

adventure risk challenge a leadership and literacy program

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University of California Berkeley and Merced | Sagehen Creek Field Station



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aldana fernandez

My Hidden Treasure

I am a star
The everlasting light.
On a dark night
I am your protecting light
I will roam the skies
Never stopping till i die.
I will always be here
For my Family
Like they have been there for me!

I am a Star
Who never knew how lucky i was
Being surrounded by people who love me
Like the big dipper.
My uncle Scott, Nini, Aya and I
make up the ladle
They have always been around
Telling me what I need,
The handle is the rest of my family.
At the end of the handle is
My mom

My mother has always been there
An inconsistent star.
She made me dim my light.
Hiding my feelings
And not caring
Is how I showed
I was in Pain.
Without her I feel abandoned and betrayed
Why should she
Not want to be
With me?

My aunt Aya, and my grandma Nini
Have raised me,
From a speck to the star i am today
They took the role that my mom couldn't
When sad they hold me
When mad they calm me
Without them I don't know
where I would be
Their presence comforts me.
They are my northern star!

I am a star
Who strived to keep up with the Sun.
The one I called Dad
My Uncle Scott died when I was 11
He was always there and taught me things

That others couldn't
When he died I felt lost in space
with no way to go
Who would protect me from
Turning towards a wrong galaxy?
Who will be my dad?
Who will make sure I am always ok?
Yet I still feel his presence around me.
Even though he is no longer alive
He still lights my Path.

I am a star
That has crossed many galaxies
Just like a mountain range
I have things to overcome.
When my uncle died,
the loss was more than I could bear
In a state of depression
I fell towards Earth.
I'm returning to my lustrous self.
After 5 years.



Now my biggest challenge is my weight,
My weight is just a shell
That hides my
True identity
People only see my reflection,
But do they know my radiance?
I do.
I am shy and scared
I wonder about what others think
Sometimes I feel weak
Or think that I can't
But I always walk tall and proud
Never burning out.

My hidden treasures are
humor, compassion, motivated, athletic,
nice, caring, loving, sweet, active, dramatic,
smart, bright, strong, ability to make others
laugh, thoughtful, watchful, loud, and warm

When hiking up Dick's pass
I felt weak
I couldn't do it
But once i did
I felt like a shooting star
That could go anywhere without doubt.

I am a star
It might take me a couple of thousands of
years to get somewhere
But I'll make it.
I choose not to live in
The past or the future
I live in the now
I will travel the world above everyone else
I am becoming my own northern star.
I will be free
Of things that bring me down
I want people to see me
For who I really am
And not what I look like on the outside.

I am a star
That may be little
But i am mighty
The distance doesn't matter
I'll reach my dreams

I am a Star
That is lucky to be granted
The most wonderful cluster of stars
We each have our own different identities
Each one of us came as one.
But we will leave together as a whole.

Like a star
When proud
I'll shine brighter than any other star
Flying around the world.
I will be free
One step closer to the sun.
I will soon reach the open space and
Soar.

Nothing Can Hold Me Back!

“The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.” – Unknown Author

When I read this quote I instantly thought that it described me because I am scared of taking risks. It told me that if you don't try, then you won't gain anything. The benefit of taking a risk is the ability to be free from what may hold you back. When I first came to ARC I thought about how it could help me. Would it change me? Before coming I was always quite scared and didn't believe in myself. I thought that ARC would not help me. But as soon as I stepped into the car on day one I knew it was going to be the best thing that could have happened to me. Before I came, I was always the quiet one. The one who hated being called on. Always hiding and not speaking. But since I came to ARC I have changed. I now make sure I let others know my opinions and how I feel about group decisions. My whole life I have always thought less of myself, never thought I was good enough. But here I have grown in how I think of myself, and how I show I'm not afraid. Every day I have done something that my old non-confident self would have never thought of doing. Like going on an 8 day hiking trip, speaking to a group of complete strangers, trying things that make me scared, and just going for it. What all of this has taught me is that on the outside I may look like a normal person, but inside I am a leader. From Arc I learned an incredible life lesson: if I take a risk I will grow stronger and believe in myself.

The biggest risk I have taken over the 40 days has been being away from my family. It was difficult not being with them and spending time with them. I missed the opportunity to hang out with my cousins when they came up to visit and go to the pond to fish, followed by the pool to cool off. I felt sad that I could not go down to Berkeley to hang out in the city and see my mom. I am very sad that I was not able to be there this year to help out with my relay for life team, the Super Chicas. However, I am happy that I came to ARC because I now have magnificent new amigos. Now when I go back home I will be with my family and will also have an expanded comfort zone of friends and adventures. Throughout the whole program my family has supported me in every way they can, like sending me letters and keeping me informed on what's going on. I know that when I see them again I will appreciate everything they do for me. It's all for the better, not the worse. I now have the strength to go far away from home and try new things. I will educate my family and friends with lessons I have learned. I know that my family is proud of me for taking on this challenge. I know that they will be even prouder when they see how much I have changed. The new improved Aldana, who's stronger, braver, and more confident. Being away from my family taught me that I can be away from them and try new things. They will always be by my side even if I am tons of miles away from them. I feel stronger knowing that I can step out of my comfort zone and follow my hopes and dreams.

Falling down a hill not knowing if I'm going to stop or not, but believing that I will survive was

the scariest thing to ever happen to me. “I'm alive!” was the first thing that rushed through my mind when I fell. We had been hiking on the trail and we had come to some snow. We had to cross the snow slope on Mt. Lincoln to get to the other side of the trail. It was so nerve wracking walking sideways with our packs on, over slippery, icy snow, and if we looked down there was a long, long way to the bottom. I was doing well not worrying about it because I was making good steps, planting my feet in a good place where I wouldn't fall. But then in the front of the line, Oscar fell. He was able to stop himself with self-arrest. Josh made the decision that it would be safer to walk down to a piece of land that was not covered with snow to get off the snow. We had to go slow. When it was my turn, I turned around because I felt safer walking on my toes rather than my heels. I took one step, then another; I felt great. Then, on my third step I planted my foot into a notch and put my weight on it, and as soon as I stepped, I felt the snow shift underneath me and I started to slide. Next thing I knew, I was sliding down the hill. I tried to stop but I was not able to. I hit the dirt and tumbled twice before I was able to stop. I sat up without thinking and screamed “I'm alive!” I got up and walked over to the others who had been waiting. I felt overjoyed because everyone was worried and wanted to know how I was. I felt for once that I people actually cared about me and that I wasn't a nobody. The fall was scary, but after a few minutes I was fine and just wanted to get to the car, where I would be buckled in to a safe zone and I wouldn't be near snow. All day that was the main topic we talked about, remembering how scary the snow hill was for all of us. What this experience helped me learn about myself is that even though I may fall and be face to face with a challenge, it won't stop me from getting back up and continuing on my journey.

Here at ARC, I risked falling again and again, and when I did my ARC family encouraged me to get back up and try again. I learned that failure won't get you anywhere. Before ARC I always felt that words, people, and society were in my way. They told me that I was not perfect. I always listened and never tried to get up and walk away. Whenever I would fall or get pushed down, I didn't put up a fight. I would just lay there, wanting to waste away. But when we did the ropes course at Project Discovery, that all changed. I fell off one of the wires on one of the high elements and was below the wire. I thought I couldn't pull myself up. I wanted to quit because I was always fearful of failing if I tried again. But the whole team was there supporting me, cheering me on to just try. This helped me feel like I was not alone but part of a group who would stand behind me and support me. So I tried, and I was able to pull myself back up. This experience was so uplifting and grand



that I felt mad at myself for all the other times I fell and just gave up. I learned that no matter the situation I will have people supporting me to be successful and to not give up. I also discovered that I am mentally strong, so if I put my mind to my goals, I am unstoppable.

On the last expedition I was given the role of a Guardian Angel. I was told that I was to look over the team, communicate with the instructors, work with the leaders of the day, and take control of the group if I felt it was necessary. I felt nervous. Would I be able to make good calls for the team's safety? I knew that over the 40 day course I had grown as a leader and as a person, so I thought this would be pretty easy. I just had to make sure that in unsafe situations I would pick the best route to keep everyone safe. As the trip started, I made safe calls, like walking on dirt instead of snow. I also checked in with the group and made sure we had water and food and were going in the right direction. During

the whole trip, I motivated the group, keeping us together and encouraging everyone to keep going. However, one day someone didn't want to eat. The team kept trying to convince her to eat, but she wouldn't. So I took action and went to our instructors. They called the person over and spoke to her. When my teammate came back she was mad at me. I felt like I had made a wrong call by going to the instructors for help. Later on I told her I was sorry for going to higher authority, and that I didn't mean for her to get in trouble. I learned that sometimes I might make a call that not everyone agrees with, and might make somebody mad. But it made me stronger by listening to my voice and not just going with the flow. It also made me think that whether my opinion is right or wrong, I should stick with it; I should not back down.

