



adventure risk challenge

a leadership and literacy program

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Lonely Aspen's Wish

I am a little Quaking Aspen tree.
My parents have spent a lot of time and money to raise me,
Now, I hide in my parents' shadow,
Stay under their protection.
With light: my parent's love,
With water: language challenges,
With clean air: new experiences and bravery
And with rich soil: my deep curiosity,
I will grow stronger and stronger,
So that I can take care of my little brother and sister in the future.

I am a little Aspen.
I arrived in the USA one year ago, by myself.
This is a strange and cold country for a little tree
Who used to live in a hot and wet region of China.
Although I don't have parents by my side,
I know they support me every day.

I am a little Aspen.
In winter, heavy snow sits on my branches
The snow of learning English,
The snow of finding new kind hearted friends
And the snow of adapting to a new life.
Although the cold and stiff wind hurts my bark badly,
I wait silently for spring,
I wait strongly for the sun to melt away the snow
and free my branches,
I wait patiently for my green leaves to grow again
I wait to see my real home, my parents, and my happiness.
I wait for myself to adapt to this cold and lonely country.

I am a little Aspen.
I will reach the sky, I will never give up.
I will stand on the top of the mountain,
Thrive in this strange and cold country.
I will grow taller and taller and see more and more
Views like Lake Tahoe. I will appreciate nature.
I will meet other trees, to know more stories and news.
And listen to the hikers,
to learn about determination and expression.
When my branches become longer and longer,
I will be strong enough to support all the winter snow.

I am a little Aspen,
My roots assimilate all of the nutrients of the rich soil,
feeding my deep curiosity
Curiosity makes me ask and learn.
Curiosity shortens the distance between the sky and me.

I will become the tallest tree of the forest
To protect my mom from the rain
To be a support for my siblings
To tell my peers what I see.
I will lead the other trees to change their leaves' color.
Our roots connect and I know I am not alone.
I know I have a lot of buddies standing behind me.
They support me so I am not afraid of loss.
I have confidence that I can lead the other trees
to pass the harsh winter.

I am a little Aspen.
I will create a way to solve the problems I face.
Maybe someday people will cut my trunk,
But I will become paper, a house,
or a boat that is useful for people.
I may change my shape and appearance.
But I will never die or disappear.
Nothing can stop an innocent tree from growing straight and tall.



My Teacher Mr. Challenge

Why did I want to join ARC? Before I joined ARC, I just wanted to learn English. I didn't believe a summer program could change my life, or even change me. I thought it was too hard to learn English in San Francisco where a lot of Chinese people live, so I wanted to have a chance to learn English. Everything in my mind was English and school, and I didn't care about other things around me. However, after joining ARC, I tried a lot of things. For example, cooking, helping and making American friends. All of these things were new for me. I went through a lot of things with my "Ohana". We cleaned dishes together, cooked together, and slept together. We did everything together. I became outgoing and different. Now, I always want to try new things and I don't want to miss any chance to change my boring life again when I go back to San Francisco. I don't want to be the girl who always wore a mask and ignored everything that was around her. I want to dance and try new things with other people. Also, I know how to express my feelings, make other people love my personality and show thoughts for others. I have realized that English isn't the most important thing that I learned from ARC. The most important thing that I learned was interaction and teamwork.

ARC changed me from a person who was always scared to talk to other people, to a person who always wants to show her personality. I used to think expressing my feelings was a nuisance to me and other people. It wouldn't help me. Also, if I said something wrong or against other people, people would hate me or argue with me; so I thought the best way was to agree with all of their opinions and simply smile. I thought smiling would make people love me and not argue with me. When I was in San Francisco, I used to use my smile to hide all of my feelings even if I really disagreed with something. At home, my cousins and my aunt always talked bad to me about my father and Macau to displease me. At school, I always thought my English teachers wanted to send me to the lower level class. I thought English was a chain around me; it locked me into a small world which separated me and other people. It blocked all the ways that I could express my feelings to other people. Although I felt tired and stressed, I still kept smiling and hiding all of my feelings in my heart. I couldn't disagree with or refuse my cousins and aunt, because I needed them to take care of me. I couldn't talk to my English teachers, because I thought my English wasn't good enough to talk to them. I thought if I said something wrong or displeased them, it would become an excuse to send me to the non-credit class. When I came to ARC, I didn't want to talk to other people and I wished I didn't need to answer other people's questions. I still considered that my poor English couldn't make me become their friend. Then, I started to realize that I should value this chance to learn more English. My English teachers don't live here, so I don't need to worry about saying something wrong. I knew these girls were very nice and they wouldn't blame me for my poor English, so I could say whatever I wanted. I knew I would live with these people for forty days, and I couldn't just be quiet until the end of the course. That's when I started to try my best to join their conversations. Now, these girls are my "Ohana". We went through a lot of challenges together like hiking, rock climbing, kayaking. Now, I feel more comfortable to share my opinions. Sometimes, I shared my ideas and everybody liked it. I feel very happy and proud of myself. "It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves. (Author Unknown)" I realized that if I always hide my feelings, other people will misunderstand me and keep doing what I don't want them to do. I used to think not knowing English was the only one reason for me to hide my feelings. Now, I can talk to other people in English, so I think I should prove my teachers or other people how smart I am by improving my English a lot. I have no reason to be the quiet girl that I used to be again.

My mom has always told me, "The best way to learn is asking." When I was in Macau, my father hired

a housekeeper to do all of the housework. After I moved to San Francisco, I had my relatives take care of me, so I never did housework before I came to ARC. When I just arrived in ARC, I didn't know how to wash the dishes and cook. I was afraid to ask and I felt I was useless. For example, when I was an iron chief, everybody knew what they are going to do next after they looked at the menu; I just stood there and waited for somebody to tell me what to do. I felt scared when I was waiting because I was afraid others would think I wasn't doing my job, but I still didn't want to ask and kept waiting. I thought cooking was very dangerous, and maybe I would hurt myself, so I didn't want to learn how to cook. Sometimes, other people just gave me some easy tasks like going to the refrigerator to get some stuff for the meal, but I still couldn't finish my job because I didn't know the English words. They had to spend more time to repeat again and again to explain what they wanted me to get. When I was the great eye, I wanted to help the house mice to clean the dishes, but I was the last one to finish my meal. I didn't have time to help them; they even had to wait for my dish. I felt inferior and I thought I didn't have the time and ability to help people. I envied other girls becoming more and more independent. They talked and laughed when they are working. I wanted to join them and be a part of them, so I started to try my best to help. I asked more and more, and then I learned more and more. Now I know how to make fruit salad and wash dishes; I became more independent. Everyone taught me a lot of things. I realized that I used to always blame other people and I never wanted to ask. I thought I couldn't speak English very well just because I didn't have chance to practice it because all of my friends speak Chinese. I didn't know how to do housework just because my family did everything for me before I wanted to do it. I considered a lot of things on my solo day. I understood that if I try to ask, my life would become better. If I asked other people who speaks English to be my friends and ask them about English, my English would become better. If I tried to ask my family how to do housework, I might know how to do some ease housework. I missed so many chances to ask and learn, and I will not make that mistake again. I will keep being a curious girl in the rest of my life.

I am a leader in my own unique way. I used to have stereotype for leader. I thought leader was smart, mean, perfect and always keep everyone on time. I thought I couldn't be a leader because my personality didn't fit to be a leader. I always need help and I am a slow person. I am not mean and I always am the last one to finish everything. I thought I only could be the follower. I remember that when I was the leader for the first time, I always needed other people to remind me the time and my tasks. I thought I wasn't a leader that day and I was very scared to give myself feedback. I said a lot of things that I could work on, but I only could find one thing that I did well. Everyone helped me and encouraged me a lot that day. Then, I saw other people show how to be a leader. I learned their virtue is a leadership skill. I listened to other people's feedback carefully and thought about what is a leader. My leadership style became better and better. I was so glad when everyone told me that my leadership improved a lot in the evening meeting. They said that they thought my leadership had made a lot of progress

every time. I knew the hardest thing was getting everybody's attention, so I used some funny ways or acts to make everyone do what I wanted them to do. Everyone loved my leadership and I am so proud of it. They made me understand that I don't need to be a mean boss, I can be a funny and kind leader. I love my leadership and I will make everybody love my leadership.

I learned to not think that other people's burden is lighter than yours. I remember on day one, we need to separate the food into ten piles before we hiked. Everyone should carry one food bag. I got a very heavy food bag and I thought maybe other people's food bag is lighter than mine. I thought that it was very unfair to me but I just didn't want to say it. When Mel said we should change our food bag, I felt released and lucky. After we changed our food bag, I discovered that the second one I got was heavier than the first one. I was very regretful. I thought the food bag was a burden. You should know somebody else's burden is heavier than yours and you are not the

only one carrying a burden in this world. If you always think you are unlucky or your burden is heavier than others, you will just get angrier and your thoughts will become a new burden for you. I believe that if you think you're lucky, then the luck will follow you. Everything just depends on what you think. Also, when we were at base camp, we had to run every morning. The road that we ran has two sides. I always chose the fewer rocks side because I didn't want to hurt my feet again. When I saw other people ran faster than me, I thought that because their side had fewer rocks, but after I ran to their side, I discovered that my thought was wrong, so I ran back to my side. When everyone did better job than me, I thought that just because their job was easier than me. Now, I understand that when I am not trying my best, I shouldn't ignore other people's endeavor. You should see and care about other people's endeavors not just your own. Compassion exists between

people everywhere. Sometimes, you just need to think about your daily life or experience, and then you will see compassion's trace.

I used to think I was perfect. I thought that everything I did was right. I thought I was very smart and I wouldn't have any challenge in my life. I thought that I could do everything by myself. In ARC, I learned that teamwork is very important. If I hadn't had my "Ohana" always standing behind me and supporting me, I couldn't have finished this forty days course. I understand that no one is perfect, but everyone is very strong. I think life is like hiking and rock climbing. If you take a lot of breaks or want to give up, you will just become more and more tired. Sometimes, when you are crossing country on a deep and slippery mountain, if you just sit down and stop, it is very hard to stand up again and it is more dangerous. In your life, if you don't face your challenge or push your limit, you will just become more and more fearful to face your challenge and always want to avoid new challenges. In rock climbing, it is very hard to find a correct route to the top. Sometimes, you can see the rock that you should grab or step on, but you can't reach it. That time, you shouldn't forget your buddy is standing under you and supporting you. Don't be afraid to ask; he will tell you the right way that you should go. If you always think about your experiences, we will learn a lot from them. Some people think that challenge is a bad thing, but I think challenge is my teacher. I need to work hard to pass his class, but I also can learn a lot of things from him.



