
I can roll uphill.

Choosing better friends and letting go of the past  
I will move on  
And hover above everything.  
I will not  
Fall down the mountain ridge.

I am a granite rock.  
Trying new things and pushing myself  
Is what keeps me strong.  
With my brother and sisters by my side  
And with their support  
I know  
I can overcome anything.

I am a granite rock.  
Made of different parts.  
My quartz-honesty and loyalty  
Make me a beautiful shiny crystal.

My feldspar-sincerity and care  
Make me soft and sensitive like light brown  
sand.  
My mica-motivation and determination  
Make me bold and strong like thick hard  
gravel.

I am a granite rock.  
Sitting at the highest peak  
Playing sports  
Graduating high school  
Continuing onto college.  
Working hard for what I want  
Creating my own path  
Making my parents proud.  
I know  
I'm above everything  
That once tried to stop me.



# The Magic of Mago

“It takes courage to grow up and turn out to be who you really are.”-E.E. Cummings.

These past days in ARC have really opened my eyes to see who I really am. Living with strangers, not knowing what they were expecting of me scared me and made me think that I was going to be the worst person they were ever going to meet. Leaving my friends and family behind for forty days made me feel as if I was never going to see them again. Back then I used to not care about anything. I depended on others to tell me what to do and to tell me who I had to be. I never finished what I started and procrastinated and did things later. I only cared about myself and I used to think that I was all that mattered to me. After this ARC experience, I transformed into an independent and determined person who cares about others as much as they care for me.

I have become a responsible person; I do my group job independently and make my own choices, but I still know when to seek help and support when I need it. On the car ride to our first expedition, I began to think about what I was going to do without my family and friends. I only knew one person out of eight that I could depend on for the next forty days. I was scared. Before, I used to always do anything my friends and my sisters did or told me to do. Now, I had to think for myself and become independent. As days passed, I began to see that I couldn't be dependent all my life, so I did what I thought was the right thing to do. I didn't have to ask others what I could do. I just did my group job and helped others when they needed it. If I was to get the food ready, I did. If I was to put up tarps and clean up a mess, I did. If I was the leader of the day, I did my best to care for the rest of the group and let them know that I can be a reliable person.

Although I have learned to be independent, I also learned I cannot do everything by myself. After the Manifest Our Knowledge Expedition, I learned that being independent and being dependent come hand in hand. I was leader of the day and we had to travel four or more miles off-trail and I knew that I had to keep the rest of the group safe. As we began to hike through bushes and down steep hills, I got so frustrated because I didn't know where we were. I didn't know how we were going to get out and I just wanted to give up, but giving up meant letting my team down and I couldn't do that. Thankfully, I wasn't alone. The group then began to push and encourage each other to keep going. We made decisions together and when we all disagreed, I made the best choice for the group and together we got to our destination. It is important to me to be independent because I get to do what I want but also there are times when I cannot do

it alone.

Another thing that I learned in ARC was to be determined and to never give up. The rock climbing wall was the first experience that taught me to never give up. When we arrived at the wall, I saw how high it was and was afraid. I began to think that I was not going to get through any of the three sections of the climb. The walls were high, steep, and flat with nothing to hold onto. I thought to myself, “There is no way I can go up that wall. I'm going to give up and stop when I can't go any higher. I'm not going to make it.” When I got on belay and did the commands with my belay team, I touched the rock, looked up, and saw my destination. Then I changed my mind set, “Come on Mago. You can do it. Believe in yourself.” I began to climb. I flowed through it easily and touched the carabineers. It felt great. The next wall seemed even higher and harder but again I flowed through it and touched the carabineers. I felt even better. The last wall was the hardest. It was the highest and most of the group was saying that it was so hard but others said it was a piece a cake. I was not sure if I wanted to, but then I decided to climb it. I began to climb and I kept getting stuck in the same



spot. I rested every five minutes for at least a half hour. Bad thoughts shot right back into my mind, “You're not going to make it, just go back down.” At that moment, I remembered my sister's words, “No matter how badly you want to give up, don't because if you keep going it will all be worth it at the end.” I looked up and saw the end of the wall, where I wanted to get to. I gripped onto the rock and pulled myself up. After that move, the wall seemed less difficult. I kept pushing and pulling myself up until I saw the carabineers right above me. I touched them and turned around to see the best view of Lake Tahoe right before my eyes. When I came back down I felt proud and satisfied. It definitely pays off to be determined and to never give up. Determination will help me in life because it is the only way I can finish what I start which is exactly what I want to do.

Through all the experiences I had in ARC, I began to care for others rather than just myself. As every expedition passed, I cared more and more about my ARC family. The rock climbing came first. I wanted to let my group know that I was a person to trust. At the beginning of the day, I knew I was going to belay for two people in my group but I still didn't know whom. I paid extra attention to the commands and the belay practice that Katie and Donald were teaching us. When the time came to belay for the two people in my group, Zulema and Valeria, I was really focused on keeping the rope tight so if they fell, they wouldn't fall too far and get hurt. I kept them safe. Then the second experience was the ropes course. When we were at the ropes course we began to play some name games with Eric. At first I didn't get the point of the games because we all

knew each other but then I realized that we were going to need a lot of communication within the group for this course. Then we all got in a circle and Eric talked about spotting and how we were going to have to trust each other. We first got in a really close circle and one person in the group got in the middle. They had to fall in four different directions to see if they could gain the trust of the rest of the group. As everyone went in the middle, I was focused on them to see which way they were going to fall so I could be ready to catch them. When it was my turn to go in the middle, I was nervous that the group was going to drop me but when I fell four times and all four times they caught me, I knew they cared for me as much as I cared for them. The third experience was the Kayaking Expedition. I was so excited that I could not wait to get to the beach and begin. When we arrived at the beach we first learned how to paddle and steer the kayak. Then we got paired up. My partner was Valeria. She decided to go in the front so I had to go on the back. After we began to kayak, I saw how hard it was to steer the kayak. I was afraid that we were going to tip over because of my bad steering. Half way through the paddling, I began to get the hang of it. Steering was simpler than I thought. I didn't have any more worries because I trusted myself and I knew Valeria trusted me too. After living with the ARC students and having to experience so much with them, I felt so close to them that I began to see them as more than just people but as a family.

Out of all the things I've learned in ARC, I will continue to be independent, determined, and caring. Every expedition made me stronger and stronger to being independent. I will do what I want to do and never again will anyone tell me who I have to be. I know there are people back home that will help and support me like my sisters, Juana and Beverly, and my brother, Ramon. Since I determined to climb a rock wall from beginning to end I know I can do anything. In school I will show that same determination and do my homework and give effort to do my best. I will never leave a job undone and finish what I start. If there is a project I have to do, I will start it as soon as I can because for me that is the hardest thing to do. The quality I want to show the most is compassion for others. The ARC students transformed from being strangers that I barely knew, to a family that I now have cared about for forty days. I will care more for my friends and family and think of them before anything else. I do not want to make them feel like they are nothing to me because they are the most important aspect in my life. I also want to show my community that I care for them as well. I want to volunteer at the BGC and at the FRC whenever I get the chance. I actually want to make a difference in my community because doing nothing is not enough. I changed magically to the Mago that I have always wanted to become. Independent to speak my mind and to say my opinions, determined to do as much as I can because nothing's impossible, and to care for others and make a change in my community.

# roxana cabrera

## You Say I Can't - I Say I Will

I am a callow salmon  
Inexperienced and unknowing  
Struggling against enormous rolling rapids  
Like a child learning to walk  
Powerful water constrains me  
Multiple forces prevent me from reaching the ocean

My mom expects me to be a good Mexican woman  
My father does too  
My community wants me to be a good Mexican woman  
My country does too  
To mop the floors which my brother gets dirty  
To clean up a country that they got dirty



People try to change my goals  
And every time tears roll down my face forming angry rapids  
going down my scales  
My throat so choked up that I can't speak  
Like a salmon with no air in its gills  
This is the rock wall that I couldn't climb  
I built up my expectations so high  
That waterfalls now drown me  
People may intervene with my dreams

But I am my only obstacle  
Even though I have harder choices to make  
Like school supplies or clothes  
It's my decision whether I succeed or fail  
Nothing to do with the people who try to bring me down

With every tumble I get stronger  
I slice through still liquid  
Stride confidently through water  
I am no longer in the river  
But part of the ocean  
Living my dreams and goals  
Proving to myself how resilient I am  
Deeper water brings more opportunities  
Expanding my peripheral vision from 180 to 360

This is my new home  
Nourishing me with the knowledge I need to grow  
Enabling me to survive  
So I'm not eaten by larger fish

Like graduating from high school  
Going to college  
Having a profession  
Being memorable  
Making my parents proud  
Making all my dreams come true

When the day comes  
I'll return to my birthplace  
No longer a puerile infant salmon  
Unsure about swimming in the deep end  
But an accomplished adult  
I'll see where I came from  
All I have accomplished  
How far I've come  
I know how deep the water really is

Nothing can stand in my way  
No one can tell me I can't!