Before I came to ARC, I was just a normal person walking in my high school hallways. Since I came to ARC, I have become a leader, something I never thought I could become. I knew doing this would change me, and I felt scared. I choose to take the risk of heading towards a new path I have never traveled before, being challenged. Since I took that first step, I feel unstoppable. I have learned many lessons from these 40 days of ARC. I will always have someone helping me towards my destination. I can do whatever I want if I believe I can. I can test the boundaries of my comfort zone and try new things. I am not scared to take a risk, because most often I can learn something from it. Sometimes I need to push myself a little farther each time to grow. I have a strong voice that has been striving to be heard. Once I leave here, I will continue speaking up, not crawling into a ball and hiding. I will go and test my limits in life, expanding what I do. I will not be scared to try things only once and quit. I will give things a second chance. I won't back down because something looks a little sketchy and scary. I will just be careful. I, Aldana will only take steps forward and not let anything pull me back!

angela wood

My Clear Path to Freedom

I am a topographical map
Who is not yet complete.
My trails to the future are perverse
Trapped up in family and personal issues

My lakes are my depths,
My inquisitiveness about my biological family:
Why was i adopted?
Who are my siblings?
Do they miss me like i do?

Sometimes i feel excluded from my family
Occasionally i feel they are happier without me
Even though i know it's not true,
I feel unaccompanied.

I am a topographical map
Who is not yet complete,
But my map is still shining and bright,
Still refining

My accomplishments are my peaks:
Surviving freshman year,
Leaving behind the past,
Finishing eighth in state in high jump,
Beginning the ARC program

My mom is my saddle,
Supporting me even though i push her away,
Always trying to think of new ways to help me:
With organization,
Strategies
Good advice for my future

I am a topographical map, who is not yet complete,
My jagged ridges reveal the relationship between my brother and me,
Where the granite rises we bond,
But it's been a long time
Where the cliffs drop off,
We fight
It is sad to see other siblings talking
When all we do is argue
I hope when I come home we can make a change
Not always arguing blaming and accusing
I accuse him of doing things and he accuses me.
I feel like we are always mad at each other.
It drives my parents crazy.

When I get home
I want to talk to my brother without arguing
I want to talk to my brother and socialize
Like when we were little we used play together
We had a lot more fun when we were younger.

My dad is my river,
The rapids show when he is disappointed,
The waterfalls prove his joy,
In his eddies,
He makes us laugh

Not all my trails lead to my destination
My false trails are my objections about helping the family:
My arguments,
My stubbornness,
My selfishness,
My procrastinations

Some of my roads are perplexing,
Because I don't know the right decisions,
Even when i ask simple questions
My mom says yes and my dad says no
I waste time and give up

With a clear road:
I can surpass in homework,
Sports,
Education,
Integrity

My contour lines lack confidence,
I don't trust myself as much as i should.

My past weighed me down
Because of all the things people said and did.
In my past people ripped my map that lead to my future
Making jokes about my race,
Excluding me because I was different from them.

Even though my past trail was unstable,
I have found a new path
That doesn't rip me to pieces because I am different,
My new path encourages me to do the right things
So I can feel safe
And secure around it.

My legend helps me to be stronger
The knowledge from my parents,
Helps me and guides me
They guide me to figure out the simple things,
Sometimes I don't want to listen
But in the end I realize they are very important
Legends can help me in my future
Because I will be able to make better decisions in my life
Without giving up
It will help because I will feel better after
I make the one life changing decision and it will lead me to
Roads of adventures.

I am a topographical map
Who is not yet complete
But my cairns have uncovered me
Back on track and landed me to where I am today,
My future begins
When I use what my parents have taught me,
When I become self-confident in everything I do
All my trails will lead to my destination



Excited to Make a Change For Myself

“We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust and sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, and spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit.”

From ARC I have learned that it is okay to trust people, that it's okay to open up to people. You should not live in the past, you should live in the moment. Now that I am older and I have the support from my friends and family, I have learned from myself that not telling my mom what is going on in my life at school is not ok because I release all that anger from what has happened out on her. It causes stress to her and to the family. When I was little I used to not tell her what was happening. I did not want to make her and my dad upset because I thought what was happening was my fault. I finally realized that it was not. So now every time someone is mean to me I am going to tell my parents and not hold it in. From now on I am going to have to be strong when others make fun of me, be able to trust myself, and be more open to my parents.

All my life I have not been able to trust people because I was always made fun of, always the one in the corner feeling alone. Being adopted is hard because I have been different from others my whole life. People would not play with me because I was black. It was difficult to try and make friends when they would laugh and point and run away saying, “Ha, ha you're black and you're adopted which means you don't have a family that loves you.” This summer at ARC I have experienced that as soon as I would express my opinion or my story it made me realize that people do actually care and want to listen to me and that it will help me trust them more. It makes me feel that I don't have to hold back and be quiet. I will know that every time I speak that they will care for what I have to say.

I have become stronger physically by pushing myself beyond my limits, and by achieving things that I didn't think I could. Also become mentally stronger by becoming more self-confident, believing I can

do things even though I am weak. For example, when we were hiking my feet were killing me but my brain said to keep going because I knew that we were almost to our destination. I will use this skill at home by not complaining about doing chores because I have done a lot of chores here at ARC. Now when my mom asks me to clean my room I will not give her attitude, nor will I get upset.



Stepping back for others is sometimes difficult. It is difficult because when an idea pops into my mind I just want to blurt it out before I forget. I have been trying to step back for others by listening to other people's ideas and accepting ideas so they can share their opinions as well. I remember the first day of English and Shelley asked us a question about a noun and I just said the answer, not caring what the others think. Now that I know how the group feels when I say everything I have been stepping back for the people that don't usually speak. Even though I have been stepping back I know that I have my challenges stepping back for others. I will continue to use this at home with my mom by not arguing and letting her speak and listen to what she has to say. It is important for me to step back for others because I need to learn to care about others opinions and not just mine. To not

be selfish about everything can sometimes be hard but for me it is a constant thing and ARC as taught me to share the power of voice, because the group does not work well if we are only using half the power of the group.

Being open to people is very challenging because I feel uncomfortable telling people my stories that I haven't even told my closest friends or my parents. But now that I see other people sharing I don't have to be afraid and worry. Becoming more open to people is a really cool way to get to know somebody. Being more open to people is a good way to explain how you are feeling. For example, during the conversation café I was open to the group by telling them my past experience about being the only black kid in school. When I was in elementary school I was drinking from a water fountain and another student pushed me over and said, “You can't drink from this water fountain because you are black.” After I shared this event with the group, I felt relieved that Aldana has been through a similar experience. Now I know that I don't have to feel alone. ARC has helped me realize that it is okay to voice your opinion and don't be afraid of sharing because we are a team. I will use this at home by telling my mom how I feel instead of building up the anger and then releasing it at her because I was not open to her. Being more open can help me not have so many arguments with my mom and my brother.

My parents have listened and told me that I am valuable, but I still didn't believe in myself. Here, at ARC, I have been able to accept myself because I have been open to people that I've only known for 40 days, and they have taught me that I am a valuable person. Now I am ready to go home and be more open with my parents. When I go back to school I will be strong when someone is racist and make a comment to me. If it ever happened again, I would express my feelings directly to that person and tell them to not judge me by my appearance because they don't me. And I would definitely share my feelings with my loving mother. Once everyone gets to know me now, they will see that I am mature, unselfish, and open to others.

brandon hackett

Soaring to My New Potential

I am a falcon
The best flyer in the world,
But sometimes I feel jammed on the ground like a sparrow
when I should be gazing down on the land
it can be hard because I struggle with finding the motivation to fly
I know I can go higher and higher
to the best schools in the world

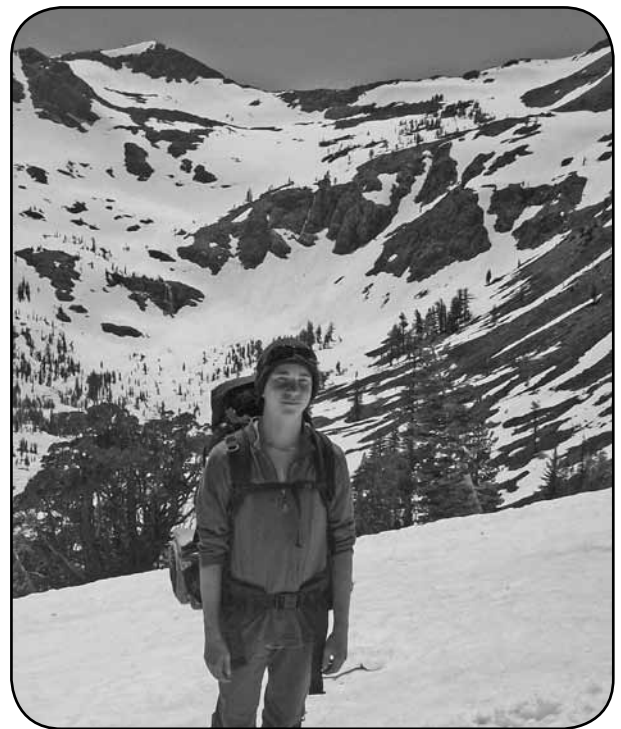
I am a falcon
guiding itself in any good direction
as I fly, I see my parents who support me
my nest is with my mom
my big oak tree
who provides help and comfort
my dad can't, but his limbs are there when I need them
my aunt and uncle are my mom's soil even though it may be dry or
sometimes flooded
without them I would never have hatched
into a soaring robust being

I am a falcon
with many challenges now and down the road
like a falcon who can't find food to live
so I circle the ground scanning
I know my potential to excel but I don't reach for it
when I get home after sports
I don't do my homework
I can easily reach the top of a tree
but I choose to head in a different direction
flying into the wind
I could try harder and feel more accomplished,
This is my salvation which will help me reach my goals
And be more self-confident so I feel I can succeed in life

I am falcon
I have a great past that was sometimes troubled
I would only think about myself
like the time I was playing
and lit my back yard on fire
I became grounded, not able to spread my wings
After that I made better decisions
I now realize bad from good
I now think about others, not just myself
I helped an old lady with her groceries over and over again
I give my mom presents whenever I can
To make her happy when she is down

I am a falcon
with a great past, but there is a better future
if I set my mind on my prey, I will be my own leader
and i will succeed in doing my own great thing
like having a good paying outdoor job with a family,
soaring high and proud.