I am a resilient stream with an invincible current
Slowly turning into a
Marvelous and beautiful river
And gradually making its way to the twinkling blue ocean

I was a new tributary
Directed through a tough life
That I did not know I would soon approach
I was happy
Energetic
And shy
I was a child who had no worries
No problems and so many exciting moments in my life

After many years
I found out that my life would not always be so easy;
I turned into an outraged brook of flooding water
I destroyed everything that got in my path,
And did not care about what went on around me
I had nowhere to turn to
No one to talk to
My father left us at such a young age
My mother always busy doing something else
And my sister too young and naïve to understand my struggles
The only way I thought to solve my emotional problems
Was to hold them in
And so I did

Life put me through many obstacles
Just like a stream trying to find its way
through piles of sturdy rocks
I got trapped and held in
Until finally I made my way through the small cracks
I had no father,
But I did have a mother,
A mother who was not always there for me
She paid more attention to my step-father
And my newborn sister
I was mad because my mother did not love me

As I grew older I became a thundering stream
I lacked control for my emotions
I fiercely crashing onto the rocks that were too tall for me
I was always irritated when I was at home
I never wanted to talk

And for a while my water was not taken care of
And was at risk of drying out
And giving up
Not being able to make it
To the vast and beautiful sea
My mother and I would argue
To the point that I felt I had to run away from home
My step-father made my mother think I was lazy, stupid
And under the influence of alcohol and drugs
He made my mom and I fight even more
When I ran away he acted like he cared,
However, I saw that he wanted to stop me
From flowing into the ocean,

He made me think that my mom did not love me
My mother was blind to the distance he put between us
One day while sluggishly guiding my way
I encountered a wonderful lake,
A lake that was well taken care of,
This lagoon of clear
Blue green
Sparkly
And twinkly water
Took care of me
And showed me a new way of thinking
She showed me that talking to my mother
Would be a way to get closer to her
And so I did

My mother and I started to bond more
Now we talk more than we did before
Allowing me to safely travel downstream with calmer currents,
Like I did before, as a child

My future as a mellow, powerful and independent stream
Flows towards the ocean of extended freedom
While having a goal



A goal
To get there without being prevented
By rocks taller than me or a steep waterfall
That will jolt me around
And when that day comes
I WILL BE
INDEPENDENT
A ROLE-MODEL
A LAWYER
A LAWYER THAT USES ALL HER RESOURCES
IN THE WIDE SEA
PROTECTING AND PRESERVING
ALL LIFE AROUND HER
IN THIS COLD, HARD BUT YET BEAUTIFUL WORLD
AND SO I WILL!!!

A New Life in Forty Days

Have you ever spent 40 days with a group of female strangers and not recognize the person who you were before? Well I have. I never thought that my life would change in 40 days. I transformed from a hardened and uncaring person, into someone who wants to make a change and feel trustworthiness to those around her. ARC made an impact on me that forever changed my life.

People who struggled never mattered to me. I always would say to myself; "Why should I encourage and help them, when they're not going to try to push themselves?" Before ARC I saw people struggle and always give up. I did not want to help them and didn't know why. Now I see that if I would have given them a little push, all the giving up might not have happened. ARC made me realize this in a variety of ways. For instance, throughout the summer our team, Ohana, had plenty of people with fears. There were people with fears of heights, dogs, ducks, and even water. At the beginning of the 40 days, I felt like they were holding down the team. I would be frustrated and get angry, like Shrek showing passive anger. I saw that my teammates would encourage the people who were scared and that I wouldn't. At first I did not feel bad at all, but then I noticed that they were pulling away from me. I decided to change this at rock climbing, and I knew it would not be so easy. I had already planned to be more encouraging during our rock climbing adventure, but I didn't exactly know how. We were in front of a 90-foot wall, I had just had my turn a few minutes ago, and Christina was making her way down. June was waiting unconfidently for her turn. I had known from earlier in our expedition that she had a fear of heights. When we were walking from Dick's Lake there was a very steep slope, which felt like if you took one wrong step you would fall and die. During this part of the trail, June could not look around her, or even look down at her feet to look where she was going to step. She almost cried. Back at the granite 90 ft. wall, I did not know how I should help her. I knew



that if she did not take her chance to go up she might later regret the decision. I had to encourage her to go up, and when she did go up, she went up with confidence. From there on I knew that it's risky for people to face challenges, especially when they are fearful. June showed me that encouragement is a great way for people to face their fears. She might not have been so happy when she was back on the ground, but she had such great confidence because of the encouragement that the other girls and I gave her. Now I see that encouragement can help people with different things. I plan to keep encouraging people, because if I encourage people, people will want to encourage me. Also people would be happier making me happy.

I always thought I could do everything by myself. I would never ask for help, but ARC made me realize that I can't always do everything on my own. We had our roles while hiking, and if one person stayed behind, we would never reach our destination. We all had to work together, like we did during the hike from Needle Lake to Tinkers Knob. During that hike we had to travel cross-country. The team had never really experienced that type of terrain before, making it difficult. There was no trail to follow, trees always blocked the possible ways, and broken trunks and rocks were too high to go over. It took us 12 hours to hike to Tinkers Knob, but we made it! The only way we were capable of doing this was by helping one another. Sometimes we would not know which way was the easiest way to get through a difficult section. I thought that if I led maybe we would get out there faster, but no. We all had to explore trying to find the easiest way out of the jungle we were in. There were parts in the forest that were too high, or too far away to reach. It took time for me to want to ask for help but if I didn't I could hurt myself. I saw that I was just making everything so difficult by working on my own. Now when I go home, I will not let myself try to do everything on my own.

If I did, I could end up hurt, or make a problem bigger and not find the solution. I have found that if I ask for help I will get a different perspective and answers that can help me.

Before ARC, I used to listen to the first thing I thought of, and never doubt or change my mind. I lost opportunities that I could have changed my life, because my mind always stopped me from reaching my goals. However, during the ropes course I saw that my mind was an obstacle, but my body was what made the decisions. Yilin and I were on top of a log that was held by two other trees. The log was only about 1 foot wide, 4 1/2 stories high and 20 feet away from a platform, and I had to walk across on it. I was frozen and so was Yilin. Inside my head I would chant to myself; "No, you can't do it!" But everyone else was yelling that I could do it. I started to walk forward without even thinking. My feet moved forward like a model of some sort. But then, I suddenly stopped. My mind had once again taken over my body's strength. But I did not let my mind get in front of me for long, and I started moving again. I was surprised that I did not give up half way through the catwalk. My mind kept trying to stop me; however, my legs did not let me stop. Being in ARC made me realize that my mind will not always make the decisions. I now know that I have the ability to overcome the power of my mind. When I go back home I will not let my mind stop me from doing the things that I want to do.

All the expeditions and times at base camp made me become a better person. The not encouraging, none believer and not able to ask questions girl is gone thanks to all the great things that ARC offered my teammates and me. The obstacles the program put between me and success made me push myself to try new things, and overcome my mental strength that used to put me down, making me give up. Now when someone tells me, "You can't do that, just give up." My response will be, "I can". When I see people who are being discouraged and scared, I will take the initiative to be the person to help them back up. Outside of ARC I will keep challenging myself, and make myself discover new things about me. Thanks to ARC I am a new person that can do anything she wants.

I'll Be Strong

I am a Silvery field ant
Tiny and inconspicuous
I don't speak English very well
So I used to hide all my feelings
All the time

I want to be a psychologist
Writing an essay in English is difficult
My brain always goes blank
When I am writing
As the ant can see the sky
But can't touch it
My dream is untouchable and far away

The wind can easily blow me
Far away
From the location
That I want to go
But I'll be strong
Strong enough to find my way back
As the ants
Strong enough to find their way back
By only remembering the smell



When I moved to the United States
The culture and language were all new
I didn't know how
To express my feelings In English
So I could only hide my feelings
I cared
What other people thought
At school I was afraid
To make mistakes
Because the Chinese Americans always
laugh at the newcomers.
I remember one time they said,
"ONLY the ELD students
Cannot pass the CASHEE test."
Even though they were mean
I'll be strong and prove them wrong

The ant can hear
Even the quietest sounds
But the sounds won't distract them
They still keep focusing on their job
They let me make sure that one day
I'll be strong
I always care about
What people think about me
I can't focus on my responsibilities
I didn't cook at home
I typically woke up at lunch time
Therefore, I was a lazy and inactive ant.
I want be a self-sacrificing ant
They always focus
On all their responsibilities
I cannot even focus on one thing

Sometimes I think people don't like me
They tell me this through their eyes
And their actions
When people don't like me
I feel alone
I feel like I cannot be friends with them
When I am in ARC
I feel safe
Everyone is approachable and kind
I only choose friends
Who are approachable and kind
I don't want myself to get hurt
I cannot let myself to get hurt
This makes me sure that one day
I'll be strong

Most of the time
The people don't believe
That an ant can travel around the world
My relatives say
I need help from them
But I definitely don't
Just like the ant believe they can travel
around the world

My relatives are anteaters with sharp teeth
That cut us down
They don't care about my family
As the anteaters always
Show their sharp, pointy teeth
to the tiny ants
We only get help from them
When they got paid
Sometimes
Even though we said we can pay them
They still unwilling to give help

When the fire blocks the way
The ant families
Make concentric circles

Quick as lightening
Rolling through the fire
What gives the worker ants the courage
To voluntarily stand on the outer circle?
Unity!
Self-sacrifice!
Why does my family protect me?
Because they love me
Even though I'm a lazy and inactive ant
This makes me sure that one day
I'll be strong
Strong enough to protect my family
As the worker ants
Protect the queen and baby ants

I want to be a worker ant at ARC
Work as hard as I can
I'm always wondering if I am doing my best
On our first expedition
We had to hike for 6 miles
With heavy backpacks
I felt the most tired and exhausted
I have ever felt
I desperately wanted to give up
With clenched fists
I stabbed the hiking pole
I felt like someone take my brain out
And only my body was left to hike
But I forced myself to keep going.
And I made it
This experience makes me sure that one day
I'll be strong

I want to be the self-sacrificing ant
Who will go to college for 8 years
Just to become a psychiatrist
I will help children who have been abused
Protect them and mitigate their hurt
My dream will let me make sure
that one day
I'll be strong
One day,
I'll be strong
Strong enough to overcome English
I'll be strong
Strong enough to accomplish my dreams
I'll be strong
Strong enough to protect myself
and my family
I'll be strong
Strong enough to leave my relatives
And let them realize
The things they did were all wrong.
I believe that one day,
If I walk steadily,
step by step
I can reach my success

Keep Progressing

“A failure is not always a mistake... The real mistake is to stop trying.” – B. F. Skinner

Before I came to ARC, when I felt challenged the first thing I thought was to stop. I really wanted to accomplish my goals, but I didn't have the bravery to do them. Every time I worked on my essays for English, I always got stuck on the brainstorming part. I got frustrated, and I would stop. My essays would be like a draft to a kids drawing. I wanted to work on it more, but had no idea how to continue, so I would tell myself, “That's it! You cannot do this. This is your level, and you cannot do better than this.” But now, I don't discourage myself when I am writing and I don't hate writing essays. At ARC, I always pushed myself as hard as I could. While we were backpacking, most of the time I felt exhausted, but I always tried to keep going. I told myself, “You will be fine. When you get there you can relax as much as you want.” When I didn't know something, I would ask instead of hiding. My encouragement made me progress a lot. When I found that I had something to improve on, I would actively work on it instead of waiting for help. I worked on my positive attitude and faced my fears. This made me grow a lot and I feel like I can leave my parents and be independent.