# Reborn

It is 7:00 A.M on June 23, 2009. It is time for me to say goodbye to my parents and give them an enormous hug, which will last for the next forty days. I sit in the back of Jen's car with the other ARC students from Kings Beach. I stare out the window as we pass by Tahoe City and head to Save Mart. Jen parks the car and walks out toward the white mini van that the Truckee students are in. I try to see who is in it but the windows are tinted. I'll have to wait before I get to see who else will be sharing the summer with me. Then I hear Mago say, "I want to go home." It makes me begin to feel the same way. An uneasy sensation comes to my stomach as Jen comes back to the car and we drive to Desolation Wilderness. I was inundated with mixed feelings and thoughts that I would want to go home after the first day. We arrive at the Desolation parking lot and it's time to circle up. I see my future family and say to myself, "Oh my God!" I stood before eight students my age, each nervous about the experience they were about to face. We were quiet and did not want to talk to each other because the feeling of homesickness overwhelmed us, but as the days came and went, I became closer to these strangers. I became part of a bigger family and my homesickness began to go away. The ARC students have shaped me into a new person, showing me that I am not alone. My ARC experience has brought out the person hidden inside of me.

Being away from what I am accustomed to on a daily basis made me realize that I can be a grateful person. I had never noticed how unappreciative I was for everything given to me. Before ARC, I questioned myself about the lifestyle I was living, "Was I taking what I had for granted?" Both of my parents are with me; something that not many kids have. Although I have been blessed to have their love and support, I wanted independence so badly that I pushed away the two people who could teach me how to get that freedom. Telling my parents that I love them was not as much as showing it. Everything I have, I owe to my parents: the bed I sleep in, the food I eat, and the opportunity of having a good education. When Project MANA came to ARC to teach us about how kids my age lived in different countries, admiring the things I have, I could not help but feel selfish. The times that I wasted a perfect piece of food and didn't want to wake up to go to school in the morning replayed in my head. I was blinded and could not see how these kids would give anything to live a life like mine. The materialistic life I lived made me ignorant about the world around me. It took me weeks for my eyes to open and realize how much I was really taking for granted. My sudden appreciation for people made me want to take action in my community by being involved



in activities such as our service projects. In order to prove to myself that I can make a difference, I have to take the initiative to make things happen.

The ARC program has brought out the leader in me. The first time I was "Leader of the Day," I was nervous because I doubted that anyone would listen to me. Leading on the trail was even harder because the uphill sections seemed to never end. My whole body ached and I felt like giving up. When I glanced back at my group I saw the same look in their faces. I kept telling myself, "A weak leader makes weak followers." If I could persevere, I could keep my group going by encouraging them to go on. We made it up the hill and cheered with excitement as we saw Gilmore Lake. At this moment, I realized that we could make it through anything if we all worked as a team. A good leader does not always make a good team; it takes a good team to make a good leader. These forty days have taught me that I can be a better leader by involving the others I work with and having confidence in myself to make good decisions.

By being leader of the day and seeing how hard it was to get the group on task, I also became a better team member. Here at ARC we work as a team, always helping and caring for one another. You can hear the encouragement and see the compassion as we run each morning. We tell each other, "Don't give up, you can do it," and hold each other's hands to run even faster. Each day, we show support by giving each other a helping hand. After dinner time, each of us helps clean so that we can move on to the next activity. By clearing and cleaning the table, washing the dishes, and putting food away, we see how much we benefit from each other's services. I am reminded that I am not alone and that I am part of the team.

I have lived with eight other people for forty days and each person has different qualities which appeal to me. Some of these students are the most enthusiastic people that I have ever met. Their excitement for our daily activities, such as writing an essay, is contagious. I see how fast each day goes by because of the fun we have. With this support team, it is impossible to feel homesick. Each member of our family shows determination and integrity. The more they are pushed, the harder they try to succeed. We had many days to finish our poem, but some of my peers were still working hard to improve their poems during free time. Their devotion to their work amazed me. Because they set a model for everyone to follow, everyone tried to improve their essays and poems whenever they got the chance. Each person proved to be trustworthy and a good role model, showing me the enthusiastic, determined, trustworthy, compassionate, and helpful person that I want to become.

The ARC members' characteristics made it easier

for me to confide in them. On our day of truth, everyone shared a heartfelt story about a struggle they had had in their life. This moment impacted me the most because I had never thought about how hard it is to be a teenager. We had all been in that position where we felt trapped because no one understood us. All of us are between the ages of fifteen and seventeen and already we have overcome so much without letting our obstacles affect our lives. I shared stories I never thought I would tell anyone. With the awareness that we all have ups and downs, I felt comfortable expressing myself for the first time. It was hard to share these stories but when I began to cry I felt eighteen other arms embrace me and reassure me that everything was okay. They taught me how to forget the past by sharing what I felt and letting my real self shine.

I have learned to accept the person I was and change into the person I want to be. I knew that I was not living the life I wanted when I began to question my individuality, "Do I really run my life, or do I let others run it for me?" I let others easily discourage me from my dreams and goals. I was a puppet letting others pull the strings which controlled my life. This summer, I became aware that I was too interested in what others thought about me. By gaining knowledge about my problem, the ARC program helped me regain control over my life. I have learned to be more self-dependent in making my own decisions. As a result, I can now set my mind on a goal and not give up until I achieve it. For instance, the last day of our first expedition we went rock climbing and my legs were shaking before I got my harness on. Just the look of the ninety foot wall intimidated me, and flared up my fear of heights. I had a hard time getting off my feet and onto the rock but I kept going and the next time I looked down I was already at the top. I became a new person looking at my obstacle, the ninety foot wall, and triumphing over it. I was determined to climb that wall and prove to myself that fear is just fear and I should not let it stop me. I became a new person: daring and self-assured.

Through ARC, I found the strong person inside of me that I never knew existed. Each of the skills and values I learned here are closely related. Compassion: appreciation towards others made me a more considerate person. Leadership and teamwork: there is no leader if there is no team. Integrity: honesty builds trust. ARC has helped me see my problems and find solutions. When I leave this program, I will find it easier to understand others, become a leader in my community and most importantly, make my own choices. I plan to take on more leadership roles in my school by encouraging others to take part in extracurricular activities. By increasing my involvement with my community and school, I will apply the skills I have learned at ARC to my life. Now that we are at the end of this program, I will never forget the everlasting memories I have shared, not merely with ARC participants, but with my ARC family.

# valeria cabrera

## My Obstacles

I am a dolphin  
Swimming all over the globe  
Excited to accomplish new things,  
Making people happy  
And grabbing attention  
Soft as velvet  
Sweet as candy  
Shy, diving deep beneath the water  
But also strong as the wave I ride.  
Fast as lightning chasing the tail of my dreams

I wasn't always this dolphin, diving deep  
Instead of making my family happy,  
I didn't listen to my parents.  
Dad, I am really sorry  
for the day I disobeyed you.  
I was tired of school, tired of chores  
When you yelled,  
I don't know what happened inside  
Couldn't control myself,  
I needed to take my anger out  
I kicked your leg with shock on my face  
And now that's in my conscience.

I am sorry for what I did to you!

Soft as velvet  
I am sensitive  
When I know that someone close  
to me is hurt.  
That day my mother crying on the phone,  
I felt her sadness.

Sweet as candy  
I am caring,  
A friend to my younger brother,  
Like the day I convinced him not to follow  
Peer pressure.

I am shy, diving deep  
When I don't know you,  
I don't talk.  
I wonder if you will like me  
But I am different when I know you  
I open myself to you and tell you  
my problems.

I am strong as the wave I ride.  
But I don't show you enough.  
My trust and values will drive me forward  
To my future.

I am blessed with the family  
that God gave me  
Happy to laugh with them  
To talk with them  
To dance with them  
To teach them  
To share opinions



I miss the rest of my family,  
My life in Mexico  
I was sad to leave my grandmother,  
aunts, and uncles  
Lonely without my 32 cousins

I am thankful to Gustavo and Elena Ca-  
brera Tepepa, my parents  
That they are giving me this  
Better life.  
Giving me the chance  
To learn another language,  
And the chance for more opportunities.

Being a dolphin is not easy  
Sometimes, I don't feel as fast as lightning  
I am slow to understand the math problem,

or my family's jokes.  
I need to pay more attention and  
push myself.

I need to ask questions.

To be as strong as the wave,  
Reaching the goals that I have set,  
Is hard.  
Goals at home and goals at school.