I am a falcon
I am flying fast but in control down my flight path,
making my own choices where to fly and how high to go.
I will have the perspective to see the land, my future, beneath me.
With my view up high I can envision that I will reach my potential.
I will no longer feel like a sparrow,
I will raise my head and flap my wings to new altitudes



Establishing a Fresh Being

When you are dreaming of the person you want to be, don't forget the person you are.
- Unknown

At home I was someone else who tried to impress others and not be myself. I thought everything would be handed to me so I took things for granted. I had a less open mind towards others. Even though I needed to improve on my personality at home, I was still a strong leader to myself and others. I was trying to be a good person, yet I wanted to be better by improving my communication skills with others. Now at ARC I realize that I can be much more than my past self and I am much more appreciative of what I have. I will appreciate what I have because it's all I have, and it's much more than most people will ever have. I have strong leading skills towards others, but I am being put to the test and learning new ideas on how to be even better. When I go home, I will not be the person in the past. I will be the person people see me as I am at ARC. My confidence as a leader at ARC lets me have a clear open mind about others and not take things for granted.

I am a good leader with lots of confidence and experience. I am confident that I can lead because I have had good practice and been told that I am a great leader to myself and others I know. Getting people to do as I ask, and attaining the task ahead comes easily to me. It can be hard to get people to listen which I think is the hardest part of being a confident leader. A time when I am not confident is when people don't listen to what I have to say. It makes

me think that I am not leading correctly. Now when people aren't listening to me, I make a shift to continue with what I have to say and get my mind back on track to the task at hand. There are many different styles of leading people. The best way to learn to be a good leader is to practice and figure out what you did wrong. This I learned from being at ARC because we have a system of feedback to make us stronger and to make us grow. My leading resources have now expanded to be able to approach people in different ways. These resources are compassion, integrity, determination, and service. When I get home I will use these resources with my friends to get their opinion for things I do.



I have a more open mind towards others and get to know their ideas and thoughts. ARC taught me how to be more open minded. Listening to the new people I have met, makes me realize that everybody is different and they have really good ideas. For instance, I met two Chinese girls who are from the city and a different culture. They appeared to never have lived the life I do. Something different about our lives is they haven't ever seen snow till now, and I live in it, but we both like the outdoors. Listening to them makes me

want to be more open-minded. This makes me think of the people I have at home, friends and family, and how I want to listen to what they have to say. I have learned that what others have to say is interesting and I am not the only one that has good ideas. A time when I am at home and I could have a more open mind, is when I am with my

friends, and they have an idea at the ski resort. Usually they give a suggestion, but we end up going my way. A way I can work on this is by compromising with them and going down the run they want to go down. I will do my best when returning home to think better of what others have to say.

Taking things for granted is something I do a lot. For instance the foods I eat at home having homemade dinner, and being able to eat when I want. Never having thought of the millions of people who can't eat even though there's plenty of food. Something else I take for granted is my family. My mom does anything she can for me such as buying me things I do and don't need. My mom also makes me dinner every night and gives me money to buy snacks and toys, and lets me be free with my friends to play all night and day. Life in general is something I take advantage of every day, I always think ever thing will be handed to me and there is no work but only play. I have learned how too not take things for granted through arc. When I am in expeditions or base camp I started to do dishes and not have to support me but others. If I think about myself more than others I will not get much farther in life. If I help others I will get help in return. For instance when the group is hiking and going slow I need to help them out in order to get us all to the final destination. Starting now I will not take things for granted knowing it's what's right for me and those around me.

This summer I have learned how to be the real me and I now know that people can accept me for who I am. At home I was a good person who was respectable and enjoyable with some flaws, but through my experiences at ARC I can improve. I can still be respectable and fun, but when I get home I will not take things for granted and prove that I will be a better person. I will also have a more open mind towards others to get farther in life. I will use my leading skills to succeed in life. My summer experience at ARC has let me become my true self and let my personality flow out for people to see.

Achieving My Dream

I am a bee,
 a little tiny insect, working every day
 not complaining, just putting my mind into my work
 though sometimes when I feel exhausted,
 I have thoughts about giving it up,
 but from when I was just a baby bee,
 my parents always taught me that
 if you were looking forward to a dream flower,
 and wanted to reach it,
 you would have to be strong-willed, keep going and never give up
 With my workmates' encouragement
 step by step,
 I will overcome the strong wind, and land on my dream flower

My parents, the worker bees in our hive
 Work hard to make honey
 To make food for me
 To support me
 They give me everything that they have,
 To make me a strong queen bee.
 Now I know about how much
 my parents have done for me
 I wish I could tell them,
 I love you forever

One year ago,
 I moved from China to the United States
 Everything was very new for me
 In China,
 People would eat dogs
 on the first day of the summer
 In the US
 People love their dogs as their children
 In China,
 students study for the full day,
 From 7am to 10pm
 Like bees working from dawn until dusk
 We worked hard for our scores
 Like bees making honey
 We didn't have time to be creative or play sports
 In the US
 teachers aren't strict
 some students don't pay attention
 and don't work as hard as the bees they could be.
 But here I have had time to volunteer
 To hike and backpack
 To be part of nature
 And to observe new things

I was shy and weak as a new born bee,
 I tried to be more outgoing
 I tried to have more friends
 but it didn't work

because the other people thought I was a strange kid,
 I sat there by myself, didn't talk, didn't play with other kids
 I tried to be close to them,
 but they ran away
 until my teacher had a wonderful conversation with me,
 She told me that I was a nice kid,
 Who liked helping other kids and worked hard.
 I had been flying around in a lonely fog
 then, I started to realize,
 I also could be an attractive bee, part of the hive.

I moved to a new hive when I began the 40 day program
 Here, I am not a queen bee
 but another worker bee.
 I do so much more than just take care of myself
 We have to support each other

I am changing from a typical bee
 to an evolutionary bee



Because of ARC,
 I have had a chance to see snow,
 I felt really excited,
 I never did crazy things before
 This time,
 I ran into the snow, laid down and yelled
 I never, never felt free and relaxed like this
 before

As a little bee,
 I was challenged by hiking 30 miles
 the weather changed a lot
 rainy, snowy, windy, hot, cold
 I am a hard-working
 and strong-willed bee
 I overcame all challenges,
 I felt proud of myself

I will be a successful worker bee,
 No longer wanting to be a queen bee who can't take care of herself
 Pollinating my dream flower
 Going to a respectable college
 Finding a good job
 Supporting my family
 Working with my excellent teammates
 Being strong and never being alone
 ARC can help me in the future
 To achieve my dream flower
 I am a powerful, reputable, driven bee.

I Am Changing

“Believe in yourself and try your best to overcome challenges. But when it doesn’t work, try something new. Don’t let failures beat you up,” Kim, my interviewee said. Before coming to ARC, I was a little bee living in the green house. I was weak, not only physically but mentally. I would be really nervous when I was facing challenges, because I did not believe in myself and lacked of courage to stand up when I fell into failures. After I came to ARC, I had done many of my first time. First time to see snow, do backpacking, go hiking, do rock climbing, do rafting, do kayaking and open my mind to people besides my parents. During this wonderful journey, I am turning into a strong-willed, independent, confident person and getting braver to open my mind to people who I trust. In the outdoors, I have learned more about myself than I ever have before.

Strong-willed- I used to think these words would never fit for me. From when I was a little kid, my parents started to teach me everything that they knew. They wanted me be the best in school, and I was. My teachers liked me, my classmates admired me, and even their parents also tried their best to make their children be like me. I used to be the most proud bee in the hive. But when I had to face failures, I felt helpless. It was really hard for me to stand up again when I fell down. I emigrated from China to the United States one year ago. I felt like a new born baby here. I dared not talk in public because of my lacking English speaking skill. Though sometimes I tried to communicate with people, they couldn’t understand me very well. This made me feel really upset and disappointed in myself until I became a part of ARC. I have to speak English here, because almost all of the group members didn’t know Chinese. I always just sat there by myself at the beginning. I remember that the first two times I was leader of the day, I tried to be good, but I got too nervous. Most of the time, people didn’t understand what I was talking about and didn’t want to listen to me. At the time, I thought I couldn’t be a leader of the group, and didn’t put my mind into the job when I was a leader of a day. But the instructors encouraged me to speak up. They told me that no one in the world was perfect. People had to learn from their failures, and improved themselves. If you put too much pressure on yourself, it was not going to work, because you were beaten up by failures easily. I cried, because at that time I realized I didn’t have to make everything is perfect. I should know about what I should improve more from learning from failures, instead of letting failures get me down.