“You always look serious! Why don't you smile?” my mom always asked me since I was 13 years old in China. I used to have a poker face before I came to ARC. I never noticed that a smile could change everything. On day 27 of the 40 day course, we hiked out from Tinker's Knob and I was the leader of the day. That night was the brightest night that I had ever seen, because I learned the value of a positive attitude. At about 8'o clock, it was time to start the evening meeting, which meant it was time for me to get feedback from the group about my role as leader of the day. I didn't notice that my face was turning into stone; I just kept looking at the sky and wondering why the sky didn't turn dark when it was supposed to. The sky was like a child who didn't want to go home when it was the time, but wanted to spend the last moments with her friends. It was a sign it that I would receive the best present that night, which is good advice. The group told me that I need to improve my tone of voice and smile more. At first, the feedback made me feel frustrated, but I really listened and I understood that it would be useful for me. I finally knew what I needed to do to improve. I am a person who always strives to become perfect. Every time I hear people explain how I can be better, I feel pleased. I used to think smiling

was stupid, I didn't smile so I could protect myself from getting hurt; I thought it made me stronger to be serious. I didn't want to show people what I was feeling. Since that night, I started to smile a lot, and the more I smiled the more respect and confidence I received. I learned that my smile brings more smiles towards me. When you are in a good mood, the things you do will be much easier. For example, when I was hiking, the long distance made me feel exhausted. However, when I was talking to people about things we are interested in and more, I felt better. You will always see the bright side of things when you are in a good mood. When I face a challenge, I will try to smile first, and I won't care how hard it is. I will smile first, and I won't let myself be depressed.



I used to be a scaredy-cat. When I was little, I was afraid of darkness, heights, dogs, and getting hurt. I don't know why God brought so many fears for me to face. I knew I would have to face my fear of heights by coming to ARC, and it made me question if I should come. At the ropes course I faced a lot of these fears. I knew it would be scary, and there was no place for me to hide. In my memory, it was a sunny day but in my eyes it was cloudy. The only fear I knew I would have to face was my fear of heights, but I didn't know there were other fears waiting for me. When we got out of the cars, two dogs came towards me. The dogs reminded me that I have to face my fear and not hide. I couldn't even put my feet on the ground because the dogs

were around me. As the dogs came towards me, my fears grew to the highest point. My fears were broken down when we began to play a game. After lunch, the scariest moments finally came towards me. I put on a harness, and it reminded me of when we went rock climbing. When I went rock climbing, I had to climb a wall that was almost straight up. The higher I climbed the more scared I felt. Finally, when I wanted to go down I realized it was the biggest challenge I had ever faced. I couldn't let go of the rock. I had to let go of the rock if I wanted to get down safely, but I was scared. My body needed to lean back from the wall, but this action reminded me of when I almost fell out of a building when I was a kid. At the ropes course, Mike, the facilitator, asked us to line up by how much we were afraid. When Mike said I would go first, I felt frustrated because I was the most afraid. Usually people will put the people who are most scared at the end, but I was first. I was the first one to go up the Flying squirrel, which was an element where you are raised straight up in the air as high as you can go. My tears started to fall down; I really didn't want to cry in front of a bunch of people, especially a 12 year old kid who was Mike's son. At that point, I wasn't in charge of my tears, and I felt weak. I took a couple deep breaths before the rope was attached to my harness. I closed my eyes, and I started to go up. The higher I went, the more I cried. But I forced myself to not give the thumbs down, which meant “go down”. I ended up going 30 feet high before I stopped. I finally realized that I was brave. Even though I was scared, I still tried. “If you don't try, you will be regretful later,” I always remind myself. This experience led me to the top of my challenges. I will use this experience to remind me to always keep going and at least try.

Finally, I have found my unique way to reach success. I need to actively push myself and not just wait for help. I need to stop discouraging myself and be positive. I need to always keep trying. I believe I can do anything if I work really hard. I used to like seeing the hard working people work in their jobs because they were inspiring. Now I have learned to be a hard worker as well, and I can inspire others. I will show my bravery by trying new things, and facing my fears. I will take the initiative to choose to keep my positive attitude. When I go home, I will bring the keys to success with me. I will not let anything bring me down. I will keep trying. I will not stop. I believe I can keep progressing until the end of my life.

My Life is Like a Fish Traveling through Water

I am a fish traveling through water
It's a long difficult journey
Through the river to get from the lake to the ocean

I swim with a school of fish
Even though they are there for me
I am the uncommon fish
I need to escape but
I feel terribly alone

As I travel I come across bumpy rapids
Managing school, friends, home, and expectations
The force of the current pressures me to do right thing
To be responsible and independent
But I just want to be left alone to make my own choices

Rushing water
I am swimming against the current
Trying to leave my past, but it keeps pulling me back
I know that I need to push past my limits
By working hard to get to the ocean

I swim through torrents
Of worry, sadness, pressure, mistakes and my burdens
I worry about my sister
And try to help her be strong to forget by being a good role model

I cry because I can't do anything to help
I'm trapped in one place
My past
I made the mistake of blaming myself
I couldn't keep up with the current

I eased my wounds and eventually I came to calmer water
I tasted salt and I realized that I was near the ocean
I learned to carry all my problems since I was a child
By letting go of the load and going with the flow
Even if the currents were strong
I could swim through them

I left the lake to get to the ocean
Even though my memories still swirl around me



I realize I'm also swimming through waves
Of happiness, freedom, joy and dreams
I am overjoyed to be with my mother that's constantly there for me
Supportive even though she's fighting her own currents of disability
She doesn't complain because it makes her stronger
My sister also won't let her disability or age stop her
from having a powerful life

Life is a long river rushing by
By fighting the current
It made me stronger
To be where I wanted to be
When I reach the ocean
I will have the satisfaction of achieving my goals
Of successfully finish high school to gain my diploma,
Reaching the college I desire and become a strong adult like my
mother

I will get to that clear beautiful ocean
I will feel strong and independent
I will have the strength to overcome all my obstacles
I will have a wonderful home and a beautiful life

I Was, I Am

“One of the greatest tragedies of our modern civilization is that you and I can live a trivial life and get away with it. One of the greatest advantages of pain and suffering is that it forces us to break through our superficial crusts to discover life on a deeper and more meaningful level”-Time Hansel.

Joining ARC was one of the best choices that I ever made. It changed my life and the way that I see things. I now see life from a different perspective by paying attention and listening, and trusting others and myself. By becoming more confident, I can make a change.

I became a leader instead of a follower by listening to all of the feedback people gave me. Every time that I was leader of the day I would dread ABC news at the end of the day. I was afraid that people would tell me that I did a horrible job. On the first expedition, I felt that I did a horrible job. I was the first leader of the day and I had no idea of what needed to happen. I felt lost and hopeless like a bird trapped in a cage unable to spread its wings. I kept telling myself that I could do it and my instructors told me that they picked me because they felt that I could do it. Everything was going well until my ankle began to hurt. The trail got more and more rocky making it painful to walk. I didn't want to let the group down on the first day so I kept walking. As we got closer and closer to our camping site, I began to falter to the point that the pain was getting in the way of me leading. The pain kept getting worse. I was beginning to cry and I couldn't stop. We had to stop and find a new place to camp for the night. Finally, it was time for the evening meeting and I was scared to know what they had to say because I felt that I had let them down. During the leader of the day feedback, I wanted to cry all over again by just thinking of what had happened. They kept on telling me what I did wrong and only mentioning one or two things that I did well. At that point I didn't want to listen. I wanted to ignore everything that they told me and just go home. I knew that I did the best I could, but they didn't know. I soon realized that they were telling me this to help me and not to make me feel bad. Later I realized

that I was using what they had told me to do, because they said that I was improving. I now know how to lead the group better than I did before, because I learned from what they had to tell me. I talk louder than I did before, and learned that I am a person that my team can follow since I am compassionate, confident, and I make good choices.

Before ARC, I didn't trust anyone because I didn't think that they would understand my feelings. I felt that I couldn't trust strangers and feared that they would make situations worse. I also didn't have the confidence to make friends and talk to people. I was quiet and insecure, fearing everything I did. During ARC we went white water rafting and I fell out of the raft into raging rapids several times. Every single time that I fell out my team was always there to pull me back in. When we went to the ropes course, I climbed 40 feet off the ground. I felt scared and insecure to go any higher, but my team kept cheering and supporting me to go on. I reached the top, and felt shaky. I did not want to leave the tree. But I still had challenges to overcome. I had to walk across a log 40 feet up in the air and swing down the Giant Swing to get down to the ground. These activities were overwhelming and I felt terrified. The only reason I managed to get down was because my team kept cheering me on and made me feel like I could trust the equipment, them, and myself. Through these experiences, I am now confident to talk about what is hard for me to say. I also have confidence in myself and have the courage to take the first step towards challenge. Getting to know strangers and learning

more about them can show me that they can become friends and even my family. By letting the people in my Ohana share their feelings too and supporting me to do the same I feel like I am about to overcome my fear of trusting others.

When I was younger, I would never ask for help because I didn't want to feel weak. I had to grow up fast and be responsible and independent to take care of my sister. I would pressure myself to do everything, thinking that no one would understand, and be able to help me. I would pressure myself to do everything by myself because

no one could do it for me. My community in ARC is a good role model. They have showed me that they are here for me for support and also to give good advice. Through being asked to give help, I have realized that I also can ask for help from others. I was able to ask them for help when I was having a hard time. I wanted to leave the course because I felt that I couldn't make it to the end. They said that they would do everything they can to help me finish the course, and I did. Other examples were when I was the leader of the day and I was asked to help keep the group stay on task, when I was the aqua bear I was asked to keep the group hydrated, when I was a house mouse I was asked to help clean up, as an iron chef I was asked to make sure that everyone was fed, as the great eye I made sure that we didn't get lost, and as the journalist I was asked to point out our accomplishments. Knowing that there are people that I can share the load with at home, school and in my community and it makes me feel safer and confident. This helped me let go of my control and be less independent.