One day,  
I will buy my mothers dream house.

Sometimes, I think you don't know me  
I am not getting in trouble; I am not drink-  
ing, doing drugs or staying with the wrong  
girls  
I don't want to be like them.  
I am clear in my life.  
I know what I am doing.  
I will show you that  
I can do it.

This year, I will show my dolphin inside  
That I can overcome obstacles in my way,  
Show my parents that I can be like  
My sister Tania  
and my little brother Gustavo.  
Smart, Independent, successful,  
a good student,  
But different.  
With my own opinions,  
My own decisions,  
My own career,  
And my own life.

I am a dolphin  
Soft as velvet  
Sweet as candy  
Shy, diving deep beneath the water  
But also strong as the wave I ride  
Fast as lightning  
Chasing the tail of my dreams.

This is me  
A dolphin

## The New Vale!

“Most people don’t know my struggles, most people don’t know my pain, most people don’t know my purpose, but they will remember my name.”

- Carlos Olivero.

In the past people judged me without knowing me. They didn’t know my struggles, pains, or purpose. At ARC I have expressed myself and have told my family in ARC my struggles and my purpose in life. Through this, I learned the meaning of two words, independence and freedom. Now I know what they mean and that I want to have them in me. Before I came to ARC, I wasn’t independent. I didn’t do hard things by myself; I always needed help from others. I appreciated those who helped me in my struggles, but now I want to discover more about independence. Freedom? I didn’t know what freedom was because I was always at home locked up like a bird in a cage, in the same place with nothing to do. Now I am going to show my parents and the world that I can be free and independent. I have learned how to be an independent and free person, through the support of my family here at ARC.

I thought that independence was easy, but now that I am living it I see that is not. Independence is a hard thing to do. To be independent, I thought I had to be alone and I didn’t like it. I always needed to be with someone and be doing things. This summer 2009, I learned that I can be independent and have family surrounding me. Independence is raising my voice, communicating my feelings and making my own decisions. I was willing to try a lot of things. Some of them I accomplished, but others I did not. The day of the final expedition, I was head honcho. Everyone was tired when we got to our campsite. I was trying to do things fast so everyone could rest and finish all the chores that we had to do. I chose the place where we were going to put our campsite with my sister Mago. The boys like always were whining because they did not like where I asked them to pitch their tarp. I knew that the right thing was having all of us all together because something bad can hap-

pen, and we always needed to be together. Since I was the leader I knew that this was a good thing for all of us. I spoke up and used my newly found voice. At ARC I learned a lot of things about myself that I had never thought about. I learned that I can do my own things like cleaning, putting things in there place, making my own decisions and taking on responsibilities. I feel happy to not be dependent on others and that I found my new voice.

Before, freedom was a word that I didn’t know at all. Thanks to ARC, I discovered how freedom feels. On the ropes course day, I felt free. I could overcome the obstacles that were in my way and not be scared of them. I completed all the activities of the ropes course. As the obstacles started getting harder and harder, I kept going. I saw two tall trees that I had to climb. They were 40ft tall and between them a log was attached horizontally. I had to walk on the log and I was really scared. When I was up there, I was shaking and trying not to look down and kept walking on the log. When I finished walking with the support of my ARC family, especially my sister Wendy, I was really happy. At that moment, I thought I was done with all the activities. Then Eric, the man that works there, told us to stay and get ready for the big swing. In that moment, I was excited to go, but when I saw how tall it was I got scared again. Wendy went first and I saw that she had problems doing it and I supported her by saying, “You can do it!” I knew I was going to need the support of my ARC family when I went. It was my turn. Eric tied me to a heavy wire and I thought I was going to fall because it was pulling me forward. I got into position to throw myself into the air by sitting down on the edge of the platform. I was so scared that I felt I couldn’t do it. Eric told me that if I stayed there for a long time I was going to get more scared. A couple of seconds later he asked me if I needed a push and I said yes because I thought that

I couldn’t do it by myself. He gave me a gentle push and I was in the air, screaming like crazy. I felt like a free bird getting out of the cage; I was free with the wind in my face. Freedom is being strong, trying new things, forgetting the bad memories, but remembering the wonderful things that I have had in life.

I have learned that to have independence and freedom I need the support of others. I have experienced a lot of things here that I wouldn’t have done otherwise, but I couldn’t have done them without the support of others at ARC. When I return home, I am going to show the school that I can be a good student and be independent. But I am going to need the support of my family, friends and teachers. In my community, I am going to show that I can help and do a lot more than before and be more involved. I will be supportive to my community like I have been in my ARC community.



I will show my parents and the world that I can work through struggles and can

overcome my pain and show who I am and who I will be. I want to show that I can be independent, without struggles and without problems. I will take these things I learned and never forget about them. At home, I am going to show my parents that I have changed how I think and how I want to be and that I am not going to struggle in life or school that much. I can help in what people need and that I can do things by myself. At school, I am going to say what I think and express myself with my voice and my mind. In my community, I will show that I can do more things because I have more experience; I have done a lot of fantastic things in my community of ARC. I want to keep the personality that I have now, and not change when I go back home. This new person that I have inside me has changed in many ways. I am not shy; I talk in front of people, express myself, and share my opinions with the world. These changes that I have made are taking me to a new place in my life. This new girl will be a designer, gynecologist and successful.

# wendy olivas

## Trustworthy

I am a peak,  
Everest, rocky, pointy  
Standing alone, surviving the cold weather with little support.  
Watching time go by from up high.  
Watching the birds pass by

Shivering when rocks rumble down my spine.  
I try to let problems just pass by  
Wondering if there is a solution for every lie  
Lies about finishing my work  
Letting my grades drop down like rocks.  
Hurting my sister  
Only later to feel the pain in myself  
With every lie crumbling inside of me  
Loosing my only trust

Now I'm regretting it  
Stringing my web of lies  
Hurting my sister  
Watching her cry  
Realizing that she was following my path  
Made me want to change my life  
Little sister learn from my mistakes  
Its better to struggle in life then waste blood  
Trying to cover your lies wont help in life  
It Makes you loose trust  
From the people that love us very much

I am a peak  
Everest, proud, steep  
Life is too gorgeous to do stupid things  
I'm young, and successful by staying away from drugs  
I stay strong on my left and right sides  
Keeping myself balanced day and night

Powerful, helpful and always a smile on my face  
But turning that smile upside down inside of me  
There are rocks each step I take,  
Blocking the way  
From expressing my feelings  
With those that I trust  
Finding the right time to run to my dad  
When I get my heart broken

I will be a peak  
Confident, true to myself, smiling inside

Making people laugh,  
Finding the right time to make myself laugh  
Finding that path to discover the real me  
Never backing down when I start a new passage in life.  
Starting from the bottom and making my way up.  
Working hard  
Going to college  
Leaving behind my childhood  
Making my own money  
Making my parents proud  
By getting good grades,  
Pushing myself to touch the stars  
Dedicating my time to experience new things.



I am a peak  
Proving to my soul that trust is all I need  
Trusting my own steps  
That will help me in my future  
People can judge me by my looks, my style, the way am silly  
But in the end  
I will be the one climbing Mountain Everest



# Sweating

June 23, 2009 I woke up at 5:30a.m with excitement on my face, ready for the next forty days of challenges and sweat running down my face. As I hugged my sister and mom, I knew for the next forty days I wouldn't be able to call them or see them. Arriving at Truckee High School it was time to tell my dad good-bye. I gave my dad a huge hug and waved good-bye as we drove away to Savemart in Tahoe city in some white vans. The group was ready for the first expedition. For the next 7 days we would be trying new things like backpacking, rock climbing and trying to survive with no showers. Since the first day I have shared many challenges with the friends and family I have made in ARC and I have become more self-confidence, trusting of others and able to express my ideas. ARC made me realize that a trusting, fun and caring communities can help me overcome challenges and become a better person.

Having a wonderful supportive ARC family/friends has made one of my summers unforgettable. I experienced living life to the fullest here in ARC because with at this community I wouldn't be able to talk about my problems. Spending my summer with 9 people (7 girls & 2 boys) I found friends that support me, like when I am scared to try new things and when I am home sick. For example, when my dad wrote to me and told me he loved me so much and he wished I was there by his side, I started to cry and the girls cuddled up by my side, holding me tight and even slept by me. They told that everything was going to be all right and pretty soon it would be time to go home. Eddie supported me when were running and I told him I wanted to give up. He told me that I could do it and pushed me to run the whole time. In this community I have brothers and sisters who will love me and I love them back.