The first hiking trip was the hardest time in my life that I ever had before. I felt extremely exhausted, I wanted to give up. But then I started to think about my family. They tried their best to support me, wanted my life can be better. They had done too much for me, how could I give it up just because I was tired? I took a deep breath and step by step, caught up with the group. During that time, I promised myself: never cry again just because what I am facing is hard. The other people could do that, I also could. When I stood on the top of Dicks Pass, I smiled to the sunset which was the most beautiful that I had never seen before. I finished this eight days hiking trip with my sweat, tears and pride. I realized that I could overcome any challenge as long as I never gave. I grew a lot during the hiking trip which allowed me to succeed in rock climbing. We went to do the rock climbing the day after the first expedition. That was my first time to rock climb. I felt scared and my heels were also really painful after the hard trip. But I had already grown up more after the trip. With my teammates and instructors’ encouragement, I started to try my best to climb up. Though I didn’t finish the rock climbing route, I still felt proud of myself.

In China, students study for their good grades. I always studied for the entire day. I didn’t get any chances to be outdoors. That’s a reason why I still don’t know how to ride a bike and swim. My parents wanted me to be a successful business woman, work in a very comfortable office and have a nice long break whenever I want. That used to be my dream before I came to ARC. Doing homework, reading books, using computers already took all of my time in a day. I didn’t like playing sports or even just going outside to have a short walk. On the first day of ARC, I began my first time hiking trip. I wanted to go home because I never got that tired and dirty before. But I didn’t give up because of my wonderful teammates and instructors’ encouragement and support. I became stronger, not only physically but mentally. When I stood in mid-air on Pipe Dream, and looked far away through the mountain, I took a deep breath, closed my eyes and feeling the wind

splashed on my face. I felt like a bird, free and alive. From that time, I stated to get to know about myself more. I can also enjoy being outdoors.

In the past, I didn’t like sharing what I thought with other people, because I just wanted people thought I was always being proud, happy, nice and strong. I never expressed my real feelings even to my parents when I felt sad and helpless. I thought I could hold it, never poured it out. But that made me had few friends, because they couldn’t feel trust from me. I was always in a dark mood. It still happened until I came to ARC. In ARC, everybody opened their mind to each other. They talked about their families, their school, their community and even their thoughts that never shared with others before. When they were opening their mind, every group member listened to them carefully and gave them advice. Then, I found that express-



ing your real feelings and your weak sides to people was not that bad. It could help you release your pressure, and learn from others’ advice, knowing what to do in the future and improve yourself. I feel safety to share my thoughts here, no longer be afraid of trusting people. I put down a big rock that will bother my amazing journey in the future. I never felt relax like this before.

I have changed a lot during my experience on this journey. I learned a lot and overcame the challenges that I could not image before. When I have to face my failures, I will no longer drown in it. I will try my best to stand up and smile again. Now, my dream is not only becoming a successful business woman who works in an office for the entire day, but also can always be in outdoors and travel around the world to meet more challenges. I feel the most alive when I am in the outdoors. I am also able to trust people and show my feelings to them, tell them what I think, what I want to do, and learn from their advice. I am becoming a strong-willed, independent, confident person. I will keep going, never give up no matter what happens in the future.

gerardo placencia

Flowing Toward My Future

I am a river
When I am happy my current is slow,
Taking time to enjoy the things around me.
My waters support all life around me
But I in turn am supported
by my mom who is the rain and my dad who is the snow

I am the river
I am a waterfall when I am angry,
thundering onto the rocks below.
I am strong like currents,
always finding ways around obstacles that nature presents.

My mom is the rain
She helps me to not dry up
Even when she is mad, only a light mist falls to clean the air
When she is happy, she is like a rainbow in the sunshine
Illuminating the sky with colors
She is the rain that gives life to plants and animals
She is the food and oxygen that helps them thrive
She is always there with me
Telling me that everything will be okay
She takes care of me
cooking my favorite food to make me feel like clean spring water.

My dad is the snow
He is stable and can hold me up so I don't fall
My dad tells me to always try hard,
To always do my best, to never give up,
And to always work hard
to get what I want in the future.

He joins me as he melts
Helping me to be strong and make the right decisions in my life.

Enormous boulders block my path
Before I was born
My dad came to the United States
working to support my family
We only saw my dad once a year for ten years
It saddened me like a river drying out
We were the only ones without their dad in special moments
like a serene swimming hole with no swimmer in it

I was a lazy river
I didn't care about school
I didn't study, disrespecting teachers
I would pour water on my classmates
and lock them in the bathroom for a long time.
My waters became stagnant

I was an angry river, alone and weak
Now the rain and snow are feeding my river,
My actions also make my river stronger.
Now when I'm angry I always think twice before acting.
I treat people with respect so they can respect me.
I want to improve my grades in school
So I can go to college and get a career to become a mechanic.
With a good paying job I can support my needs.
I am a river flowing strong toward my future.



In Control of My Life

We were walking up mountain Lincoln over a large part of snow. We were almost in the middle when one by one people began to slide down the mountain. I felt scared because I thought that I was going to slide too. But instead of sliding, Mel began to make steps in the snow making a zig zag path. The steps made it easier because they were stable and they prevented me from sliding down the mountain. Although the steps made me feel safer, I didn't feel 100% secure. I felt scared because I was thinking that I would slide down and hurt myself. After we got to the trail, I felt safer because we didn't have to hike more long snow parts. My experience at ARC has been beautiful in my life because I had to try a lot of different fun things, like hiking, that I never thought I would because I was scared of trying them. Through these fun experiences I have learned that I am a confident and strong person. In this program, I have learned that I am in control of my success, I can speak up, and that I should never give up.

The very first day of our first expedition I had never hiked and I was kind of nervous of holding up the group because I was tired. I continued walking without saying that I was tired. When we got to our camp my feet hurt and I didn't want to continue walking the second day because I thought I would get a blister. I thought I wouldn't make it through the whole eight days that we were backpacking. What helped me keep going was that everyone was encouraging me and they told us that if we got tired or our feet hurt to tell the instructors to check if we have blisters and to tell them to stop when we were tired. I was encouraging myself too because I would get stronger and good at walking and not get tired too fast. In this experience I learned that I can walk 30 miles in eight days. Before I thought I could walk only one or two miles. I learned that mentally I need to think positive and always think that I will get there instead of being negative and saying that it is hard. It was important to think positive because you can get there safe and happy. This experience made me a stronger, more confident person because I can now express my feelings and let the group know how I

am doing. When I return home and have the challenge of understanding the teachers when they are explaining something, I will remember this first day and think to myself, that I will always make it.

Before I came to ARC, I never talked a lot in front of my teachers when they called on me to say the answer. I would just say a little bit. I would only say a little bit because my ideas were stupid and that everybody would laugh at my ideas. I was also scared of people telling me that English was hard and that I would never learn it. Sometimes in my head I imagine how I was before ARC and now. Before when the teacher wasn't looking or left the class, I would put my head down and take a nap.

I heard other people telling their ideas and I knew they were good so then I didn't have to answer. I always thought that other people's ideas were way better than mine. Or I would just chill with my friends in the class when the teacher was trying to teach. It was easier to just talk with my friends than to understand what the teacher was saying. After this program I learned that I can talk way too much and that my ideas are important to the whole group. Everybody says a lot of different ideas and everybody will respect my ideas. We are a family and we support everybody in what they feel and what they need help with. Now I express my true identity, my thoughts, what needs to be done, and what needs to be right- in my second language, English.

After the first expedition, on the eighth day, we were going to climb at 90-foot wall. After hiking for 30 minutes we finally got to 90-foot Wall. When we got to the place, we met Andy and Chris who were experts at rock climbing. They told us how to put

the harness on our body. Then they gave us a little class of how we need to use all the stuff. It was very important because you are holding someone else's life on a rope. After they told us about all the important stuff, Andy and Chris demonstrated how to climb. I was so excited and at the same time

kind of scared. Even though they told us that we were completely safe. I was thinking in my mind that the rope wasn't strong enough, that it was going to break, that I was going to fall and that I was going to die or hurt myself. After we all were ready, the instructors split us in groups of three and one group of four. In my group was Zach, and Emily. Zach was going to climb first. I was the belayer. I



was holding Zach's life in my hands. I was nervous, but I was trying to stay focused on what I was doing. After Zach finished it was my turn. I was shaking a lot but I was trying to not show them that I was scared. After we both checked that everything was right, I began to climb. At first it was tricky because I couldn't find a good way to begin to climb. After a lot of times falling, Andy gave me a hand to pass the tricky part. After I saw other people climbing so fast and confident in their self, I challenged myself to do it right and confidently and I never gave up.

Everything that I have learned in ARC, is very special to me because it will help me in my future. The lesson that I have learned will help me when I face challenges when I return home. Instead of sitting silently in class I will share my ideas, try my best and answer every question as best I can. I will never give up when I have to run long distances or when I am having a hard time in a class. I learned that I can always be successful because I am in control of my life.

jaira paniagua

Keeping the Constellation Together

Keeping the Constellation Together

By Jaira Ontiveros Paniagua.

There were 12 stars in the constellation,
Now there are just six.