By joining the ARC program I was able to learn that I can be confident. I can ask for help when I need it because I can trust other and myself. I can now make my own decisions with confidence. ARC was a life changing experience.



A Thoughtless Creek Becomes a Grown River

I am an independent creek
I start from the top of the high mountain
I have my own way to go
I make my own decisions for life
To reach my goal
That all other creeks want
To reach the vast ocean

I used to be a lazy creek
I just laid on the ground and flowed slowly
The same routine everyday
Not finding a new way to live
Until I realized that my life was boring
While the others made their lives more interesting day by day
I felt lonely and lost in my life

I was a selfish creek
I didn't want to share the water I had
With any trees around me
Even when the water was overflowing
I thought that it belonged to me
I didn't have to share with anyone
Until I saw and perceived that
Those trees were dying day by day
They lacked water
Like some people who have to collect trash for food
Those people really need things that I had thrown away
Especially back in Vietnam, my country



I was a thoughtless creek
I just copied everything people did
Without thinking if it was right or not
And then I learned that
Not all of the things those people did was right
They just did what they thought was beneficial for them
And didn't think about others
Sometimes I felt that I was inconsiderate
I didn't think about the others' feelings
Even my parents when they were tired after working
I didn't help them with anything
But I kept making the house a mess
And they would have to clean up after me
Until I saw they got more white hairs
And more wrinkles on their faces
Because of taking care of us
They gave us everything they had

Now I want to be myself,
Be more thoughtful
Be a grown, confident, and bold creek
Strong enough to become an independent river
To reach the ocean, my goal
Nothing can stop me from reaching my goal
I set aside the wrong things people want me to do

One day, I'll rise back to the mountain
Where am I from
To share water with the trees,
Who needs the support to keep growing healthy
They don't have to collect trash for food anymore

I'll choose my own way for my river flow to the ocean
I'll be more than a daughter for my parents
A generous sister for my siblings
I'll try my best to be a successful student in high school
Go to my dream college
Get a great career to earn enough money
I'll come to my parents and ask them to rest
After working hard for us many years

My river has reached the ocean successfully
I have changed myself
From a lazy, selfish, thoughtless and inconsiderate creek
To be an independent, confident and strong river
No one can stop me from reaching my dream!

Try New Things to Prevent Regret Later

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do...” – Mark Twain

Before I decided to go to ARC, some of my friends told me that I should not go. They heard from previous ARC students that ARC would not allow me to use any electronic devices, I would have to do a lot of things that are dangerous, I couldn’t talk to my family, and I might waste my summer for nothing. They made me confused about what I should choose, but I thought that if I joined, I would have a chance to learn more things. If ARC was like what my friends told me, I might still regret my decision. But, if I did not join ARC and have this summer with nothing to do, then it would be too late for me to take a chance to try new things and meet new people. I’m glad that I did not listen to them. If I had, I will regret it like I did when I was a little kid. I used to be a lazy, passive person. I always waited for the things to come to me, and never found the new ways to make my life better. I followed everything people told me to do without asking or being concerned why. Sometimes, I felt I was a puppet on their hand, they used me for amusement. When I had enough knowledge to realize what happened to me, I refused to be a fool in front of those people. That made me hesitate to try new things because I thought people would laugh at me if I made a mistake. I would rather do the same things everyday than try the new things that made me feel shameful in front of others. I wasted a lot of time staying home, being on the computer, Internet, and doing nothing. Now, I feel disappointed about the time I wasted before. I decided to join ARC, and I know that I will never regret this decision.

Before this course, being away from family for forty days was something that I did

not think was an option. I was dependent on my family. I thought that without my family I could not do anything. I needed to be reminded of small things, like eating on time. When I came here, I learned to be independent. I did not ask for help if I could do it by myself. I also learned how to be a responsible leader of my peers because of being independent. I tried to help them to be on time by setting a good example. I woke up earlier and did my cleaning before I woke them up so I could make sure that they had enough space and time to do their work and get to the stretch circle on time. From being a leader, I learned to be more confident to speak up. I felt that my English improved a lot when I came here. At the beginning of the forty days, I was thinking a lot of what I would say or ask others. I used to think that they might think that I was



stupid if they could not understand me. That made me quieter. Later, my team helped me be more open by sharing their life stories and encouraging each other. They made me trust others and myself more. They let me know that what I thought before was wrong; I am not dependent on my family, and I am confident to do what I want.

Compassion is something I didn’t think that I had until I came to ARC. I learned to put myself into others’ shoes, to comprehend what they were sharing, and think more

about their feelings. Compassion helped me to be more patient. When we were hiking, we could not stay together all the time because some of us were scared of heights and some were tired. So we had to wait for them and come back to support them sometimes. That made me angry because I thought that they were holding back the group and did not try their best. Later, ARC helped me understand what a team is. In a team, we should work together and help everyone reach the goal together, not as individuals. In the last expedition, we saw that some of us had not improved

enough. This made us realize that we helped them too much, and made them become dependent. So, we decided to let them try first to see if they really needed help. We saw that they became more proud of themselves and improved more. Therefore, I learned that if you want to help others, you should think about encouraging them to try first. That means you are not taking away their chance to be better, and they will not regret what they did not try.

Being responsible has a big effect on the group. Working in a team, you are not only responsible for yourself, but for everybody. Your actions might hurt yourself and affect the team. This could be positive or negative to your team. At the ropes course, we showed a lot of teamwork and responsibility. We helped and supported each other to reach the goal together. When we walked on the rope, the people who crossed the rope first helped and showed how to pass the rope easily to the others. We supported each other. When we played the ghost rider, we had to be careful with what we did because if one person failed, then the whole group had to start over again. It made you be more responsible. We climbed a tree and walked on a log which was 40-feet above the ground, called the catwalk. When I was on the catwalk, my legs were shaking. I kept telling myself that, “My friends have me on belay down there, and I’m going to be OK.” I looked down to my belay team, and they yelled my name and encouraged me. It gave me more bravery to keep going. I stopped for a second, took a deep breath, and tried to push myself forward. I learned to trust my team and myself more. This can help me overcome my fears because I know that my team is out there for me. They can catch me whenever I fall. They made me trust myself that I can do it. When I wanted to give everything up, they were there and told me to not give up but keep moving. I really appreciated the time we had together.

I can see how much I changed if I compare who I am now with who I was before these 40 days. Before, I was lazy and passive. If I had stayed home this summer, I would have kept sleeping until noon, staying late up at night, and spending time on my computer every day. ARC helped me learn a lot of lessons. These lessons I believe will help me now and in my future. I have changed to a more active and compassionate person because of thirteen strangers, who called me Ohana, or family, after a few days later.

sabrina johnson

Changes to Free Myself

I am a sparkling cloud
But most do not reach out to me
Instead, guessing, judging and imagining what I am
Some take the time to guess with their friends.
Sometimes their guesses put me high.
Most times their guesses put me low.

I wish they weren't so blinded by my personality
So bright, loud, and seemingly confident
Often, my dark shadow leads people away
I wish my shadow would bring them in
I offer shade, a shoulder, an ear and advice

The more comfortable I feel
The higher I rise
The more I laugh, joke and smile

I've been through more than people think.
I'm just an expert at hiding things
Things that I'm ashamed of.
Bottling everything inside
Like rain
Trying to keep it in.

My facade is always light and happy
But inside is a thunderstorm
A thunderstorm full of fear, anger and confusion
Fear for my mother, her health, her safety, her boyfriend
Anger for my brother's addiction, his "so called friends"
I fear my sister's left valve might give out
And confusion that my own dad won't fight for me
I built a barrier of vapor, thick and impenetrable
Trying to find way to avoid reality
And fight emotions

If I let my emotions out naturally
I will rain long as if I will never end
Powerful like I'm on steroids
Nice because I still want to help
A gentle hurricane
After the longest drought.

I always want to help
If you're hot, I'll shade you
If you're lost, I'll find you
If you're hopeless, I'll help you
If you're hurt, I'll heal you
If you're blissful, I'm blissful
Peoples' happiness makes me rise like clouds

I love being joyful
And I'm not going to let any obstacle in life take away my happiness
Or discourage me

Because I am an ambitious cloud
Higher than expectation

And I have the right to be
The right to be free of worries
The right to love life as I want
The right to fly and go to an extraordinary college
Become a veterinarian, make a difference
And stand up for what I believe in

I'm no longer a dingy cloud
No
I'm a determined cloud
I know where I'm going
I'm going to make a change
I know how to get there
By doing what's right ,right now

Now I'm a glistening cloud
Shinning bright
On the right path
Pursuing happiness
Achieving my hopes and dreams

ARC has helped me gain insight
About independence, strength
Letting out emotions
Making good choices
In life, I probably wouldn't have made it much further
I can't change my past
But I can assure my future



Changes to Free Myself

I was 4 ½ stories high on a tree log that was not even a foot thick. “Why did I put myself into this position?” I said quietly under my breath, while looking down in terror. For some reason I couldn’t stop looking down. Even though people were encouraging me, my mind played tricks. Their encouraging words turned into discouraging words. In my mind, “You’re not going to fall” turned into “You’re going to fall”. I tried calming my nerves by telling myself I was only 5 feet off the ground. I got the courage to take my first step across the tree; however, after only 3 steps my legs started quivering. I looked down and asked my belay team if they had me. Jocelyn, Stephany and Nga all nodded and answered yes. That eased my mind, but only for a second because I couldn’t stop thinking about everything that could go wrong. I froze with fear until I heard, “Look this way! I am coming to get you.” Maria was only about 7 feet away from me with her hand out, scooting her feet to come get me. When I finally grabbed her hand I felt at ease. I wasn’t as scared and my legs stopped quivering; we made it to the other side. I smiled, took a deep breath and relaxed because it was over. All I needed was friend there with me to overcome my challenges. In ARC I had to push myself in many different ways. I learned its okay to push yourself out of your comfort zone.

I learned to face my fears, because if you do, you will feel accomplished, and you’ll learn that they’re not that scary. I am terrified of water. The first time we kayaked I was silently crying during the first hour because I was so scared. I was going to tell Mel that I couldn’t handle it and I just couldn’t get back in the kayak. However, I started to think about all of the views and sights I’d miss out on. I didn’t want to have any regrets. I sucked it up, took some deep breaths and I told Mel that I would give it one more chance if she was right by my side. It took a lot to get back in, but I told myself that we were only kayaking in the shallow parts. With Mel right beside me, I felt safe. As we were kayaking I started thinking to myself, “If I wouldn’t have gotten in, I would have missed out on the beautiful views and all this fun.” Now I

won’t think twice about facing my fears. I won’t choose to just walk away. After ARC I will continue to face my fears because they help me grow as a person.