Starting with an unknown group was my challenge. Leaving behind my sister, Olga, who always makes a smile come to my face every morning when I am

feeling sick, or having a problem with girls in school. Since the beginning of ARC I asked myself, "How I am going to make this summer work with people that I don't even know their favorite color." Starting with some strange looks and people whispering by your side was a scary feeling. I knew I didn't want this summer to start off in the wrong hands. I wouldn't be able to run to my best friend or my parents when a girl starts drama with me. Feeling lonely not being able to give call to my mom and telling her what was going on, I had to go and



talk to one of the 6 girls about being them am home sick. I saw that many girls were going to other girls that they didn't know and talking about secrets that they had never told other people. Hearing Imelda give good advice to Mago when they barely knew each other, I recognized that you just need to take some time to know new people and they can be helpful later on in life.

Through the challenges of meeting new

people, I have become a better person. I have taken the beauty from the outside to the inside, and I have shown everyone I wasn't a girl who was just thought about money. I used to want to look beautiful like models by wearing make-up on every occasion and I never thought that people really wanted to know the real me. I tried to be brave by keeping things inside of me that would lead me to crying. I knew I had a serious attitude and I had to change it. I didn't realize I was hurting my friends and family with my big mouth, until I took a step to be serious with myself not serious with my attitude. I now show my beauty on the inside by being myself and letting go of shyness with new friends, putting a lot of effort in new things I do in life like ARC and not being lazy at home. I write deep poems that I didn't imagine people would hear me read.

Coming to ARC has made me realize there are supporting communities that are willing to overcome challenges in life and will make me become a better person. This experience has taught me to trust others because they could become very close friends. Having supporting people will allow me to become more open and have more confidence with friends and family. I will open up and let my sister know the real me better by having a better relationship with her like my sisters in ARC. By getting to know strangers and becoming friends with them

helps me let go of the fear that holds me back. When I go to college and meet new friends I will be less afraid because I am more confident in myself. I know I can express my feelings and show the real me to new people. When I go home I'll be more determined to take responsibility by trying in school, home and my community. In the future, I'll take every opportunity that comes my way that will help overcome challenges.

# zulema medina

## Flying Over the Horizon

I was a hummingbird  
turning my back  
When you talked to me  
Pointing out my tail  
I use to not care  
I didn't pay attention  
I listened to music  
Socialized with friends  
Surfed the internet  
Did not take my parents advice  
To be more responsible.

My little brother, Axel  
Helps me grow up  
Understanding responsibility.  
Leading me in the right direction  
when I fly backwards.  
I learn from the mistakes I make with him  
From miniature obstacles,  
fighting over the remote control  
To the most massive mishap,  
sleeping in  
instead of feeding him  
when he is hungry.

I am a hummingbird  
Traveling in my environment  
From Kings Beach to Truckee  
Sacramento, Vacaville  
And all the way to L.A  
Visiting family, sharing my joy  
Taking in the view as I go.  
With my visits,  
our family becomes more united  
Eating meals quietly,  
I hear the forks scraping on the plates.  
Suddenly my uncle bursts out with a joke  
Refueling my happiness  
with sweet laughter.

I am a young, gorgeous bird  
The smallest of all birds  
Colorful, peaceful,  
Chirpy, and happy

on the outside  
but don't underestimate me  
I am mature, caring, and strong  
on the inside  
I go here,  
I go there  
Offering a hand to whoever needs it  
And giving advice.

I share my point of view  
Even when I have a different opinion.  
If I don't  
I am trapped in a cage  
With a knot in my throat.  
I feel tight, furious, and sad inside  
A big lump,  
A sign that I need to speak up.  
The trust and compassion  
Of my parents listening to me  
Gives me the key  
to unlock the cage.



The lump is gone,  
The cage is open  
I feel free,  
satisfied, and happy  
in my soul once again.

My wings flap rapidly with speed  
A sign that it is time to leave,  
Standing on a log,  
Gazing at the sky  
To picture my destination.

With my parents support  
I fly over the horizon  
In the future  
I will receive my high school diploma  
complete college  
Earn a degree  
make my own decisions  
travel where I please  
I will soar  
Through the everlasting,  
blue bird sky.

# We Are Family

The “stick” had been broken representing that it was time to be quiet and my adventure by myself had begun. Deb signaled me to follow her to my spot for my twenty-four hour solo. She pointed out my boundaries and left me alone. My first thoughts were, “What am I going to do? Am I going to sleep? Will I make it through the twenty-four hours?” I was terrified about reflecting on my life and hearing myself think. I sat on a rock and saw birds perched on a branch, twittering amongst themselves. Their beautiful chirping relaxed my mind. As I gazed at the dusk’s beauty, there were different colors in the sky. On one side, I could see Lake Tahoe, my home. The sunset was purple, gray, and blue; symbolizing the sadness I felt because I wasn’t home. On the other side, behind the trees, I could see vivid orange, red and yellow that hurt my eyes as I squinted. It made me smile because the rest of the ARC group was admiring the same gorgeous sunset as I was. At this moment of stillness, it occurred to me that I live in a great place with not only wonderful people surrounding me but many other living things that I now love and appreciate. On my solo, I recognized that this great forty day experience has taught me to appreciate my three families: my family, the ARC family and my global family.

Being away from home for forty days has made me realize that I appreciate my family more than I had thought. When I was at home, I was rude to my parents. Instead of doing the chores my mom asked me to, I procrastinated so I could finish watching my television show. Now, I know I have the integrity and initiative to start the chores without my mom asking me to do it. During these forty days I helped out in the kitchen even if I wasn’t a kitchen wala or a house mouse because I wanted to help get things done on time. I understand that the responsibilities I have taken on while at ARC also will apply to my life at home. While I don’t always get along with all of the ARC students, we too are a family that must work together. When I get home, I know I won’t always get along with my little brother but I am going to try to cooperate with him and not argue about the slightest things. Before, I made him do all the work for me and he would protest which led to an argument. In ARC, I learned the importance of my family’s love because it gives me strength, makes me feel under-

stood, happy and proud. This experience has taught me to appreciate the love and support my parents offer and not take it for granted.

The ARC family, my two brothers and six sisters for the summer, encouraged me when I doubted myself. They helped me achieve goals I never imagined. It all started out on our first challenge of the program, rock climbing. The monstrous, granite rocks intimidated me. I was nervous to rock climb for my very first time, especially since the people that were climbing first were having a hard time. When my turn came, I had little butterflies in my stomach. My harness was strapped, helmet was on and I was ready to begin climbing. I gave my first try and I heard my teammates encouragement which made me determined to get to the top of the rock because I did not want to disappoint them or more importantly, myself. After I climbed all three walls, I felt excited about being successful at climbing, something I thought I would never do. I couldn’t have done it without my ARC family’s encouragement and support. Another time my ARC family encouraged me was at the ropes course. I was terrified just looking at the forty ft long log and afterwards going on the swing but that’s when I heard them shout, “Yea Zulema, you can do it!” -“Just don’t look down.” I didn’t want to let them down so I did it! I learned that with the support of my friends that I can achieve my goals. One of my goals this summer was to complete my poem. My ARC family helped me by supporting me like when Roxana was finished with her poem and helped me with mine on her free time. Achieving my goal made me realize my potential of writing a wonderful unique poem. By setting goals and being determined to accomplish them, I have discovered that if I want to do something I CAN DO IT. If I trip and fall, that does not mean it’s over and I have to give up. I will stand up and try again. Every time I do, I’ll become more determined and stronger.

Not only do I appreciate my human families, I have begun to see nature as a part of my family that I want to keep in touch with. Being with nature and learning about it has made me appreciate it more. For example, I found out that I can count the rings on the tree to find out how old it is. When Ranger Chris talked about



preserving our planet for future generations, I started to think about my brother and keeping the environment clean so he can experience the same things I did. I began to see nature as part of my family. My brothers and sisters, the trees, protect me from the hot days with their shade. The fresh, clean wind, my father, shares his air for me to breathe. My uncles and aunts, the rivers and lakes, keep me hydrated with the water they provide. The sparkly, beautiful stars, my cousins, rock me to sleep at night. My mom, the bright, cheerful sun, wakes me up in the morning and follows me during the day, looking out for me. I am grateful to have nature to go to when I want to get away from the noisy city. I will go back and visit my family in nature to share the excitement of backpacking, kayaking, rock climbing, and sleeping with my cousins, the stars. My environmental family is so welcoming I want to keep visiting it and discovering new things about it.