After living millions of years stars burn up
It is ironic how they were not even 3 years old
And their light just went out in seconds.
They're no longer here, the constellation is not complete anymore.
Now there are six shooting stars living in the heavens,
And another six stars waiting to join them.

My mother is my brightest light.
No matter what she's always there.
A strong woman, who keep the family together,
Like the North Star that guides you on the right road.
She keeps us going on our paths.
My oldest brother Melchor is my hero.
He is the Big Dog Star,
The one who cares about others.
He was always there for me
When I need a male figure to support me.
He was and still is my father.

Every immigrant comes to the U.S.A. looking for the American
Dream.
When I first stepped on American territory
I didn't know what was going on.
Recognizing my benefit at the age of 13 years old
Living in a house with 20 more people
Lost in the snow like a Snowshoe Hare,
Without having any idea my brother, my sister and I went to school
Strange people talking in strange languages.
They ask me who am i? Where I come from?
Forced to learn the language without knowing how much was left
Like my mom always looking for the exit,
I'm not political neither am I foolish
I know since the first day I came here everybody is trying to send us
go back to Mexico
I felt like a star out of the sky.
I only talked with my family,
I didn't feel lonely because I had my family with me
But it was not good because my oldest brother isn't here,
He is in Mexico.
My family that is here are the stars that form Orion's Belt
But there's that star that is missing, my brother.



My past has been tough for me and my family.
While my dad was here in the USA working,
The rest of my family was in Mexico.
My dad is like the sunset,
If you're lucky you get to see it
But if you're not you have to wait for the next day.
Every time he went to Mexico
I rarely saw him,
Almost all the time he was with his friends.
My mom worked and still working hard
To give my family and I what we need,
There were times that she didn't go to sleep to finish working.
I felt like my hands were tied,
Watching my mom working 24/7

In my future my mom wants a better life and a better job for me.
She doesn't want to see me working hard for a minimum salary,
She wants me to learn English
And show everybody that I can and I will do anything
That is on my path to success.

My experience as a star is to always be there when my friends and
family need me.
Watching everybody,
Always caring about others,
Feeling shiny and important.
Thinking about others,
Letting them trust in you,
Always being there even not physically, but mentally,
Even if you don't see me I am always going to be there.
I am always going to be
the star that keeps the constellation together.

Forty Days And Completely Change Your Life

As soon I got into my brother's car to drive to Vallejo on Monday, June 27 at 6:15 A.M. a thought passed throughout my mind. That thought made me realize that I was going to be away from home and away from my family and friends for 40 days. My mind was blank just thinking that I was going to be far away from home and be in a different place, meet different people and do different things that I wasn't use to. I made the decision to come to ARC and spend 40 days with new people and in new places it wasn't because everybody told me that I was going to have a lot of fun, it was going to be good for me and it will look good on my school record. Now I know I came here because I wanted and I still want to challenge myself to the limit and keep achieving all the goals that I proposed to myself in this 40 days course and in the future. I learned and I am still discovering that I can overcome any challenge without giving up, that I can achieve all my goals and that I'll never regret what I have done, I'm just going to keep going and learn from my mistakes.

It has been really hard for me to talk in another language that is not my home language. I'm not use to English. I don't speak it, I don't write it and I don't read it well. English is a new language that 2 years ago appeared in my way, when I came to the United States to try new opportunities and look for the American Dream. English is like a wall in my path that doesn't let me walk or see towards my future. My mom always tells me that I have to learn English so my future can be successful in the United States. ARC helped me to feel more confident in expressing my feelings and ideas in another language that I am not used to. It helped me improve my writing, reading, and mostly my speaking. I understand more English and learned how to pronounce big words that are really weird, like dendrochronology. I spoke more English in the last 40 days than the two years that I have been in the United States.

In these 40 days that I have lived life in the backcountry. I have experienced a lot of things that I never thought one day I could do it. Now that I am here I can learn every new things in the country and then when I go back to my home I am going to tell all my friends and my family that I can do amazing things. Even if I don't take a shower every day I can have fun since I am not the only one. I'm going to teach them how to set up a tent without the wind blowing it away, how to do good knots so they don't get untied, and how to walk in the snow even when I cannot stand up for five minutes without falling on the snow. I can teach them how to do the heel steps, the toe steps and walk sideways. Also I can teach them how to read the maps, how to measure the elevation, how to know if we are going up or down hill, how

to measure the whole trail with a piece of rope, and how to orient the map by just looking at the features around. I learned that by playing games you can learn about the bark beetles that is the number one enemy of the trees. The bark beetles make them turn red and kill them. When they are red, you know that they are dead. And fire is not just a bad thing. Fire doesn't just destroy forests, but also helps forests. I also learned how to belay. When you belay you feel that you have somebody's life in your hands and you become more confident and strong, not just physically but mentally because is not just you anymore it's someone else too. I also learned that if we work as a team we can do amazing things like that time when we went to Discovery Project. We worked as a team and we all passed under the rope at once, but like every challenge, first you have to try a couple of times to do it perfectly.

I have learned that I can push myself beyond my limits. When we were on the expeditions, hiking uphill, I had to push myself to the limits. There were times that my knees hurt so much that I could not even walk a few steps without stopping so my knees could rest. I stopped for three minutes. I caught my breath. I thought on the words that my mom told me before I came here "Los de Michoacán no se rajan, o que donde esta la Michoacana que no se queda atrás? Donde quedaron los 500 balazos y revisen bien la Bronco no quiero errores ustedes me responden." People from Michoacán never give up. Those words always gave me strength to keep going. I didn't want to hold the group back so I just kept going forgetting about the pain that my knees felt. All the support that my team or no, not my team "My ARC Family" gave me the strength to keep going without giving up. Another situation when I pushed myself to the limits was when I was climbing the 90 feet wall. At first it was piece of cake. I felt like I was walking on stairs that go up to the sky. I thought that the wall was stairs that will go up and reach the sky so I can be with my family up there, but somebody yelled and that made me woke up to the reality. I kept climbing like if I was walking. I was almost reaching the top of the wall but my feet got stuck. I didn't know what to do. There was no place to put my feet or my hands. It was like the world was over me, everything turned dark and everybody left. After 10 minutes passed I didn't want to go back, my goal was to reach the top and I didn't want to disappoint myself. I remembered the words that my mom told me and kept going. I was almost to the top, but my hands got stuck too and when I tried to get them out I scratched them. They were hurting but I wanted to keep going. In that moment I told myself, "I already walked 30 miles in the snow in 8 days in the wilderness. I can do this. To climb this wall

is nothing for me, it is just an obstacle on my path." But that wasn't enough to keep me going. I just gave up and told the person that was belaying me, that I was going down. I thought it was going to be easy but I disappointed myself by giving up and not reaching the top. I will use this experience that I found about myself by always achieving all my goals and overcome any challenge in my future. I will never give up again!!!

I can have more fun with people I just met, than with people that I know long time. Since the first day I came here the only thing that I thought of was leaving. When I arrived, I didn't want to do the 40 days course because my sister told me that all the teens that were coming were supposed to be Mexicans, but they were not. The first two girls I met were from Hong Kong and China. I felt like I was in other place but I had to stay, because I was told to achieve my goals. And one of my goals was to come here and finish the 40 days and to overcome any challenge without giving up. The time went quickly. Day by day, I discovered all the amazing things about my ARC family. We had a lot of fun together. When we were on our third expedition, almost all of us fell on a snow hill. I was at the end of the line waiting my turn to walk down the snow hill, it was so funny how one by one they were falling and because of that I almost fell too. I couldn't stop laughing. Then when we finished our final expedition, we went to Donner Lake to celebrate that we were done with all our expeditions. First we started to eat and then we went swimming. It was so funny when they lined up to jump into the water. First Zach got ready to jump and ran off the dock and slid a little, the Oscar went, followed by Gerardo and the last one was Brandon who instead of jump he slid and that was so funny. All the way back to Sagehen Creek we all were laughing at the video that Mama Mel recorded with Grandpa Josh's camera.

I'm not allowing myself to say my team or my group of ARC anymore. Now I say my ARC family. They have always been there for me, supporting me, and making me laugh until my stomach hurt. They are the ones that made this 40 days course fun and when you have fun the time flies. Minnie, Emily, Angela, Aldana, Jose, Oscar, Gerardo, Brandon, Zach and I, all of us are the members of the family that we had formed in these 40 days of our lives. Oh and don't forget Mama Mel, Grandpa Josh, Aunt Danielle and Cousin Shelley. These are 40 days that we will never forget. Each day we had new adventures, new discoveries, new goals to achieve and new challenges to overcome. Each day we will remember every funny moment, every time that somebody fell in the snow, every time somebody told a joke, every time we worked together as the family that we are. We are not living in the past, neither are we waiting for the future. We are living in the now. We will always remember every minute of this adventure that we are living.



I Am a Soaring Mighty Cloud

I am a cloud
confident in myself
when I am calm you do not notice me,
free, peaceful and traveling long distances along with the wind,
when I gather my strength I turn from a puffy and quiet cloud,
to a thunderous and mighty cloud
I strike the earth with all of my power
and make it rumble,
influencing those who don't believe in my strength
it is hard to get me to turn into a storm
I am very forgiving and peaceful.
I am a storm cloud that passes quickly.