As I reflect on my time with ARC, I’ve realized that I learned that when I think I can only take 2 more steps I can take 10. Whether it’s emotional, physical or mental, I can always go farther. Hiking was a big challenge for me. The uphill parts were so



tiring. I would take 3 steps then stop, take another 3 steps then stop, and so on. I started thinking about the team, and how I felt that I was holding them back. I wanted to show them that I’m strong and a fighter. I grabbed the hiking pole and stabbed the ground repeatedly, like I was furious with the trail. I increased my speed, encouraged myself and I accomplished my goal of reaching the summit. We run every day at basecamp, and while running, every step felt like it was going to be the last one I could take. I started singing the song titanium by David Guetta. It inspired me and encouraged me to keep running. Not only have I pushed myself physically, but I pushed

myself emotionally. I shared my feelings, even when I thought I would be judged. My Ohana didn’t judge at all. Some of the girls had gone through the same experience I had gone through. They made me realize that half of things that I was beating myself up for weren’t even really my fault. I realized I should stop beating myself up about something that was in the past. Now I know that not everyone is going to judge me. For the rest of my life I will push myself. I will not look at giving up as an option, because to me it no longer is. Lastly I’m taking the word “can’t” out of my vocabulary, because I can and I will.

With my ARC family, I gained confidence I never previously had. Before I meet any of my Ohanna, I thought you had to be super skinny and tall to be beautiful. I quickly learned that you don’t have to be. You don’t have to fit the statues quo. You just got to do what you want. If you dress how you want and be who you are people will think you’re uniquely beautiful. Most importantly you will know that you’re uniquely beautiful. The whole time I was here I wasn’t worried about my body or weight. I was mostly care free, and just having a good time. Here I was never worried about meeting the statue quo, or what people thought of me. I also learned there is such a thing as big and beautiful. And I am big and beautiful. Now I have so much self-esteem that I am conceited. Within these little 40 days I have gained confidence that will help me in life. When I go to an interview to get a job, I will walk in there like I own the building. I won’t be as shy about talking to people I don’t know. My appearance won’t hold me back.

In the end, I learned a lot and found out who I want to be. I learned that a friend can be your family, your Ohanna. Friends can help you overcome fears and challenges. When you push yourself you feel powerful and like you can take on the world. It will get you to where you want to be. I’ve realized that opening up and being vulnerable is actually helpful, and it makes you feel understood. Now because of ARC I feel big and beautiful. I’m so glad I came because I grew as a person.

I am a delicate
But Powerful
Juniper Tree
That wants to grow high
And extend my roots

I've been through the toughest
Weather and storms
Storms that tried to bring me down
Caused me to lose my branches

I've even been struck by lightning at birth
Lightning that killed me
And brought me back
For a purpose in life



A luminous life
I once lived as a child
An innocent
Careless and free little girl
I smiled all the time
Laughed and played with my sibling
I believed my parents had a never ending love
Believed my family was perfect
And nothing could ever bring us down

Yet as the years progressed
The seasons changed
A fearful drought came one year
It soaked up all the water
Within my mom
And my family's soil

My mother's depression hit us all
She never spoke to us
She would lock herself up in her room
Surround herself with darkness
Refuse help
All she wanted to do was be alone

But again such lonesome
Drove her to madness
Almost taking her away from me
One day as I waked into her room
And saw the bottle of pills lie next to her
She wanted to take her life away

No longer was my family

The unbreakable family I believe we were
I would no longer laugh
Talk or even spend time with my sibling
The soil became dry
Thin and created cracks
which began to separate us all
Our house felt empty
Yet it was full

The drought pushed me much too far
I let the cracks become bigger
And drove myself to a dry place
A place no tree could ever grow
I lived under the burning sun
That dried up my hopes
Hopes i had for ever going back
to my perfect family
Hopes I had for growing up with a present mom
Hopes I had for ever being my confident self
Hopes, Hopes, Hopes
All gone

The drought dried up my happiness
My berries dried blue
And sorrowful
I became lifeless
And my innocent green
And confident scale-like needled I had
Were gone

All around me I had nothing
But rage, resentment, and disappointment
With my mom,
My family
And especially within myself

My rage was powerful like a Juniper Tree's Bark
I was able to start a fire
Cause problems
Throw tantrums out of spite
Scream and talk back to everyone
Fight with my siblings
Be unappreciative
Push away all who tried to help me
Only to get things my way
No

My mom
The one person
Who I always wanted to understand me
The one person
Who I blamed for all my flaws
The one person
Who I believed never noticed me
Finally changed

It took 5 years
5 years
For the never ending drought

To be over
5 years
For rain to fall back into my life

Rain that brought my family
Back to life
It gave my family our laughter back
Our faith
And above all
It gave us all strength

Rain gave me strength to change
And let my branches sprout
It gave me the faith
To believe in myself
And learn from my hardships
It taught me to stand in the toughest weathers
And it gave me an understanding of my mom

My mom,
Who taught me the greatest lessons in life
She taught me that there is more to life
Than getting the things I want
She taught me that no matter how hard the fall
Or how bad the weather is
I must learn to stand up on my own
She taught me to be
Resilient
Determined
And a fighter

I was blessed
With a life that although it wasn't essay
It challenged me
If it wasn't for the drought
And rain which
That tested me and gave me
The skills I needed to be strong
I would have been frail and unwise

I am a twisted
Yet beautiful Juniper Tree
I will raise up high
Into the deep blue sky
I will let my roots
Extend deeper
Into the smooth rich soil
I will follow my dreams
And accomplish all my goals
I have set in life
I will go to college
And thrive to success
I will see the world from different
And higher perspectives
I will appreciate
All the little things
Life gives can only give out
But above all
I will be me

My Climb

Joe Procino once said, "Live each day as you would climb a mountain. An occasional glance towards the summit puts the goal in mind. Many beautiful scenes can be observed from each new vantage point. Climb steadily, slowly, enjoy each passing moment; and the view from the summit will serve as a fitting climax to the journey." Throughout these 40 days in ARC, I climbed many mountains, saw many different and higher perspectives from which I learned a lot. Each and every climb was a challenge that pushed me past my limits towards a stronger, more responsible, and, above, all braver me.

During these 40 days, ARC has taught me that life can be a climb and the best thing I can do is keep moving forward. On our first expedition, we hiked up to Mt. Tallac, one of the highest peaks in Lake Tahoe. That morning as we began our hike, I was thinking a lot about my family and the time I was going to be away from home. As I hiked higher and higher up the mountain, my legs began to shake and feel weak. My muscles burned and my body ached. I felt as if my knees would shatter into separate pieces leaving my muscles and tendons exposed. There was a tight knot in my chest that did not let me breathe. I tried to catch my breath by stopping but it only made the hike harder. As the elevation increased my hands and fingers began to swell. I hardly recognized the difference between my thumbs and my pinkies. As the peak of Mount Tallac got closer, I felt as if I could no longer hike. I wanted to give up. "Keep moving forward!" I told myself. "You can't stop," I repeated. Higher and higher I began to see that I was getting closer to the clear blue sky above me. I saw people pass by smiling as they hiked down the mountain. "Beautiful view," they would say, something that motivated me to make it to the top. When I reached the top of Mt. Tallac my heart began to pound harder. I felt like crying, "Wow," I said to myself. I had never seen such a beautiful sight before. That was the first time I saw Lake Tahoe in person. I felt as if I was standing on the top of the world as I saw the lake. The view of Lake Tahoe was so impactful that it made my climb worth it. I learned that no matter how hard the climb, I must keep hiking forward. I learned I must never give up on my goals like graduating high school, going to college and making my parents proud. ARC is an experience I will remember for the rest of my life.

"To have courage is not to be without fear, but to act in response to one's own true being."- Brother Ramos. I learned that I have the courage to choose the right moments when to bring out bravery. On our third expedition, we encountered one of the hardest hikes down

Needle Pass. Never, had I been as afraid of heights as I was that day. We needed to get to our campsite and the only way to get there was to hike down the pass. As I looked down I could see the steep gravel downhill and the white snow piled to my left. "Why not just roll down the hill? You'll get there faster." I told myself, trying to be humorous in order to forget my fears. As we began to hike down Needle Pass, every step I took I remained steady and silent. It was raining and I didn't want to rush myself or try to rush Christina, the person in front of me. I felt that if I rushed, I would cause us to fall down.

I was frightened and didn't want to hike much further. My fear became greater as I heard Maria cry out for help and saw Owen and Evelina leave Christina in the front of the line. My heart sank to my stomach because we all became immobile for a while. I noticed it was becoming more difficult to stand still because my feet were beginning to slide. I noticed Christina needed help, and the only way to help her was if someone moved past her and helped her down. I couldn't stand being behind any longer seeing her hands and legs shake as she began to slide. I looked down at the pass once more and then I stabbed my hiking pole in the ground and work my way past her. With every step I took on the slippery gravel, my heart pounded faster and faster. All of a sudden, "Oh Sarah!" I heard Stephany yell out. I had slipped but I managed to stop myself from going downhill. As I stood up, I worked my way in front Christina and held her hand. I walked her down the pass and did not let her go until we were both safe. My fall made me realize that no matter how scared or how frightening a fall could be, I must stand up on my own and be brave enough to risk my own safety and help someone. This is a lesson I want to remember for the rest of my life in order to help people.

Before ARC, I was very dependent on my parents and siblings to do things for me. I was lazy and didn't help much around at home. I had hardly any sense of responsibility and I would always blame my sibling or my mom if I did something wrong. I was ungrateful and a grumpy teen who needed to grow up and be responsible. Throughout the 40 days

course I have learned to become much more responsible. On our very last expedition, my job was leader of the day. We were to travel cross country over 5 different peaks. I was nervous and scared because it was my first time being a leader on an expedition but my last time being leader of the day in the entire course. I wanted my last time to be my best time and to show improvement. I wanted to show I had



responsibility for my Ohana. The beginning of the hike was difficult because we went up to the wrong peaks. It was difficult to find out where we were because we were still learning how to travel cross-country. My patience to find safe routes and keep myself focused became a challenge. I really wanted to make sure my Ohana were safe and we were all together. One peak after the next, we hiked along the ridgeline. We made it down steep and rocky areas, through bushes with dry branches and

thorns that would stick to our clothes and poke us badly. It took 12 hours for my Ohana and I to make it to Mr. Pond, our destination. Being a leader wasn't easy. It took a lot of responsibility for me to take care of my Ohana and myself. I had to find ways to motivate the team and find safe ways to get them through difficult areas. I learned a lot from the final expedition as leader of the day. I learned to take care of others and be responsible in finding safe routes through the wilderness. I will take home the responsibility I learned and use it to choose the right paths I need for school.