I realized at ARC that I am far from alone. I have more family than I thought possible: one I have known my whole life, another I met this summer, and one family I only became aware of this summer. While in ARC, I learned how to show my integrity and compassion. For me, integrity is doing the right thing even when nobody is looking, being honest and trustworthy. Compassion is understanding and putting yourself in someone else’s shoes. As a compassionate person, I listen to other people’s ideas and problems and don’t criticize them. Integrity and compassion were in my personality but I didn’t know how to show them. Now, I do, and at home I am going to be compassionate with my brother by listening to his different opinions instead of thinking that he is wrong. Also, I will be understanding with my mother when she is tired from work and help her with the chores. I will continue showing integrity by cooperating with my brother when we’re alone. If I help people, I will later on receive the help I once gave. In order to receive the support and encouragement of others, I will support and encourage others. One of my goals is to encourage people to conserve my environmental family. I want to open other people’s eyes as mine were opened this summer. Together we can conserve nature by recycling, reducing waste and decreasing pollution. By coming to ARC, I learned to appreciate all of these families.

# community interviews

On July 11th, halfway through our summer course, ten community members volunteered their time to be mentors for our students. These are excerpts from the narrative biographies students wrote about their partners.

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## Interviewing Victor Hernandez



I picked the outdoor classroom to interview Victor. The location had calming shade on the hot sunny day. We both felt comfortable in our spot. There was a sturdy table where I put my notecards to take down the thoughts that Victor shared with me. I remember that Victor had glasses covering his brown eyes, he was tall, and shared his interesting and funny thoughts with me. He taught me that to become what you want to become you always have to keep trying no matter what barriers are in front of you. Sometimes it is easy to get what you want, but a lot of times it is very hard to get it. In order to get what you want, you should never let an opportunity pass you by. Victor told me that the

three things that he values most are community, working hard, and education. - *Edgar Lopez*

## Successful Life

Ray chose to live in Truckee because he wanted the best place to raise his family and there were business opportunities in Truckee. Ray considers anyone who comes in contact with him in Truckee as his community. He is a business leader, volunteer for ARC, role model for his kids, dad, husband, and a friend to everyone who meets him. A good community to Ray is a good quality of life: no pollution, not over populated and friendly neighbors. Although Ray loves Truckee, his community has many challenges. Ray believes that the education systems need to improve; there are financial needs in families and government, drug problems, crime, and cultural problem. After talking with Ray I felt that he is really interested and he wants to see a progressive change in his community. I feel that I have to volunteer in my community if I want to see a progressive change too. - *Gaby Garcia*



## Follow What Your Heart Tells You



Marna is very successful in doing what her heart tells her to do and not what other people want her to do. She feels that success is not about money, but is about helping people. She likes to work with people, especially with people that are the same age as her children, who are two and three years old. Her children and important people that support her in her life journey have helped her to become the person she is and taught her how to help other people. The experience in becoming a mom taught her how to love unconditionally. Marna was acting from her heart because she told me that she liked people to listen and pay attention to her

and not just say yes when they don't even know what she is really trying to say. Also she revealed this to me in her acts: she had eye contact and was paying attention to what I was saying and she had true responses to questions I asked. When I was talking to Marna I could feel the connection between us. - *Imelda Valdez*

## Interviewing Nan Carnal

When you are having a dream, you have to wake up and chase it. But while you are chasing, you have to risk something to gain what you want. She told me that as soon as she began to work with biology, she realized that she loved it; she had to go for it. She also noticed that she might make some mistakes because this was her first time which was going to make her lose face and also feel uncomfortable. But, she knew everybody always has their first time to touch new things. If you don't try it, you never feel it. She told me that "after a lot of practices, you will gain confidence from your failures. That's where "practice makes perfect" comes from. She said proudly; "when you are looking back, you will be proud of yourself." - *Jiamyi Li*



## Nothing's Impossible



I was nervous and scared, but also curious to meet the person I was going to interview. I had my spot picked out: the grass tickling my legs, the dirt and rocks under my feet and all I could hear was the wind and the creek. When I found out who my interviewee was going to be, I was excited because he seemed like a funny guy. A tall, light skinned, red cheeked, blue-eyed man named Ed was my interviewee. He was wearing green shorts, a green hat, and a blue and white squared shirt. He first introduced himself, and then I began to ask questions. I asked him why he moved to the Tahoe area, and when he answered he said, "Why do Rock Stars date Supermodels? Because they can!" As I laughed, I knew I was going to enjoy this interview. As the interview went on I learned that Ed is involved in many communities, has achieved much, and has experienced many challenges and risks throughout his life. - *Mago Olivares*

## Giving

Bea taught me life lessons that will influence the way I approach my future. She taught me to "know what you want for yourself in life...make plans to get to your goal." She told me to stay faithful to my education. For instance, when she was younger, she quit after her first year of college and her mother told her that she would have to pay bills like an adult. Her mother laid out the plan which showed Bea the different bills she had to pay. The money she was earning was not enough and she realized that she wanted to go back to school. Education was more important than she thought. Another piece of advice that she shared with me was that when you have a problem you shouldn't isolate yourself. She told me that making yourself feel alone was the worst thing you could do because you can always search for help. A person with experience or advice can help you with your problems. I have now gained the knowledge that school should be my number one priority and that it is not a bad thing to look for help. With all the knowledge that she shared with me, I learned that Bea and I were much more similar than I thought. - *Roxana Cabrera*



## Interviewing Barbara Ilfeld



Barbara has had wonderful adventures. One of her adventures was to go to Alaska with her family and two friends. Another adventure was kayaking with her husband which taught her about team work. She also hiked for 165 miles around the Tahoe Rim Trail a year ago with her husband, Fred, and their 11 year old dog, Taffy. After her trip, Barbara told me that she learned a lot about nature, herself and her family. Barbara and her family were stronger and wiser by the end of the trip. She is adventurous in everyday life as well. She does road biking, mountain biking, kayaking, hiking, and skiing. She takes risks to be better in each sport and everyday life. - *Valeria Cabrera*

## Overcome Your Fears

Vicki had many goals in life to serve her community. She wanted everyone to work together and help kids, and she wanted to become a business woman. She wanted her ideas to be heard, but she thought that others' ideas were better than hers, so she almost stopped believing in herself. Vicki didn't let her good ideas pass by; however, about five years ago she opened a tutoring center named Clever Minds. Even though she had many people speak against her goals, she accomplished them by having confidence and determination. She got people like volunteers to work as a team and not work against each other. She also had the goal to help kids not give up on their homework and have fun in subjects in school. Vicki accomplished these goals, and hopefully I will accomplish my goals and not give up and pursue the things I love. - *Wendy Olivas*



## Interviewing Heather Bacon



Heather's involvement in the community, her goals she sets, and the challenges she faces are what makes her a unique, passionate, and a wonderful person. During my time with Heather she made me realize that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. I will take her advice about being passionate about whatever I want to do in life, but in order to do that I have figure out what I love first. After having the opportunity to listen to Heather's travel experiences (something I would like to do in the future), I learned that I need to work hard like Heather does. Another key lesson I learned is to never give up when setting a goal for fear of failure. Overcoming my fears will allow me to be successful and proud of myself. Finally I would like to thank Heather for taking the time to share her life with me. The most important lesson I learned from Heather is that as time goes on problems will take care of themselves. - *Zulema Medina*

# las poemas

## Volviéndome el Rey de Reyes por Edgar Lopez

Soy un ligero león cachorro café.  
Vengo de una leona y un rey león.  
En ocasiones me siento impotente, débil y vulnerable  
Aún no soy independiente, aún necesito a mi familia

Cuando era pequeño seguía a mi papá a todas partes  
Como un cachorro siempre atrás de él.  
Tratando de hacer todo lo que el hacía,  
Siempre haciendo lo mejor, siempre trabajando duro  
Para comprarme lo que yo quería.

El me enseñó todo lo que sé - bajo, piano y como sobrevivir,  
En una ocasión trató de enseñarme una vieja canción en el piano  
Pero no pude encontrar las notas  
El me enseñó en donde encontrarlas.

Cuando tenía quince años,  
Mí papá, mi mejor amigo, murió en México.  
En casa, mi hermana me dijo que papá había muerto  
Yo no podía pensar, no podía respirar  
Sole me quedé como una roca sin decir nada  
Viendo a mi hermana, llorando como nube  
Que libera la lluvia.

Me sentí como árbol sin hojas que han caído  
Me sentí como el cachorro león - abandonado.

El año pasado fue como un infierno  
Viendo a mi mamá, respirando con trabajos,  
Su cara ardientemente roja, parada frente a mi escritorio  
Viendo la foto de mi papá y llorando.

Tuve que ser fuerte para ella y no llorar,  
Caminando en el parque,  
Viendo a niños jugando con sus papás,  
Tuve que ser fuerte y no llorar.

Sentado en la sala todas las noches,  
Esperando que papá regrese de trabajar  
Y dándome cuenta que mi mejor amigo ya no existe.

Ahora mi papá a quien siempre traté de imitar ya no está vivo  
Tengo que encontrar mi propio camino  
Para sobrevivir.