My mom, dad, sisters, brother and friends are in the sky with me,
now while I am at ARC they maybe be far,
but they are always truly close and inside my heart and soul. I love
when they lift me into the sky,
they are the wind that pushes me
I will treasure and keep them in my thoughts forever,
leaving those I love
behind will be extremely hard,
but when I go into the real world,
they will be there,
it will rain,
but i know that the next breeze will make us one again.

If you are good and true to me I will be good and true to you.
I will respect and appreciate you,
because there are more people in the world
than there are stars in the universe
and we were able to find each other and support each other
you will always be a part of my sky
you are going to hover along with me and make my life even better



We will never be alone
We will always be in the sky together.

I started as a dew drop on a window
which came from the ocean,
the place where everyone I have been dependent on,
also lived,
those who took care of me when I could not,
those who picked me up when I fell and cried,
those who I love for making me who I am today,
I had amazing times with them
saw places I wanted to go.
when I was younger, I soared like a billowy white cloud to the U.S,
five years ago,
leaving most of my childhood in Mexico.
not knowing the language that I am now speaking,
feeling excluded and out of place,
not fitting in,
feeling less important than others
my life has changed,
I have met amazing beautiful people,
that I would not trade for anything.
now I am living the life that I have been given,
and I am relishing every single moment of it.

If I ever fall I will travel like fog through rivers, creeks and streams,
and the sun will support me to achieve my goals
I will fly on a challenge filled blue sky,
my fear of the unknown, of not fitting in,
being alone,
the clear starry night will love me like never before,
it will not forget me when I come crying through heaven's door
feeling the overwhelming happiness of accomplishment.

Facing everything that is unknown,
I am afraid of
that I am challenged by like being up high
might make me want to fall or stop existing
trying is worth it,
the outcomes are not always negative.

At ARC I have learned that I can keep going much farther,
hiking 30 miles,
rafting through raging waters,
are only some of the things I have done,
I can push myself,
when I am feeling tired or insecure.
I feel accomplished after all that we have been through
and very proud of myself
like I can accomplish all of my goals
nothing can stop me
not a mountain or the wind
I am a cloud

Becoming a Different Person, But Still Being Me

I was on the top of the zip line, gripping as hard as I could to the wood railing. I took deep breaths, my heart jumping out of my chest. I've always been afraid of heights and the group knew it, so they cheered me on with enthusiasm and true friendship. Knowing that they believed in me helped me to believe in myself. They yelled, "You can do it, Jose" and "It's fun! Do it!" When it was my turn to jump off the platform, I was more afraid than ever before. I looked down at the bottom of the hill knowing I could do it but still clinging to the wood as if my life depended on it. There was no other way down and I could not give up. My entire team was cheering me on but all I could think about was the cable snapping and getting badly hurt. My team members asked me if I wanted to hear them count down for me and I agreed. They started with 3, 2, 1 and I couldn't do it. My fear was keeping my entire body frozen. Then they asked if starting from ten would help and I said sure with fear still in my voice. I heard ten and my heart started racing even faster. I gathered all of the courage that hid behind my terror. When I heard "one" I jumped off and I felt like I was flying through the sky! It was nothing like I imagined in my head and I enjoyed every single second I was on the zip line. After I got off I thanked all of my teammates for giving me support and courage to do what I didn't believe I could. At ARC I learned to face my fears, I realized that I am not on my own, and in fact I am now a more appreciative person than before this life changing experience.

Facing my fears is something that I really don't like to do. If I ever come to a situation when I have to face my fears I will avoid it. When I started ARC I knew that the whole summer was going to be an extremely different experience for me and that sometimes it would take me out of my comfort zone. I wasn't going to get away from it because it is part of all of the activities that we do. On the first expedition I found out that we were going up very high on snow and I was extremely scared because I imagined

the worst case scenario and thought that I would get hurt. When we rafted I thought I was going to fall into the rapids, drown, or break a leg on a rock. Thankfully none of those things ever actually happened. Knowing that I had the support from my friends, that I was going to be alright and that I was going to get a rewarding feeling when I finished a challenge, I overcame all of my challenges. I have learned that I can overcome my fears and that everything is



going to be alright. I also have realized that I can keep going and believe in myself even though I might feel the opposite way.

In the past sometimes I got mad or frustrated, and felt like I was on my own. I now have realized that was a lie. I have a beautiful family that supports me as much as they can, and friends that add even more to all of the support. I have fun when I'm feeling loved and get to spend time with my friends and family; it makes me a very happy person. During the solo experience I thought a lot about the times that I get mad and disrespect those who love me. I now feel foolish and know that from now on I will respect and treasure every person that keeps me company and supports me even when I am not feeling happy. Now I don't feel alone. I will never be on my own as long as I don't push people away when I'm frustrated or mad. Here at ARC I have not felt alone because I always have people

working together with me as a team. They always support me when I have a hard time like on the ropes course day on the zip line.

After the long time that I have spent away from home, I have thought of all of the things that I have: my friends, family and my personal belongings. Even though I have just the basic things that I need to live here at ARC, I appreciate more deeply everything present in my life. I always complain

about my community. I say that there is nothing to do and that I wished I lived somewhere else. I am glad and excited to go back to the place that I once condemned. Truckee is the place that changed my life when I came to the United States because it introduced me to the language, culture and people that are now a critical part of my life. I appreciate living here and I am happy and proud of calling this beautiful town home. This is an important lesson to learn because we only live once and we cannot be wasting time complaining about the things that we have. My attitude towards my friends and family will be different.

I have been away from them for a really long time. I do not like missing out on everything that we could be doing and making memories with them because that is what I enjoy doing. It can be going out to the movies or spending time with them. It doesn't matter to me anymore I will enjoy every moment.

The experience of going through something that can change your life is unique. ARC has changed my life in only forty days. I am very grateful that I got to come to this program. It has showed me that I can keep on going even though I am scared or feel like I cannot do it, that I am not alone and I can be more appreciative. Those are the lessons that have impacted me the most from all the time I have spent here at ARC. I hope that more people get to experience everything that I and my teammates have experienced and change their life for good.

minnie wong

My Transformation

I am a baby bear
Needing protection from family
I am still not strong
Like a baby bear running from humans
Always avoiding the challenges
Waiting for people to come, waiting for people to depend on
I never ask for help until people come toward me
However, someday, i will become a strong, huge
and independent mother bear
Protecting family from being hurt with the evolving confidence

I have three siblings
There is always hope and courage around us
Together we get stronger and stronger
Like four pair of chopsticks unable to be broken

My mother, a kind lovely woman, always cares and encourages me
Although she is not assertive
I feel safe when i am with her
The big tree protecting and housing the baby bear
Supporting me when the rain comes
Giving the right direction
Always making sure we had the best

I immigrated to San Francisco when I was thirteen
I felt shame because I am the cause of this immigration
My parent, school and friends
Expecting me to be as good as my siblings
But I disappointed all of them
They had to give up everything in Hong Kong
To let me start over
To have a better future in America

Everything was so new to me
Language, people, place, home and school
I got confused, scared and frantic
Feeling lost and lonely
Like the baby bear got sent to another forest without its family
I did not know how to survive
I did not know what to do
I lived in fear everyday

The challenge of English appeared in my world four years ago
It was a new territory to me
I could not express my feeling to anyone
Like a baby bear who wears a mask
No one knows when I am helpless
When I feel unsafe

It was hard to find my way home
At first, I tried to run away
Avoiding it almost two years
But i never found a way out
In my first year of high school
I realized how important it was to overcome my challenges
I saw how hard my parents had gone through for me
How hard they work in their life to give the best for me
Never ask and hope to have anything back from us
Therefore, I promised myself
No matter how hard my future will be
I will stay strong
Let my parents feel proud of me
Stop avoiding and keep learning
What I had already missed in the past years
Approaching the way to be the mother bear



My future seems really tough to reach success
Because of my mistake of avoiding
I have missed a lot of great opportunities
But I am becoming a strong, huge and independent mother bear
With evolving confidence,
protecting myself and my family from being hurt
I know I will have a hard time
But I will be successful in college,
in society and in my family
I can be myself, the real me
A mother bear who takes care of others
Searching for foods by myself
The confident leader of the cubs

Nothing is Impossible

“Nothing is impossible unless you don’t try!” I always reminded myself in these past 40 days. Before ARC, I was a person who was frightened to try new things because I felt frantic to face challenges and experience failure. Therefore, I always thought I was not capable to do many things before I even tried it. I liked to say that “everything is impossible for me” to help me avoid the fact that I felt fear to fail. I have three siblings. They work hard, they are talented and everybody likes to be friends with them. Sometimes I felt excluded because I could not be as smart as them. I really wanted to be like them. But I never tried because I always kept in my mind that I could not make it and it was impossible. However, during the time in ARC, I realized I am stronger than I thought I was. Everything is possible when I push myself, fully trust people and adapt to my environment.