My life is like a mountain that I will keep on climbing. I'll struggle to get to the top, feel like I won't make it, and run out of air, but when I reach the top and look down at what I just came over, I'll see the view and have a different perspective on life than I had before. I need to be brave and move forward. I need to be responsible with the steps I take as I hike to make it safely to the top. I know that no matter the struggles in life, Mother Nature is beautiful and she never gives up on me. She puts challenges in front of me so that I can grow much stronger than we could ever have imagined. My life is a climb and I must keep climbing. I must keep growing, and no matter what I must always keep moving forward.

stephany fonseca

I Will Fly Above All

I am an innocent baby eagle
Barely hatched out of my delicate, bruised shell
I am fragile and defenseless,
Naïve and unknown to my surroundings.

I am a baby eagle
Uncertain on whether I am ever
Going to get out of the privileged nest
My mother has worked all her life
To assemble for me and my brothers.

I am an eaglet
I'm too vulnerable and cowardly
To hastily explore the indefinite risks out there
To get easily hurt and defeated
What if I'm not strong enough to survive?

My own close ones damaged me
Even when they claimed to love and care for me
Without a doubt, I am weak
To anyone that comes into my life.

Those who have disappointingly hurt me
Have such power over me,
All their opinions and doubts
Hurt me and discourage me
Break my wings one by one, little by little
Shattering them into dust and tears.

I have no motivation left,
I feel less as a person
As a daughter, as a sister
As a friend, as my self
Leaving me with no hope
Nothing to fly towards.

My nest has silently fallen apart many times
My father destroyed the dream I once had
My dream to have my distant family together.

Nights consisting of screams,
insults and escapes
He destroyed me, my home and my family
But my mother effectively managed to build it
Over and over again,
Like the strong eagle she is.

I can still feel the hollow gaps in my nest
They still trouble me at times
I don't believe I can ever be
As incredibly strong as my mother is.

My mother dreams to see me fly
Into the highest skies
And be the admirable eagle
I was meant to be.

She believes I am going to be
Someone worthy in life

Since I am someone in hers.
She reminds where I come from.

She reminds me
To not let anyone that won't
Unconditionally support me
Destroy my goals and dreams.

She reminds me
To not let anyone stop me
From swiftly flying higher
Than she ever could.

She reminds me
To be stronger and more successful
Than she ever was.

I am an eagle
I will fly above all
Towards my independence
Towards my happiness with myself
Not let anyone bring me down
Make my mother and brothers proud.

I am going to be
The strong, perseverant eagle
My mother always wished to see in me
I will fly.

My astonishing wings
Will help me fly high
Across the blue endless skies
Pushing past my limits

Emerging victoriously.

My hunt will provide
Opportunities that will
Enhance my virtues.
My compassion, determination,
And understanding nature
Will show the world
What I can give.

My outstanding eyesight
Will allow me to see life
As clearly and openly
As the most distinguished eagles do.

I am an Eagle
I will not let anyone tell me any different
No one can hurt me
Not my father, not my "friends"
Not even those who wish to see me
Gradually fall.

I will not let anyone weaken my endurance
I will not let anyone blind my sight
I will not let anyone
Destroy my widely-spread
and powerful wings
Once again.

I am an Eagle
I dare you to say that "I can't"
As I extend my dazzling wings
And fiercely fly towards my bright future.



I Know Who I Found This Summer

Fighting against your own self to transform sounds crazy, yet it's something that I have experienced this summer. I even have evidence to prove it. I have bruises, insect bites, bee stings, scratches, and dirt all over my body. I've lost sweat, tears, blood and pounds on the long expeditions we experienced. In spite of all this, I would never trade this experience for anything. All the loss and gains are worth it for the change I feel in myself. My transformation has enriched my self-confidence through each challenge I have overcome.

Before this period of transformation, I didn't believe I could ever complete challenges and found it easy to give up, or not try at all. Many times I would back down from what I wanted to do or try. It happened many times.

I turned down many opportunities like being in honors English, playing sports, working and even interacting with others. I was always timid when it came to improving myself in any aspect. I even started getting discouraged by others when I said I wanted to try something. Since I believed I couldn't do it, others started to believe the same about me. However, my first step on starting to overcome this was just taking a chance on the ARC course. I wanted to go since three years ago, yet I never took the initiative and just made up excuses to not come. I was afraid and nervous to fail at all the challenges that were involved, like being active, leaving my family behind, and meeting new people. I even doubted and hesitated to experience this course a week before it started. I reflected on all the pros and cons, what I'd be getting and losing out of it. Leaving my mother in such a busy working season was a big thing. But that was just another big excuse to not try at all. I finally came to my senses and thought, "I will never know if I don't try". I took the courage to push myself to be here and actually try. I've really given it my all here to change, and because of this small first step I can easily push myself to strive in other things as well, like hiking, leading, running and writing my assignments. I've found the determination within me. Thanks to that one small step of just taking the courage to actually try to be here, I am more responsible, and I can push past my limits.



Another flaw similar to my fear of trying was my fear of speaking. I would make sure my ideas were ignored just by not speaking up. I would always just listen to everyone's suggestions and forget about my own. I didn't want anyone to know what I was thinking because I'd feel like a failure if any of my ideas were turned down. However, I started noticing that it was worse if I kept everything to myself, not only because of the frustration I had within me but because I wasn't participating much in the group. Every time I heard someone say an idea I had before, I felt ashamed that I didn't have the courage nor the confidence to get that idea across using my own words. Day by day, I realized that I needed to speak more, and I did, but every time I tried, I'd be really

quiet and let everything I said be ignored. It wasn't until I was leader of the day for my last time that I realized that my ideas would always be at least considered if I considered them myself. It was my first time being leader of the day on an expedition, and I had the whole day planned out, but the plans had changed after arriving at our break spot. We were going to take a day to relax, practice our poems and stay at that lake. After getting this change of plans, I immediately threw out a plan for the day that would be great for the whole group. Everyone

loved and enjoyed the plan that was given, and it was the main point of my leader of the day feedback. I realized that everyone wanted to hear more from me, and that I shouldn't ever be scared to speak out any ideas or suggestions that I have.

Trying to see anything worthy in myself and thinking I was never good enough for anything was something I had a problem with before these 40 days. I came here with very low self-esteem, and with no confidence within myself at all. I didn't think I'd be able to survive here. I always thought on the negative side of things. I was very quiet, shy and afraid. I was usually put down for the tiny flaws I have, to the point where I started believing it. I didn't feel happy with who I was. But as the days went by and insightful experiences occurred, I felt a change come over me. My Ohana helped me by being sup-

portive and encouraging. They unleashed my true self from its chains by being role models and close friends. Now, I feel more accomplished, more determined, happier, and stronger within myself. I can now start setting goals for myself without doubting them. I feel happier, and because of this I can face life with a big smile on my face. I know that I can be so strong if I set my mind to it and I am going to. I have discovered who I really am. I am caring, cheerful and deliberate. I have found the virtues that I had all along and I value my self-worth.

I never realized the beautiful and amazing things I am blessed with. I am now more appreciative. Not only am I appreciative of what I've found within myself this past few days, but also of all the things life has blessed me with this past few years. All the challenges I've slowly confronted these 40 days. Hiking for hours in wide forests, meeting new people that you start appreciating, kayaking miles on the lake and being away from my home and my family have made me see my life from a new perspective. As I hiked for long tiring hours, I always thought about how many things I have at home. Many of the material things I have, shoes, clothes, phone, ipod, computer and more are things that others wish they had. I've always been known as being "spoiled" or "rich". But all those things don't make me feel happy nor better. I started realizing the great thing about that me having all these things is that I worked as hard as my mom does to get those little things I have. But I have also realized that I have more in me than all those material things. I have a great family. I have a great mother that works really hard to bring everything to our family. As I kayaked through the beautiful emerald waters of Lake Tahoe, I recognized every blessing I had, especially where I live. Not only did I realize that I live in a divine, clear lake but that I have a beautiful home. I live with an amazing family that was given to me after I thought I had lost it. My eyes have been opened to the great blessings I have. I see life in a new perspective; A perspective that I have enjoyed looking through to help me see the great treasures in life.

Robert Taylor once said, "Within every man is a creature against whom he must struggle in order to rise up, to improve himself." I struggled within my own self this summer. But after every challenge I went through, I was able to gain strength I needed to transform. The one armor I needed grew within me, my self-confidence. I transformed not only physically, but mentally and emotionally.

An Eagle Flying Along the River of Life

I was an innocent eaglet hiding in the nest.
I desired to fly
as an eaglet dreams to touch the sky
I was scared to leave the protection
to face the new, unfamiliar world alone.
My wings were tiny and soft
like an eaglet
I struggled to find a way out
with every part of my body.

I was a lonely eaglet,
living in China without my parents.
I could not forget the tears
on their faces and mine
before they went to Australia and America.
I lived in the dorm
with students who were older than me
from kindergarten
through elementary school.

I was a frustrated eaglet
In a big city with only a small space
that was my own.
I lived with my aunt,
whose husband sold my books for beer.
Many times
I was woken up at night
With tears in my eyes
By their fighting and screaming



I could not find a person who I trusted
To express my feelings
None of my friends in school
knew about my past
I was ashamed
that my wings were broken
in the stiff storm.

My family broke apart
I could not find a place where I belonged.
I could not find a way
to approach my dreams.
Like a lost eaglet
That accidentally lost its direction
in the woods.
I wanted to leave
To leave the pain, the violence,
And people's judgements
I suddenly realized
that I was not strong enough
to live without parents' love.

I was a cowardly eagle learning how to fly.
My mother brought me to America,
with the belief for a better life.
We created a new family.
We live with my new father
and a 4-year-old sister.
In a beautiful house with my own bedroom,
My mom give me everything I want.

In school,
I was challenged to learn a new language,
Meet new friends, and
Adapt to a new culture.
They put me in ELD Level 1
The challenge didn't weight me down
But made me stronger
After 2 years,
I was able to study in honor and AP classes
I graduated
Now, I am going to college
I step closer to my dream.

I am a teenage eagle
wandering around the river of life.
I mended my broken wings
piece by piece, carefully.
I see love, faith, challenge, and responsibility.
They lead me to look inside.

I have to give love
if I want to receive it from others.
I have to challenge myself
in order to grow up.

I am a growing eagle,
Building a stable foundation
for a bright future.
I found myself in silence
I am strong enough
to find my own way to survive
I catch every opportunity in my life
I push myself to over my limits
I believe and seek the harbor of hope

I hope to fly independently,
As a powerful eagle
across the mountains and ocean.
I am challenging myself
to discover my strength.
I am developing a stronger heart and mind.
I hope to be successful in my career
and to contribute to society.
To give my generosity, enthusiasm
and grace to those who need help
I hope to make my parents proud of
everything I do.