Debo aprender a tocar el piano por mi mismo  
Tengo que tomar las decisiones correctas yo solo  
Debo crecer solo.

De mi papá, tomaré su determinación de hacer todo,  
Su compasión por otras personas,  
Su valentía de sobrellevar cualquier obstáculo.

Soy un ligero, cachorro de león café  
Mí reto es crecer más rápido de lo que pensé  
Para mantener a mi mamá y a mi hermana  
Sin saber como.  
Quiero que mis padres estén orgullosos de mí  
Especialmente mi papá  
Cuando me gradúe de la preparatoria,  
Cuando vaya a la universidad  
Y sea un profesional,  
Y haga todo, lo mejor que pueda.

Algún día seré el león que mi papá fue,  
El Rey de Reyes.

## Independiente y Libre como El Viento por Gaby Garcia

Yo soy el viento  
Invisible pero invencible  
Nadie me puede detener  
De lograr mis metas,  
Obtener buenas calificaciones,  
Y asistir a ARC  
A veces estoy callado  
Y no expreso mis ideas  
Y a veces  
Soy tan rápido  
Que hablo antes de pensar

Estoy en mi hogar, el valle  
Y voy a la cima de la montaña

Dejando el valle  
Estoy a gusto con mi familia, las montañas  
Me dan seguridad  
Y me dan todo lo que necesito  
Comida, ropa, amor y apoyo  
Pero al mismo tiempo  
Me siento atorado  
Porque no quiero depender  
De aquellos que me rodean  
Estoy creciendo  
Y debo ser INDEPENDIENTE  
Y tener libertad  
Para poder aprender  
De mis propios errores  
Y cuando llegue a la cima de la montaña  
Podré resolver mis propios problemas  
Y tomar mis propias decisiones

Para llegar a la cima de la montaña  
Debo tener responsabilidades en la vida,  
Encontrar un trabajo, ayudar a mis padres y trabajar en la casa  
Estar orgulloso de mí mismo  
Mostrar a mis padres  
Que pueden confiar en mí  
Y aprovechar las oportunidades  
Que la vida me ofrece.

Yo soy el viento  
Doy aire fresco de  
Amor, apoyo y compasión  
A las montañas que me rodean  
Y solamente soplo fuerte  
Cuando debo hacerlo  
Para defenderme de mis enemigos

Yo soy el viento  
Buscando el mejor camino  
Para llegar a la cima de la montaña  
No se cuando encontraré mi camino  
Hoy, mañana u otro día  
Pero llegaré  
Alcanzaré la cima de la montaña  
Mientras busco mi camino  
Debo soplar hacia Inglés  
Obtener buenas calificaciones en la escuela y  
Aprender de mis propios errores  
Para que al llegar a la cima  
Mis padres estén orgullosos de mí  
Y seré tan Independiente como el viento

## Liberada del Ojo del Tornado por Imelda Valdez

Este es un poema del fondo de mi corazón

Yo era una nube atrapada muy alto en el cielo  
En una red de miedo y RRRABIA!  
Rodeada por mi enemigo el AIRE  
Soplado tan fuerte como un tornado  
Destruyendo todo lo que está en su camino  
Mi padre - no quiero ni pronunciar su nombre  
No está en mi vocabulario - hizo de mi niñez un INFIERNO  
Regresando de la escuela, tratando de defender a mi mamá  
De su puño, gritándome, pegándose.  
Mi mamá no podía hacer nada porque ella también sufriría  
El no nos dejaba salir de la recámara, ni siquiera a la cocina  
El era el aire que respirábamos cada segundo  
Deteniéndonos  
Yo, y las tres partes de mi corazón - el sol, la luna y las estrellas  
Tratando de protegerlas, alejarlas del futuro que nosotros no queremos.  
Sufriendo por el resto de nuestras vidas

Yo era una nube  
Solamente me movía en una dirección  
Tratando de frenar el odio que soplaba contra nosotros  
Especialmente a mí por proteger a mi mamá  
Por ponerme YO en el ojo del tornado que soplaba hacia nosotros  
El aire  
Tratando de pasar a través de mis blancos brazos  
Que yo no podía extender lo suficiente  
Para proteger a las tres partes de mi corazón

El sol, mi mamá - quien me dio el fuego para luchar  
La luna, mi hermanito - el protector que nunca tuve  
Las estrellas, mi hermanita - a quien amo con todo mi corazón  
Ellos son quienes me dan la fuerza para seguir adelante  
Nuestro enemigo el aire siempre encuentra el camino para dañarnos  
Y demostrar que era hombre, sin saber que un hombre de verdad  
Es alguien que no le pega a su esposa o a sus hijos

Yo era una nube - siempre cambiando de forma  
Es difícil de concentrarme  
Descuidando escuela, hogar, amigos y a mí misma  
Sin tiempo para hacer algo, solamente pensar que me pasaría  
Al regresar de la escuela.  
Podía ver el aire llegar hacia nosotros con mucha energía  
Peleando conmigo, haciendo ondas a través del agua.  
Las lágrimas que lloramos, tormentas todas juntas  
Tenía que correr para proteger al sol, la luna y las estrellas  
Abro mis brazos para tratar de parar el soplido enojado el aire  
Que viene hacia nosotros.

Yo soy una nube - hace seis años  
Dios me ayudó a llevarse a nuestro enemigo, el aire,  
Enviándonos un ángel para llevarse  
Todo cambió, yo me volví una nube que puede flotar libremente  
El sol nos calienta con su amor  
La luna y las estrellas comenzaron a brillar como nunca lo habían hecho

Aunque fue difícil  
Le doy gracias a mi padre por haberme tratado así  
Nunca quiso darme consejos pero aprendí de sus acciones  
A tener cuidado con quien deseo pasar el resto de mi vida  
Y encontrar el buen camino para mí.

Trabajaré mucho,  
Me educaré, seré una enfermera, abogado, policía, o agente del FBI  
Haré que el sueño de mi mamá se vuelva realidad  
Le daré una vida mejor - la vida que el aire nunca le permitió que respirara

Ella siempre nos pone primero, asegurándose de que hayamos comido  
Y después comiendo lo que sobra yo me encargaré de sus problemas

Para que pueda descansar.  
Le compraré todo lo que nunca tuvo, porque quiso lo mejor para nosotros

Ayudará a mi hermano para que no se vuelva un tornado  
Lastimando a quienes más lo quieren que no haga que el amor lo abandone

Le daré a mi hermana el Regalo de no pasar por lo mismo  
Que yo pasé

Mi meta mayor es mostrarle al aire que estaba EQUIVOCADO  
Un día él me dijo: "Tu no vales nada,"  
pero yo valgo mucho más, valgo MAS que él

Dios, la vida y mi mamá me han enseñado lo mucho que valgo,  
Y eso de "No puedo hacerlo" no existe en este mundo  
porque podemos hacer cualquier cosa malo o bueno, podemos escoger

finalmente me ESCAPE de la red en la que estaba atrapada.  
Estoy Liberada del Ojo del Tornado.



## Mis Obstáculos por Valeria Cabrera

Yo soy un delfín  
Nadando por todo el mundo  
Emocionado de lograr cosas nuevas,  
Haciendo feliz a la gente  
Y llamando la atención  
Suave como el terciopelo  
Dulce como caramelo  
Tímido, sumergiéndome muy profundo bajo el agua  
Pero tan fuerte como la ola en la que floto.  
Rápido como el rayo que persigue la cola de mis sueños

No siempre fui el mismo delfín, sumergiéndome profundo  
En vez de hacer a mi familia feliz,  
Yo no escuchaba a mis padres.  
Papá, lo siento por el día en que te desobedecí.  
Estaba cansada de la escuela, de mis deberes  
Cuando me gritaste, no sé lo que pasó dentro de mí  
No me pude controlar,  
Necesitaba desahogar mi coraje  
Te dí una patada en la pierna con asombro en mi cara  
Y ahora está en mi conciencia.

¡Siento mucho lo que te hice!

Suave como el terciopelo  
Soy sensible  
Cuando sé que alguien cercano a mí está lastimado.  
Ese día mi madre llorando en el teléfono. Sentí su tristeza.

Dulce como un caramelo  
Soy bondadosa,  
Un amigo de mi hermano menor,  
Un día lo convencí de no seguir  
La presión de sus compañeros.

Soy tímido, clavándome profundo  
Cuando no te conozco,  
No hablo.  
Me pregunto si te caeré bien  
Pero soy diferente cuando te conozco  
Me abro y te platico mis problemas.



## Mis Obstáculos (continuado)

Soy fuerte, como la ola en que floto,  
Pero no te muestro mucho,  
Mi confianza y valores me llevarán adelante  
A mi futuro.