“That is totally impossible!” I yelled in my mind when I realized I had to hike to the top of the mountain with a 30lbs backpack in eight days. I am from Hong Kong and I live in San Francisco. I am not an active person and, therefore, I had never been in the outdoors camping or hiking before. I was shocked when I first saw the heavy backpack in front of me. “How am I able to carry this backpack to the top of the mountain when I could not even hike up to the mountain without a backpack?” I thought. At that time, I already believed that I would give up soon. At the beginning of the hike, I was tired and I missed my family. I knew that they would support me when I was down. I cried and asked to go home. I just wanted to put everything down and run away. But the instructors stopped me from running away; they encouraged me and pushed me to keep moving forward. More importantly, I made a lot of friends. They helped me carry some of the heavy stuff, made me laugh and made me forget the hard time I had. I felt warm because we all laughed together like a family. I believed that if they could do it, I should at least try. I believed in my thought, pushed myself and I finally made it to Dick’s Pass, the top of the mountain. That was the moment when I felt proud of myself, and realized I was a strong person.

It was hard to trust people when they were holding your life in their hand. However, I experienced a time when I had no fear to worry about the person who belayed me and we made it by truly trusting each other. “Come on Minnie, you can do it!” said Jaira, holding the ropes with her two hands. I was frozen halfway up the tree. I was trying to climb the catwalk, two big trees that are 45 feet tall with a log between them which I had to walk in the middle of without hold-

ing anything. The challenge of this game was to fully trust the person who belayed me because I may fall if the person did not hold tight to the ropes. I looked down at Jaira and asked “Do you got me, Jaira?!” My legs were shaking by holding the wood too long. “I got you!” yelled Jaira with a confident smile. I felt safe when I saw her big smile. I knew that I could trust her with it. Although it was possible that she could not hold tight and I might fall, I knew that I must believe in her. I kept climbing up to the tree without looking down and checking if Jaira was still holding tight to the ropes. Finally, I reached the log between the two big trees; it was 45 feet high and no handle. I had to walk to the middle of the log with a perfect balance and fully trust. I gulped and told myself “Don’t worry, she’s got you.” I looked down again, tried to find a support smile from Jaira. I heard a lot of encouraging sound down from my other teammates and instructors. But only Jaira waited patiently and gave me trusted eye contact. “You can do it, Minnie Wong!” I thought. I slowly walked toward the middle, not looking down because I knew that it was no need to worry about the ropes anymore. Finally, I reached the middle and she gently belayed me down. I closed my eyes and smiled because I had completed the catwalk. When I got to the ground, my body relaxed immediately so that I could not stand still and fell on the ground. I laughed and so did Jaira. Suddenly, I realized that the belayer actually had a more difficult challenge than the climber. They may get hurt so easy by holding the ropes for a long time, but they had a lot of pressure from the climber by holding their life. I knew Jaira had tried really hard, held the rope tight and made me feel safe. I pulled myself up and smiled at Jaira, thought back to her big confident smile which supported me that whole day. After the ropes course, I noticed that I have no fear to climb the tree when I trust people and I felt good to work as a team instead of by myself. The most important is I overcame my challenge with my friend, Jaira.

In this material world, I turned into a selfish and foolish person who always complained about my life. I always hoped to have more and more as I could not live without the

materials. However, today, I realize how lucky I am to be in a healthy family without worrying about my living. My life can also be possible without any material... Before I joined ARC, I would not treasure all the things I have: family, friends, my health, clean water and even the opportunities of education. I always desired to have more materials: my own computer and my own room. But I have three siblings and we all had to share the limited materials. Therefore, I always asked myself why did I have to share with my siblings, why could I not have the same materials as my other friends, why did my parents always give the best to the elder first, why did they only force me to learn and why could I not get to choose my own life? There were a lot of questions in my life that made me feel the world was not fair for me and my life seemed impossible if there were no material things for me. Yet, I survived in ARC, 40 days without connection to the world and materials. During the time in ARC, I could not take a shower every day, I could not have the food I liked, I could not connect with the community and I could not even communicate with my family. It was like a cave which locks you from the material world to be independent. With this situation, I was able to overcome my material mentality by adapting to the environment but not avoiding and pushing it away. This was the greatest and hardest accomplishment I had ever made. I turned from a material city girl into an outdoor

person. I learned that my life is also being meaningful without any materials, and adaptation could change the life I had.

In these 40 days, I experienced a lot of “impossible things” and I learned an important lesson from ARC. Within my determination, there is no impossible in my world. I could also be a strong person who admires to try new things, trust and support people, and adapt to the things I have. ARC has given me a lot of fun moments but also challenging moments. Although there was also a time when I tried to

give up and run away, I was supported and encouraged as part of a family. I also realized how important my family is to me and how much I love them by leaving them 40 days without any conversation. Today, I am totally different; I will not complain about my life anymore; I will not avoid challenges but to overcome them and I will try things I think are impossible for me. After this program, I will keep challenging myself and be successful in society by using the skills I learned from ARC. ARC is the hardest thing I have done, but I hope that it is not the hardest thing I will ever do in my life.



oscar sanchez

Forging a New Person

I am a bear
One that's awakening from its slumber
Checked out up until High school.
Going through The motions.
My body was there
My mind in outer space.
Now I'm awake worried that I'm chained down
By my own failures. I scream at the prison
"Do your homework,
Pay attention, focus, listens."
My roaring at my self is to no avail.
How I long to be free.
To choose my own path
To gaze at the sights unseen by most.
To roam the earth, as far as my mind will let me.

I don't want that obsession that my father lives in.
One of drinking and caring about alcohol
more than his own family.
Seeing the tears rolling down my mom's face
like a river of sadness.
Then in a split second he is gone.
Thinking he could leave his responsibility
But I'm still here.
For that reason alone I'm different
I won't become that person.
He abandoned me.
I won't abandon myself.

I made a commitment to forge a new person
So now I'm here.
Without my family I
Feel I can't breath
Feeling scared and not running wild
But to be free I must release
Those chains attached

My roar is weak
And can't be heard
But at the end
It will be known that I'm a bear that's proud
And if my heart is open
Then it will be the beginning of a bright new start

A new start might
Just be what I need for
This track record ain't so good
Cause I have to be restrained
before I attack.
It puts me back in the cage.
But my commitment releases the chains
and my drive opens the door
To the freedom that allows me to create my own path
Seeing my mom's face so proud of me.
Is where I will live



Seeing the New Me

I looked down at the step that was made in the snow by the person in front of me and thought, “That is not safe. If I step on that, I’m going down,” but there was no other way to go and I would hold up the rest of the team if I didn’t go. So I went for it. The next thing I knew I was going down the side of Mt. Lincoln knowing that the step gave out. As I was sliding down, time felt like it stopped and I flashed back to snow school in the first expedition, when we were learning how to self-arrest. Even though we were having fun, it still was serious. After I got used to hiking on the snow I thought, “I’ll never have to use that technique.” Then I smashed into reality speeding down the mountain. I tried to dig my elbows into the snow, but I felt that I was not going to stop. The emotion that I felt when I stopped was relief and I lay there motionless, thinking that a little extra elbow grease just saved my life. My fall started a chain reaction, as six of the rest of the group started dropping like flies. One person actually started rolling, but stopped before anything happened. Once all of us were down onto dirt it all became a big laugh, but it was one of those laughs that only happen when people go through something dangerous. That has been one of my biggest learning points in my time at ARC because it shows the transformations that have occurred. I see my confidence as a leader has sky rocketed to new heights to allow me to push myself and to be an example to others.

When I first started ARC I thought that was going to be an easy ride. That all changed after the second day. I didn’t like being here, and I was uncomfortable trusting this entire group of random people. I had never been hiking before, so I wondered how I was going to survive. On the fourth day I got anxious looking at the pass ahead of us, so I stayed in the back of the group not wanting to be the first to face their fears. Crossing that

pass allowed me to become the person that could conquer whatever is in front of me. Going through those experiences together, I gained the trust of my peers and that helped me feel more confident and that allowed the leader inside to really express himself. Others look to me for help either with the group or with some responsibility. Also I allow the more quiet ones to try to voice their own ideas because at the ropes course we found out that half of the power of the group isn’t going to get you anywhere—you need to have everyone. It was at the ropes course that I realized that I was one of the top leaders of the group. From there I took it to mind that I can lead. Truly that moment propelled me to the leader that I am today.



Being on the snow on the first expedition got me tired and cold and what was in my mind the day before was “How can it be cold. It’s June.” How wrong I was. For instance, it started to rain the first day out. By the end of the day had become a frozen pillar. The only thing I associated with ARC from that day was me almost dying from the cold. I hate being cold, but there was only one way and that was for me to go on. Now I knew that had to change my mindset. Never thinking that I would be this mentally exhausted. But that’s not to say it didn’t help me. For I am now more supportive of others when they are having trouble.

The knowledge that I bestow on the group means that they ask me questions when in trouble. Also the way that I’ve adapted to all of the different things that we’ve done. Never having done hiking, camping, kayaking, or walking on the snow in an advanced way, I have found ways to adapt and use the tools that I have been thought. At first I didn’t like helping the group, but after having some sketchy moments I knew that I needed to. Knowing that people don’t have the same limits as me and that it’s much easier to go through difficulties together than single-handedly. The instructors say that people are intimidated of me. So they don’t ask me to do something. Then I get called lazy, but I don’t help unless they ask for it. Although being known as the lazy guy in the group, the team still looks up to me and allows me to show all my brilliance.