My dear mom,
Thanks for giving me everything I wanted,
but what I need is your understanding.
My beloved family,
If my immature action hurts you,
Please forgive me.
I will create my own life in the future.
Please encourage me
when I am falling.
Please motivate me
when I lose my faith

One day I will be an adult eagle
flying across the river of life.
I will leave my parents' arms.
and face the challenges independently.
I will find a path to success
for myself and future generations.
I will freely wave my wings
to show my strength confidently.
I will open my heart and soul,
to kiss the sky.

I Never Knew

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do.” - Mark Twain.

I was a cowardly girl who traveled in material cities. I depended on my parents to make decisions for me and never appreciated anything they did. I thought that my life was colorful because I lived in the middle of the city with shopping centers, movie theaters, and fancy restaurants. I am glad that I was not satisfied with my life. I chose to leave my family’s protection to see another side of the world. When I stood on Mount Tallac with my dirty and sweaty body, I realized how small and short-sighted I was. I never knew the world could be such an amazingly beautiful place. I have just experienced the most meaningful and valuable forty-days that I have ever had in my entire life. I am proud of how much I learned, grew from challenges and how much I have changed and improved myself.

I was standing on the edge of the Needle Pass trying to walk down. It was steep and dangerous. I felt paralyzed and found it impossible to move even one small step. I was in the middle of the line, and I could not go back. I encouraged myself and my friends, even though I had never been scared like that before. The line was moving very slowly, and I heard a few people screaming which made me more nervous. Standing in the same position with my heavy backpack made me tired and I wanted to get out of there. I looked at the view so I could forget the danger and my hunger. I felt that Needle Lake was close to me, but it was still too far away to reach. After a few minutes, the weather started thundering and raining. I almost cried. I really hoped that we could move faster, but we had to wait for everyone, since we are Ohana. Honestly, I was mad, and I complained to the person behind me. I had to keep moving, because the longer it took the more dangerous it was. There were two instructors helping one person who was afraid of heights. I did not want to give them more trouble, so I had to deal with my fears on my own. Finally, we moved with small steps to the “trail”. This pitiful excuse for a path was created only moments ago by an instructor’s kick steps. I took a deep breath. The whole group hugged. I tried to hide my anger and emotions, because we still had things that were more important to do. When I look back this experience now, I still cannot believe that I did this. Sometimes in life, we have to push ourselves to face our fears and find a way out, because we have no chance to go back to make a change. If we do not push our limits, we will never discover our strength and know how powerful we are.

On my solo day, I woke up at night and my eyes were caught by the thousands of stars above me. I could not fall back to sleep again because I was accompanied by the cold and some fear. A lot of things came to my mind. I appreciated that ARC gave me an opportunity to reflect about myself and my life at home. My Ohana, my family, made me discover more about myself. All of us had our own responsibilities, and we have to work together to finish things perfectly.

I never knew that I could be so important and helpful. I thought that I was a great daughter in my real family, because I respected my parents and got good grades in school. In reality, I did not care about anything at home but myself. After leaving them for a month without being able to call them, I cherish my family more. In ARC, I cook, clean up after meals, and take care of my friends. At home, I did not even wash dishes or look after my 4-year-old sister. I can hike 12 hours a day with the heaviest backpack that I have ever carried. At home, I called my father to pick me up at bus stop, even though it was only a five minute walk to my house. I get up at six o’clock every day to exercise and finish all the assignments that I need to do in a day. At home, I woke up at noon and spent more than 8 hours a day on the computer during vacations. I feel extremely remorseful about how my actions affected my parents and myself. When I go to college, I will have less and less time to spend with my family. After going home, I want to use every moment to show them how much I treasure them and do as well as possible.

People’s trust and understanding changed me from a follower to a leader. On our third expedition, I experienced my hardest day of the course. We hiked 12 hours to Tinkers Knob. I was the leader of the day, and it was my most challenging leadership experience. In the morning, we went two miles downhill and traveled cross-country. Nga and I had to find the easiest way for the group. I also needed to take care of a few people who were scared of heights. I tried to pick up the pace, but the group could not stay together. Jocelyn helped me to check the way so I could pay more attention to the group. It took 6 hours before getting to the trail. I could not find a place to have lunch while we were traveling cross-country. We were all hungry and exhausted. Some people complained about those who walked slowly. I did not want anyone of them to get hurt, so I put all the responsibility on my own shoulders. I became frustrated and lost control of my emotions. I cried. Jocelyn comforted me that it was not my fault, but I still could not forgive myself thinking I had made the group four hours

late. After lunch, one of the instructors talked to me and made me feel better. I went to the creek to wash my face and sat on the rocks to calm down. I encouraged myself to be strong. I was the leader, so I should be responsible for the group. I went back with a smile. In the afternoon, I tried to keep up my mood to give the group more mental energy. The sun was burning us on the way uphill, which made it more difficult. “Great job guys!” I spent all my energy to yell out. At that time, my responsibility was to be positive and active. I shortened all the breaks

and gave help when I needed to. We got to Tinkers Knob in the evening. I did not have any energy left to enjoy the beautiful sunset. During the evening meeting, I was nervous that they would blame me because of my inefficiency. I was surprised that everyone gave me lots of positive feedback. I never knew that I could hike 12 hours with 30lb backpack and still can take care of others. My Ohana gave

me support and understanding, which made me more confident to be a gentle leader. I used to be a follower who always listened to others and never shared ideas. This experience improved my leadership skills. Now I am a responsible, generous, and active leader.

The personal stories of my friends inspired me to openly express myself. We wrote a metaphorical poem for an English assignment. I was confident in the beginning, because I had written many poems when I was in China. The poems which I posted online got lots of good feedback. Even though I had never written an English poem, I still believed that I could use similar strategies. After getting some feedback from my English instructor from ARC, I felt confused and lost my confidence. She always wanted to know more about my personal life and my past. I did not want to tell people about my past, and I hoped that my poem sounded deep and beautiful. She made me feel that my thoughts were ridiculous. I am not in China, and people here do not hide feelings when they choose to express themselves. As soon as I heard that we had to share our poems to many strangers who supported ARC, I realized that I had to change my old opinions. I read my friends’ poems and expected to learn from them. They all talked about many hardships in their lives. I started to open myself up more. I added a little more of my experience in the poem, but I did not like my poem any more. Once on our final expedition, all of us read our poems to the group. I was nervous to express my poem and get feedback. I was moved and cried hard when I listened to their poems, because I could sympathize with their stories. At night, I covered myself with my sleeping bag and wrote one more stanza to talk about my challenges in school. Finally, I felt better about my poem and more confident to express it. When we came back to basecamp, we got more practice and considerable feedback from volunteers. On poetry reading day, I did not feel nervous. My Ohana and instructors were there to support me. I appreciated that ARC gave me many valuable opportunities to discover myself. I never knew that I could read a poem which is about my personal life, in front of 80 people. Now, I want to express my feelings to receive more understanding. I can bravely talk about my past, because it makes who I am today.

“We are Ohana!” Have you ever met a group of strangers and called them family after a few days? I have, and I am proud of being a part of this strong family. I felt happy in ARC. I could smile and speak from my heart. I never knew that my life could be so interesting without the Internet, a cell phone, and dressing up. I never knew that I could experience so many firsts in a short 40 days. I would have never known how much I could do or how far I could go if I refused to try. Compassion, integrity, service, and determination are the core values of ARC that I put deeply into my heart. I will bring the life lessons that I learned in ARC home, to college, and everywhere I go in the future. I no longer care about how others think about me. I am myself, and I love who I am. In college, I will do my best to receive good grades and transfer to my dream college. In my community, I will do more to volunteer to help people and gain experience. I will not be afraid of facing challenges, because I believe that I have tools to overcome them. I will do everything with curiosity, enthusiasm, and integrity. I will treat people with love, generosity and compassion.



yvonne guzman

The Phases of the Moon

I am the moon
Always there day or night
Might not be seen but never gone
I was a naïve little kid
Not a care in the world
Always playing and having fun
Like the moon that bounces around
Every day and night.

I was an unfocused little kid
Who was compared to her big sister
Like the moon is compared to its other half, the sun
The sun that was perfect in the adult's perspective
I felt like I was not a person, but a thing,
Like the moon is said to not shine any light
To the planet earth, but is just there in the sky,
Just waiting to catch the light of the sun
To illuminate the earth with its brilliant light.

I was only able to talk about my feelings
When I was around kids my age,
Like when the moon slowly passes by
And mutters its secrets to the stars
Because I knew that they wouldn't
Remember what I told them.

Now I am an unfocused teen
Who is still compared to her big sister
Like the moon is compared to the sun
And still feels like an object that is only used when needed
Like when a kid gets a new toy plays with it
Leaves it for months and starts using it again
But this time the brilliant sun's friends
And other people who know the ravishing sun
Are also comparing me to this bright fair star.

What hurts me the deepest is that
My mom compares me to this opposing world the most
By telling me that I should dress more like the sun
By asking me why I'm not in any honor classes like she is
And by telling me if I lose weight then maybe
I would look better or prettier

However, like the moon is cold and the sun is hot
Each are unique but beautiful in their own ways.
My mom does not know that by comparing me to my sister
Like comparing the moon to the sun
She makes me feel like I don't exist
That I am not an actual person
Now when she asks me why I can't be like my sister
All I say is "I don't care"
Even though I might not show it
That little comment is tearing me apart
Like the moon was torn from the earth billions of years ago
I feel torn from my home
I have stopped talking to my mom and sister
I don't talk about my feelings at all.

In spite of my past, I can change all that in my future
Like the moon, I shall embrace my power
And start to push and pull my tides of faith
I want to graduate high school
Get accepted to a pristine college
I want to thrive in school,
Be a successful ER nurse,
Feel liberated from my past
Where I won't be judged and compared
Get a renewed start at life,
Like the new moon marks a fresh beginning.



I am the moon
I have a purpose in life
I can do whatever I set my mind to
I am beautiful
I will create my own light
I will not care what other people say
I am the soft and gentle moon,
I will not be eclipsed by the sun.

The soft and gentle, reflected light of the moon,
Illuminates the darkness
It shines its own unique beauty
I am beautiful in my own ways
I have to embrace how different I am from others
Not everyone is the same.

My Self-discovery

Caterpillar: "... and who are you?"

Alice: "I... I hardly know, sir, just at present-at least I know I was when I got up this morning, but I must have chanced several times since then."

Lewis Carroll - Alice in Wonderland

Before the beginning of the ARC 40-day course, I wondered how it would be to be away from home, technology, and civilization. I thought it would be easy to stay away from all of that stuff, but I worried about all of the hiking and running we would have to do. The physical challenges were easier than I thought they would be, but I was challenged in other ways that I did not expect. I had no idea how this experience would change who I am.