Mi familia es una bendición que Dios me ha dado  
Feliz de reír con ellos  
Hablar con ellos  
Bailar con ellos  
Enseñarlos  
Compartir opiniones

Extraño al resto de mi familia,  
Mi vida en México  
Fue triste dejar a mi abuela, tías y tíos  
Sola sin mis 32 primos

Doy gracias a Gustavo y Elena Cabrera Tepepa, mis padres  
Por darme esta  
Vida mejor.  
Dándome la oportunidad  
De aprender otro idioma,  
Y otras oportunidades.

Ser un delfín no es fácil  
A veces, no me siento tan rápido como un rayo  
No entiendo rápido el problema de Matemáticas o las bromas de mi familia.  
Debo poner más atención y esforzarme más.

Necesito hacer preguntas.

Ser fuerte como la ola,  
Llegar a las metas que he forjado,  
Es difícil  
Metas en el hogar y metas en la escuela

Un día, compraré la casa que sueña mi madre.

A veces pienso que no me conoces  
No me meto en problemas; no tomo, no hago drogas o me junto con  
Amistades equivocadas  
Yo no quiero ser como ellas,  
Soy clara en mi vida. Yo sé lo que hago.  
Te lo demostraré  
Yo lo puedo hacer.

Este año, demostraré el delfín que hay dentro de mí  
Que puede superar los obstáculos que se encuentran en mi camino,  
Demostraré a mis padres lo que puedo ser como  
Mi hermana Tania y mi hermanito Gustavo,  
Inteligentes, independientes, con éxito, buen estudiante,  
Pero diferente  
Con mis propias opiniones,  
Mis propias decisiones,  
Mi propia carrera,  
Y mi propia vida.

Yo soy un delfín  
Suave como terciopelo  
Dulce como caramelo  
Tímido, sumergiéndome bajo el agua profunda  
Pero también fuerte como la ola en que floto  
Rápido como un rayo  
Persiguiendo la cola de mis sueños.

Ese soy yo  
Un delfín

## La Amistad Continúa por Jianyi Li

Yo soy el fuego, ardiendo eternamente  
Nada puede cubrir mi luz.

Yo soy la canción, envolviendo tu alma  
A veces suave y triste, a veces viva y emocionante.

Yo soy el arroyo, que cruza por tu corazón  
No tan rápido, pero tranquilo y con paz

Yo soy la luz que guía, brillando en tu camino  
Quizas no muy fuerte  
Pero lo suficiente para alumbrar tu camino

Pero si el fuego no calentara siempre.  
Se quemaría.  
Recuerdo cuando no te pude consolar cuando lloraste frente a mí.  
Yo podía oír el sonido de tu corazón que se rompía.

La canción no siempre era de elogios.  
Era de burla.  
Recuerdo la vez que no dejé de molestarte cuando hiciste algo mal.  
Yo podía ver lágrimas asomándose en la esquina de tus ojos.

El arroyo no siempre fluyó ligero.  
Se derramó.  
Recuerdo cuando tuviste problemas, por mi culpa.  
Todos tus amigos te insultaron, excepto yo  
No te ayudé, solamente lo observé, debido a mi temor.  
Yo podía sentir el dolor que reflejaba tu cara.

La luz no siempre fue de confiar  
De repente desapareció.  
Recuerdo la vez que vi explotar tu cuerpo de enojo cuando discutiste con  
Tus compañeros de clase.  
Yo no te pude enseñar como deshacerte de esa ira, solamente lo ignoré.  
Yo podía ver la tristeza en tus ojos

Pero amigos

Yo te calentaré cuando te encuentres solo en la tormenta.  
¿Recuerdas aquel momento en que recibí el castigo en lugar tuyo cuando  
La maestra vió la ventana rota?  
¿Podías ver la determinación en mis ojos?

Yo te daré consuejo al acercarse la noche.  
¿Recuerdas cuando te dí la mano cuando te caíste en la lluvia?  
¿Podías sentir la confianza entre las gotas en nuestras caras?

Yo nutriré tu mente seca cuando estés perdido en el desierto.  
¿Recuerdas cuando pusimos nuestras cabezas juntas  
cuando sollozabas en mi abrazo,  
tratando de consolarte de la depresión de reprobarte tu examen final?  
¿Sientes la esperanza de mis brazos que te reciben?

Encenderé la obscuridad cuando camines por las tinieblas.  
¿Recuerdas cuando paré el puño de tu enemigo cuando él te pegaba?  
¿Escuchas como se rompe el viento con la fuerza de mis puños?

La amistad continúa  
Nunca separados o desolados  
Sin importar si soy fuego, canción, arroyo o luz  
Sin importar cuando nos dejamos, a donde vamos, lo que hacemos  
Sin importar lo que hubo en el pasado  
Fuimos  
Somos  
Siempre seremos  
Amigos para siempre.

## Nada Me Puede Detener por Mago Olivares

Yo soy una roca de granito.  
Sentada a la orilla de Lake Tahoe  
Admirando el hermoso líquido esmeralda delante de mí.  
Preguntándome como alcanzaré mis metas.

Yo me sentía egoísta e inútil.  
Escapándome de mis responsabilidades, acostada en el sillón  
Nunca limpiaba mi cuarto, disgustando a mis padres que trabajan tanto  
Pensando que me harían todo.

Yo era una pequeña roca ingrata  
tomando malas decisiones y siguiendo malos pasos  
Saliendo con amigos pensando que el alcohol resolvería mis problemas.

Distrayendo preocupaciones en la casa  
Perdiendo la confianza de mi amiga a causa de rumores  
Las mentiras que me decían los muchachos  
Lastimando a la gente que más quiero  
Me hizo pensar que yo no merecía su amor.

Mis padres, preocupados constantemente por el dinero  
Preocupados y sin saber como poder sobrevivir.  
¿Podía yo ayudar?  
¿Debería trabajar y ayudar a mis padres a ganar dinero?  
¿Perdería a mi familia si no lo hacía?  
Esas preguntas me aterran y me llevaban a hacer cosas estúpidas  
Que muy pronto lamentaría

No sé que hacer  
Pero sí sé que lo único que ellos quieren es lo mejor para mí.

Yo soy una roca de granito,  
Moviéndome lentamente  
Pensando dos veces lo que debo hacer.  
Tomando consejos de las rocas más grandes.  
Con ayuda y apoyo puedo llegar a la cima.  
La gente dice que se puede lograr  
Pero yo sé que puedo rodar hacia arriba.

Escogiendo mejores amigos y dejando ir el pasado  
Avanzaré, y planearé por arriba de todo.  
Yo no caeré de la cumbre de la montaña.

Yo soy una roca de granito.  
Probando cosas nuevas y esforzándome  
Es lo que me mantiene fuerte.  
Con mi hermano y hermanas a mi lado, y con su apoyo  
Yo sé que puedo superar cualquier cosa.

Yo soy una roca de granito.  
Hecha de partes diferentes.  
Mi honestidad y lealtad de cuarzo  
Me hacen un hermoso cristal brillante.  
Mi sinceridad y cuidado de feldespato  
Me hacen suave y sensible como el arena café clara  
Mi motivación y determinación de mica  
Me hacen audaz y fuerte como gruesa grava.

Yo soy una roca de granito.  
Sentada en la cima más alta  
Jugando deportes  
Graduándome de la Preparatoria  
Continuando en la Universidad.  
Trabajando para lo que quiero  
Creando mi propio camino  
Haciendo que mis padres se sientan orgullosos de mí.  
Yo sé que estoy mas arriba de todo  
Lo que un día me detuvo

## Tu dices que no Puedo, Yo digo que lo haré por Roxana Cabrera

Soy un salmón joven  
Sin experiencia y sin sabiduría  
Luchando contra la enorme corriente  
Como un niño que aprende a caminar  
El poder del agua me limita  
La fuerza me prohíbe llegar al oceano

Mi mamá espera que sea una buena mujer Mexicana  
Mi padre también  
Mi comunidad quiere que sea una buena mujer Mexicana  
Mi país también  
Limpiar los pisos que mi hermano ensucia  
Limpiar un país al que ensuciaron

La gente trata de cambiar mis planes  
Y cada vez, lágrimas corren por mi cara,  
formando corrientes de enojo que corren por mis escamas  
Mi garganta tan cerrada que no puedo hablar  
Como un salmón sin aire en sus agallas  
Esta es la pared rocosa que no puede escalar  
Construí mis esperanzas tan alto  
Que hoy las cascadas me ahogan  
La gente puede intervenir con mis sueños  
Pero yo soy mi único obstáculo  
Aunque tengo decisiones difíciles que tomar  
Como materiales escolares o ropa  
Es mi decisión si triunfo o fallo  
Nada tiene que ver con aquellos que tratan de derribarme

Con cada caída me vuelvo más fuerte  
Me deslizo por el líquido tranquilo  
Avanzando con confianza por el agua  
Ya no estoy en el río  
Pero en parte del océano  
Viviendo mis sueños y mis metas  
Demostrándome a mi misma lo fuerte que soy  
El agua profunda me dá mayores oportunidades  
Ampliando mi visión periférica de 180 a 360

Este es mi nuevo hogar  
Nutriéndome con la sabiduría que necesito para crecer  
Ayudándome a sobrevivir  
Para no ser devorada por peces mas grandes

Como graduarme de la Preparatoria  
Ir a la Universidad  
Tener una profesión  
Ser memorable  
Hacer que mis padres estén orgullosos de mí  
Hacer que todos mis sueños se vuelvan realidad

Cuando llegue el día  
Regresaré al lugar en donde nací  
Ya no seré un pequeño salmón infante  
Que no está seguro de cómo nadar en la profundidad  
Pero seré un adulto realizado  
Sabré de donde vengo  
Todo lo que he logrado  
Qué tan lejos he llegado  
Sabré en realidad que tan profunda es el agua

Nada puede ponerse en mi camino  
¡Nadie me dirá que no puedo!

## Confianza por Wendy Olivas

Yo soy una cima,  
Everest, rocosa, puntiaguda  
Por sí sola, sobreviviendo el frío clima con poco apoyo.  
Viendo el tiempo pasar desde muy arriba.  
Viendo a las aves volar

Temblando cuando las rocas caen por mi espina.  
Trato de dejar que los problemas pasen  
Preguntándome si hay una solución por cada mentira  
Mentiras acerca de mi trabajo  
Dejando que mis calificaciones caigan como rocas.  
Hiriendo a mi hermana  
Para después sentir el dolor en mí misma  
Con cada mentira desmoronándose dentro de mí  
Perdiendo mi confianza

Ahora lo lamento  
Enredando mi telaraña de mentiras  
Hiriendo a mi hermana  
Viéndola llorar  
Dándome cuenta que ella seguía mis pasos  
Me hizo querer cambiar mi vida  
Hermanita aprende de mis errores  
Es mejor luchar en la vida que desperdiciar sangre  
Tratando de cubrir tus mentiras no te ayudará en la vida  
Te hace perder la confianza  
De la gente que nos quiere tanto

Yo soy una cima  
Everest, orgullosa, empinada  
La vida es demasiado preciosa para hacer cosas estúpidas  
Soy joven y tengo éxito apartándome de las drogas  
Me mantengo fuerte por la derecha y por la izquierda  
Manteniéndome balanceada día y noche

Poderosa, útil y siempre con una sonrisa en la cara  
Pero volteando esa sonrisa muy dentro de mí  
Hay rocas en cada paso que tomo,  
Bloqueando el camino  
Al expresar mis sentimientos  
Con aquellos en quienes confío  
Encontrando el momento oportuno de correr con mi papá  
Cuando mi corazón está herido

Seré una cima  
Confidente, sincera conmigo misma, sonriendo por dentro  
Haciendo a la gente reír,  
Encontrando el momento oportuno para reír  
Encontrando el camino para descubrir quien soy en realidad  
Sin regresar cuando comience un nuevo camino en la vida.  
Comenzando desde abajo y llegando hasta arriba.  
Trabajando mucho  
Yendo a la universidad  
Dejando atrás mi niñez  
Ganando mi propio dinero  
Haciendo que mis padres se sientan orgullosos de mí  
Obteniendo buenas calificaciones  
Tratando de alcanzar las estrellas  
Dedicando mi tiempo a experimentar cosas nuevas.

Yo soy una cima  
Demostrándole a mi alma que solamente necesito confianza  
Confianza en mis propios pasos  
Que me ayudarán en el futuro  
La gente me puede juzgar por mi apariencia, mi estilo, mis tonterías  
Pero al final  
Yo seré la que escale la Montaña Everest

## Volando Sobre el Horizonte por Zulema Medina

Yo era un colibrí  
Dando la espalda cuando me hablabas  
Levantando mi cola, nada me importaba  
No ponía atención  
Escuchaba música, socializaba con mis amigos, entraba al Internet  
No escuchaba el consejo de mis padres de ser más responsable.

Mi hermanito Axel me ayuda a crecer  
Comprendiendo responsabilidades.  
Guiándome en la dirección correcta cuando vuelo hacia atrás.  
Aprendo de los errores que cometo con él  
Desde pequeños obstáculos,  
Como pelear por el control remoto  
Hasta el mayor percance,  
Durmiendo tarde en vez de darle de comer cuando tiene hambre.

Yo soy un colibrí  
Viajando en mi ambiente de Kings Beach a Truckee  
Sacramento, Vacaville y hasta L.A.  
Visitando familia, compartiendo mi alegría  
Admirando el paisaje mientras viajo.  
Con mis visitas nuestra familia se vuelve más unida  
Comiendo tranquilamente,  
Escucho los tenedores raspando los platos.  
De repente mi tío cuenta un chiste  
Reabasteciendo mi alegría  
Con dulce risa

Soy una joven, hermosa ave  
La más pequeña de todas las aves  
Colorida, pacífica, animada, y feliz  
Por fuera  
Pero no me subestimes  
Soy madura, cuidadosa y fuerte  
Por dentro  
Voy aquí, voy allá  
Ofreciendo mi mano a quien la necesita  
Y dando consejo.

Comparto mi punto de vista  
Aún cuando opinión es diferente.  
Si no lo hago me siento atrapada en una jaula  
Con un nudo en la garganta.  
Me siento tensa, furiosa, y triste por dentro  
Un gran nudo,  
Señal de que necesito hablar.  
La confianza y compasión de mis padres que me escuchan  
Me dan la llave para abrir la jaula.  
El nudo se va,  
La jaula está abierta  
Me siento libre,  
Satisfecha, y feliz en mi alma nuevamente

Mis alas se agitan a gran velocidad  
Señal de que es hora de partir,  
Parada en un tronco,  
Admirando el cielo  
Para imaginar mi destino.

Con el apoyo de mis padres vuelo sobre el horizonte  
En el futuro  
Recibiré mi diploma de Preparatoria  
Completaré la Universidad  
Tendré un diploma  
Tomaré mis propias decisiones  
Viajaré a donde me guste  
Me elevaré  
Por el eterno,  
Cielo azul de las aves.

Dear Parents,

Thank you for letting us come to the ARC Program. Through this program we have learned that we were ungrateful for the things you gave us. We were ignorant in not seeing how much we could have really helped you. We now understand that the lessons you have taught us are for our own good.

You have probably missed us, as much as we missed you. We have made an ARC family composed of 7 sisters, 2 brothers, and some foster parents which changed each day. They challenged and supported us in many ways. They challenged us physically to run fast and challenged us mentally to question who we really are. We switched homes going from the wilderness to basecamp at Sagehen. While we were in the wilderness, we learned the meaning of survival: food, shelter, and a shovel. We backpacked, running out of breath, and sometimes feeling like giving up, but challenged ourselves to keep going.

Now we realize how important because your love, trust, and support is incomparable because we know you'll be there for us no matter what. You may notice that because of this separation we are more independent and compassionate. Thanks for being our number one support team.

We love you,  
Tahoe Phoenix, ARC 2009

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Queridos Padres,

Gracias por dejarnos venir al programa de ARC. En este programa, hemos aprendido que éramos unos malagradecidos por todo lo que nos han dado. Éramos ignorantes y nunca vimos cuanto en verdad les podíamos haber dado. Ahora, entendimos las lecciones que nos han enseñado son por nuestro bien. Probablemente ustedes nos han extrañado como nosotros los hemos extrañado. Hemos formado una familia de siete hermanas, dos hermanos y padres adoptivos que cambiaron cada día. Nos desafiaron y apoyaron de diferentes maneras. Nos desafiaron físicamente a correr más rápido cada día. Nos desafiaron mentalmente a preguntarnos quienes somos en verdad. Cambiamos de hogares, yendo del bosque al campamento en Sagehen. Mientras estábamos en el bosque, aprendimos el significado de sobrevivir: comida, hogar y una pala. Caminamos mucho, quedándonos sin aire y a veces con el sentimiento de darnos por vencidos. Pero nos desafiábamos a seguir caminando. Ahora, nos hemos dado cuenta de lo importante que ustedes son porque su amor, confianza y apoyo son incomparables. Sabemos que ustedes estarán allí para nosotros, pase lo que pase. A lo mejor, ya se dieron cuenta que por esta separación somos más independientes y con más compasión. Gracias otra vez por ser nuestro equipo número 1.

Los queremos,  
Tahoe Phoenix, ARC 2009



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