My experience with ARC has taught me that teamwork is important to function as a group. Some of the experiences I have found in which teamwork was important were on the ropes course and white water rafting. The first challenge that we encountered when we arrived at Project Discovery, the ropes course, was the flying squirrel. The flying squirrel was a high ropes element in which the group pulls on one end of a rope, which allowed the person at the other end to rise up in to the air. The flying squirrel took teamwork because we needed other people to support us by pulling us up and lowering us down slowly when we were ready to come down. When I was the person in the air, my stomach was turning but, in the end, I kept going and I ended up liking it. The team was very supportive by cheering when I was up in the air and when I was coming back down they celebrated and congratulated me with high-fives. Another experience my group had was white water rafting. Some of the ways we used teamwork then were by trying to paddle together and rescue Maria after falling overboard twice during class three rapids. If we did not paddle together, we would have gone in circles. This was very important because we would have not been able to paddle over to Maria and rescue her. What I will take home from ARC is that from now on I will work with whatever group I am put with in any situation and try to work together with them to accomplish whatever needs to be done.

Another thing I have learned during my time in ARC is that it's okay to open up. With the group, I learned that opening up and getting involved helps me to feel supported and a part of something more. Our group was like a family where I had

people to go to when I had problems and questions. Opening up to a group takes a ton of trust. One of the examples where I needed to open up was with my sister Jocelyn. My sister and I have not been good friends since we started middle school. We always put each other down, talked about each other behind our backs, not showed any sign of respect for each other, and never talked. Since coming to ARC I have been able to talk to her and tell her things that I could never talk to her about before. I feel like I can play with her like when we were little kids. I have been able to show her that I love her by not arguing with her, smiling at her, and showing my concern for her. I hope that someday the relationship that was shattered between us can be reassembled and I hope that one day we can be true friends.



Another example of opening up was with one of the very good friends I have made, Sabrina. Sabrina showed me to love the way I look, embrace who I am, and be confident about what I am doing. One afternoon we were talking in our cabin at Leo's. We were lying down on our beds, talking about how much weight we were going to lose and about how we viewed ourselves with a group of skinny girls that we had been around for weeks. I said to her that I felt like a huge, titanic-sized boulder compared to most of the girls. After I told her this she looked me in the face and said, "What are you talking about? You are beautiful no matter what size you are. There are people out there who will like you just the way you are. You don't have to change for people who don't like you." This made me feel amazingly confident, a way I had not felt before. Sabrina made me feel like I had a very best friend who I could talk to about my problems. Most people I knew before didn't understand me because they never went through similar experiences themselves.

Pushing myself to new heights is something I learned during my time at ARC. When we were at the ropes course, my partner and I were getting ready to climb 45 feet up in the air to a platform. Before I started I was confident and ready. But, when I was almost to the top I did not want to move from the spot I was in. Even though my legs were hurting from the position I was in, I didn't care. I was not going to move. I started to break down as I told my belayer I wanted to be lowered down. By that time, Mike said, "No you can't! You have to walk out to the middle of the catwalk if you want to be lowered down!" By now, I was crying, trying to get up to the top of the log. When I reached the top of the log, I had to stand up and hold on to the tree for dear life. I stayed there for a while, sitting and crying. But, there was someone there with me who I forgot about. My partner Sarah was bravely making her way to me. She came and told me to grab on to her shoulders. Then we slowly made our way across the log to the platform and onto the swing. I felt accomplished that I had made it all the way. I realized that with encouragement, I could do more than I thought I could; without encouragement I won't go far.

Another way I have pushed myself to new heights is by training to run the seven miles around Sagehen. I have never liked to run because I was never fast, could not breathe, and felt like I was going to pass out. During ARC, I committed to running even if I didn't want to. It was a challenge I had to face here. Over time, I have been able to increase my speed, calm my breathing, and run longer distances. I feel accomplished and healthy. I hope to start a new routine when I get back home of running and exercising more.

In the end of all of the experiences that I've had during the last 40 days, I now know that I can change my life in ways that will benefit me. I learned that by pushing myself I can get further than I ever expected. I can exceed what people think I can do, even the limits I place for myself. Opening up has taught me to trust people and relate to others better. In addition to these life-changing things, I also have increased my vocabulary, which will help me in my schoolwork. I am better able to write essays after learning things like clauses and sentence fragments. I am happy I completed the 40-day course because I have gained more confidence to express myself and to keep going and never give up. I will not give up on the things I want in my life.

community interviews

Halfway through our summer course, ten community members volunteered their time to be mentors for our participants. These are excerpts from the narrative biographies students wrote about their partners.

Determined Flower



“Money doesn’t make happiness.” Yami said. She thinks success is feeling happy, working hard, going to school and having a job that you like. She likes to work with young

people. At work, she helps with programs and dental nutrition. When she was younger, she wanted to be a nurse, but now she wants to be a midwife after she graduates from college. She said she is a flower. Its growth depends on the sun, water and rich soil. I think she means that her personality and experience changed her a lot. She also tries many things to keep increasing her experience. I think she is awesome.

- Christina Sit

Always Look Ahead

When I heard Lynn say she used to be a psychologist for a little while, my brain was full of questions to ask her. I felt like I



could reach my goals because my dream in life is to become a psychologist. She is the person who has the most similarities to me in my life that I’ve ever met. Because of this, I knew that this conversation would be brilliant.

- June Liu



You Are In Charge Of Your Own Future

It was around nine in the morning, and the sun was as bright as it could be. The birds were chirping and the sound of Sagehen Creek was running in the background. I was ready to be introduced to my interviewee, by Jen, the ARC director, but what I wasn’t ready for was for how much my life

was about to change. Then within seconds a woman with a white shirt and baby blue capris



stood to my right. She paused turned her head towards me, smiled and rubbed my back, making me feel safe and secure..

- Jocelyn Guzman

Lessons Learned

Barbara Ilfeld has learned that being close to family is important. After having a hard time connecting with her children when they were younger she has now accomplished having good relationships with the people she loves, her family. Knowing this about Barbara, I learned that is okay to slow down and make relationships with people. I learned that I should try to make deeper connections with people in order to fix my problems with them. Right now, I feel as though people see me as a closed-in person, but by talking and sharing my feelings and hearing their feelings too, I will make good friendships..

- Maria Sanchez



Follow Your Heart

Cathy overcame many challenges on the way to becoming successful. She was an ocean wave, crashing over and over. She never gave up her goal. After high school, with the help of her grandparents she was able to go to college. After college, she had to figure what kind of law she would learn, and continued on three more years of law school to be a lawyer. When she got married, she had to balance between work and family. Cathy taught me a lot of keys to success.

- Nga Vu

Figure Out Who You Are



Jeff has gone far in life and has had so many accomplishments. He helped to start ARC and has kept

Sagehen Creek from being polluted. Some other accomplishments were just stepping stones, like earning his badges. They all contributed to making Jeff the person he is today. His accomplishments have impacted so many people and have helped them out. He has helped, saved, and taken care of animals here at Sagehen. Jeff never really gave up, but he just went for it. If things ever went wrong, turned out wrong, or he just felt sad or lonely, Jeff remarked, "I don't dwell on it, just did something to refocus my brain." He says that life is great, frustrating, scary, wonderful, and fulfilling all at the same time.

- Sabrina Johnson

Smiling at Life

Nancy has always had a positive perspective about life and enjoys everyday as if it was gift. "Wake up every day saying it will be a good day... It does help you," Nancy advised. She's



strongly aware of how to make herself enjoy every single day since the start of her day, and this shows how positive she is. There was

an answer that really absorbed me when I asked her how she would describe life. Nancy replied that "life is a gift" and an "opportunity to engage".

- Stephany Fonseca



Traveling to Destiny

Through life-changing experiences, Paul learned to not take things for granted. When he was 18 he traveled and lived in Paraguay, Mexico, Nepal, and other Asian countries. He wanted to see different cultures, and how the world worked. When he was traveling he felt powerful because he saw new places and experienced new things. In high school he did not want to go to college, but through traveling he learned that he was lucky to have the opportunity to get a good education. Through talking to Paul, I learned that I am lucky to have an education, and that it is important to experience new places and new cultures, and appreciate what I have now.

- Yvonne Guzman

Following Your Heart with Happiness

Overall, the best advice I gained from the amazing Keoki Flagg was that I have the power to create my own path and follow my dreams. I can go to college and be a scientist if I choose. I learned that I must trust myself and the decisions I will make. My family too will support me if I need them, so I must trust myself. I understand life is a challenge and I will soon have to face it in 2 years when I graduate high school. I can make it through with determination and dedication. I can do what I set my heart and goals to do. Lastly, I must be true to my heart because with happiness, anything is possible.

- Sarah Gama



Seeing the World with Integrity

I cannot forget the smile and satisfaction on Deb's face when we talked about her family. She treasures her family the most in her life. She has wonderful parents and three brothers who give her love, motivation and encouragement, so that she can be confident to do everything she wants. She always has a safe place to go because her family is always there with support. Her greatest accomplishment is her two boys who bring her a joyful life and make her feel younger. Her lovely personality must affect her sons as well. She never stops



improving herself to be a better person so that she can be a better role model for her sons.

- Yilin Wang

Letter to the Audience
June 26, 2012

6 different countries came together: China, Mexico, Africa, Vietnam, Sweden, and America
All strangers heading on a 40 day journey - no one knew what was ahead of them.

Yvonne: Have you ever slapped your arm to kill 5 mosquitoes in one hit only to see the fallen replaced by 20 more?

Maria: Have you ever fallen out of a raft three times only to get back in and try again?

June: Have you ever woken up at midnight and realized that you are far from home?

Sabrina: Have you ever gone flying on a zip line?

Jocelyn: Have you ever kayaked 12 miles just to have lunch at a ruined teahouse?

Stephany: Have you ever brushed your teeth under the moon and stars?

Christina: Have you ever cried in front of strangers while throwing rocks into gilmore lake?

Sarah: Have you ever faced a challenge just to discover that you have the strength to overcome it?

Nga: Have you ever been a part of an awesome group like our Ohana?

Yilin: Have you ever met a group of strangers and called them family in a few days?

ARC has made us better people
understand, introduce, and mingle
lost then found, come find us Nemo
in 3 days we're Ohana you know

Some saw snow for the first time
then up to Mount Tallac yeah we climbed

Have you ever went flying on a zipline?
Have you ever went hiking for the first time?

Six races united, that's fine
kayaking lake tahoe, good time
Out of breath, still climbing, rock climb



now we're family, combined
Just so you know that ARC is the best
Yes, they are awesome, I must confess

Now here's a little lovely take home message
and just so you know this might be a mess

Always try to push past all your limits
Just take a chance
Live life with no regrets
I mean YOLO
and the rest is all fish
I'll just tell you,
there's more to life than just to live.



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