Going to ARC I knew was going to be a good life experience, thinking that it was going to be easy without many challenges. Instead, what I learned here is that the team is much stronger once we have gone past our limits. Also I am getting past all the physically and mentally demanding challenges have landed me in the top of the

group. I’m one of the good leaders here. Now I just have to use all the information to help my community. I want to be an inspiration and help out the people that are in need instead of going home and sleeping; I want to make a difference in someone’s life, rather than just thinking about what’s going on this weekend. I want to make sure that I can lead myself to a better life—one that brings me happiness for the work I do. I want to share my experiences that will help me take a grip of my true potential. ARC has helped me realize that anyone can take control of life instead of letting others telling them what to do. Now the path I take will be completely up to me.

zachary kriston

Strong, Independent, and Trusting Myself

I am a Bobcat,
Smooth and calm
My moods are even, not changing quickly
Soft and quiet
Never wanting to be the center of attention
Strong
Little things don't bother me
independent
needing time to myself

I am a Bobcat,
healthy, happy, strong, and independent,
never giving up
I always keep going no matter what.
trusting myself in difficult situations,
I learned to trust myself in everything I do
by making mistakes and getting support from my family.

I am a Bobcat,
always near my dad
spending time with him,
golfing, hunting, and skiing with him,
I feel good and happy he is still here.
In 6th or 7th grade,
I was shocked and upset,
I worried that he may never return
Worrying if my dad was ok
Thinking every night
I hope he doesn't have another heart attack

I am scared of leaving home,
migrating to find new things, meet new people
I am fearful of not having a home or a family when I return
I have learned now
I easily adapt to new habitats
I can be loud when I need to be
Help cook and clean
Carry things for the group
Make friends with people from different parts of the world

I am a Bobcat,
My dad tells me to always try new things,
so I tell myself every day
if it's something new or difficult,
always try new things and keep those words with me.
I get support from my mom and my dad,
and they encourage me to do a good job
and to not give up on myself.

I am a Bobcat,
having a hard time with my English and hand writing,
feeling frustrated when I can't get it
and learning that if I study really hard,
focus in class, listen really closely,
I can get it right

I am a Bobcat,
That needs to change the way I act at home
listen more and do what I'm told the first time
don't talk back to my parents
show them a stronger side of me,
that can take on harder tasks

I am a Bobcat,
Strong, independent
And trusting myself.



My Experience With ARC

Good judgment comes from experience, experience comes from bad judgment. - Unknown author.

I have made some bad judgments in the past and I have learned from them this summer in ARC. Before I came to ARC I was quiet and lazy and not a good communicator. I didn't trust myself and when I thought about doing something, like going off a big ski jump, I didn't put my mind to it and try it. Now that I have been at ARC I'm loud and more active, I have gotten better at talking to others and speaking clearly so they understand what I am saying to them, and I can trust myself when I'm in a difficult situation or doing something that I have never tried before.

Before the program started this year I was lazy. I really didn't do something this difficult, like hiking in snow up a pass in the backcountry. I had to get up earlier than I usually do in the summer and carry a heavy backpack for 17 days up unstable ground and terrain. When we were on up on Castle Peak, it was so windy that I felt like I was going to be blown off. As we hiked up to Castle Peak I felt anxious that I would go skiing down the steep drop-off on my left. ARC has helped me get through difficult situations and face my fears, like rock climbing and going on a ropes

course. It helps you to keep going and not to give up on yourself, and motivates you when you are tired and lazy. When I get home I will always think of what I did at ARC when I feel unmotivated. I will do my chores more efficiently and without being told or do them the first time, and I will do my homework and ask for help if I need it.

Before I really didn't talk or speak up as much as I do now and explain my ideas to my friends and family. Now if I want someone to listen to me, I explain what we

are doing and which way we're going and where we are, loud and clear. Now I have to speak up and talk a lot louder than I usually do and clearly say which way we are going and what we are doing next. When I was eagle eye I was telling the group and the point which trail we're going on and what was up ahead, which peak, pass, and saddles we are going to or through, and how high up we are. I can also explain that we needed to stay at the same elevation to go across a bowl or around a peak. Speaking up has helped me be more confident and not mumble when I'm talking and speak clearly to someone. It is important to speak up because you want the person



you're talking with to understand what you're saying. It is important that everyone has an opinion on what is going to happen or what we will be doing. I will explain what I'm doing and where I'm going, and how my day was or what my day will be like.

During the winter time I had a hard time trusting myself going off big ski jumps. When we were at the ropes course before the second expedition I decided to do something I have never done before. That

was something called a cat walk. Two people climbed up on two different sides of the log which is tied two different ways to climb up to the log. Then you had to walk across the log then switch with the other person in the middle of the log which is very difficult when you do it and it looks easy when someone else does it, but it really isn't. That is how I came to trust myself and put my mind to something and then I do it. It has helped me build confidence and trust in myself, and to overcome my challenges in life. It is important to put your mind to something because you may need to use that skill in the future or in life. I will put my mind to do my homework

and the chores I do around the house or at a friend's house.

I won't be lazy as much as I was before and be more active and go outside more than I usually do. I will also put my mind to a lot of things, like speaking in front of a really big crowd, or going on something I have never done before in my life, like skydiving and going on a zip line at 60 MP. So when I get home I will listen to my parents and do chores without them telling me at all or the first time I'm told. I will also help my mom and dad with things around

the house and at my mom's rentals and my dad's job sites, like cleaning up, shoveling a path to the house, and checking if everything is there and turning the water on and off. I will share my ideas and how I'm feeling about something with my friends and family.

community interviews

On July 16th, 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.

Yin Yang of Cathy's Life



On the day of the interview I woke up shaking and jumpy. I was scared about my interview. I didn't know who the person would be or what they would think about me. But as the time came closer I felt better and better. I saw Cathy as she entered the circle and she sat down next to me. I thought she seemed nice and friendly, I wished I was paired with her. As we played the "A What" Game, I was anxious to see whom I was partnered with. As soon as Jen said my name and Cathy's I was relieved. I couldn't have hoped for a better person to get to know. As we walked to the spot I found, the grass was dancing to the music of the wind. - *Aldana Fernandez*

Inspire and Relate

It's very green and peaceful like a Zen garden; the trees were perfectly placed to allow for a great view all around Leo's



Cabin. As we sat amongst the flowers, we discussed not only Brad's life, but mine too. Brad and I relate to each other by always having variety in what we do in our lives. - *Brandon Hackett*



Expect the Unexpected

As we dispersed into pairs, I felt nervous that Beverly and I wouldn't make a connection. She had a shining smile and good posture. She had a confident attitude and a soothing voice. As soon as we began talking I knew we could make a connection because she told me she knew and loved my mom. Beverly's involvement with her community, her relationship with her family, and the lessons she has learned have made her a successful woman. - *Angela Wood*



Giving Your Love to the Community

Kim is full of passion. She is always thinking about how to help people and making them feel better. One of the reasons why she chose to live in Truckee is that she wanted to do her best to help out her community and provide health care to the people here. Becoming a nurse practitioner was Kim's dream when she graduated from high school. She put all of her mind into learning health care. When she graduated from college, she gave a call to Nevada County Health Department to apply for a job, and they hired her because of her knowledge and good experience being a nurse. Now, she has reached her dream and works for Nevada County Health Department and Planned Parenthood. - *Emily Ma*



If You Fail, Keep Trying

Kathy is a board member of Tahoe Mountain Resort Foundation and she contributes money to the ARC program. I enjoyed talking to Kathy during the interview because we had a lot in common and we were happy and laughing a lot. The advice that Kathy gave me was to work hard, don't give up, have passion, enjoy what you are doing, and if you fail keep trying. From interviewing Kathy I learned to always try new things because sometimes if you take a chance you can be successful and happy. - *Gerardo Placencia*

Strength and Confidence, Keys to Succeed



Coming from a big city to the little town of Truckee, the first year was hard for Tania. Like a

sponge she tried to absorb everything she could, to do her best, make her parents proud of her and set a good example for her siblings. At first Tania hated Truckee but later she started to see the things in a different way. Truckee is calm and pretty with blue skies, pine trees, and is close to the lake. Truckee is so tiny but everybody is close together, people are nice, everybody knows each other. Like Tania, I came to the United States without a choice. I was 13 years old when I first stepped in American territory, and everything was new for me. - *Jaira Ontiveros*

Follow Your Dream

Kim is an outdoor person. She loves hiking and being in nature ever since she was young. One of her dreams when she was growing up was to go to the Himalaya Mountains in



Nepal. Kim now likes to live in the mountains more than her home town. She said nature sounds like the music in her. From my interview with Kim, I realized

that nature is a place for people to relax. Before, I felt like being in nature was uncomfortable and I would rather be in a city than in the mountains. However, after talking with Kim, I know that I want to be in nature more than in a city.

- *Minnie Wong*

The Wise and Amazing Life I Admire

Larry worked hard on his education and career and to this day he is still a very hard worker. He is now retired but he still does lots of work to help in his community and tries to help others including his family, all at the same time. He worked as a Chief Financial Officer for Hewlett Packard in various countries. I would describe Larry as one of the most inspirational people I have met because he really made an impact in my life and has taught me that dedication and effort pays off with beautiful rewards. -



Jose Cruz

A Life-Changing Interview

George Notle was a man that became happy in life because of what he achieved. Even though there were ups and down with his father he still looked up to the man that would sometimes bring him down. It made me think about my problems with my father and what steps I should take to resolve those issues. George's ability to forgive his father made me realize that I can't let issues with my father bring me down. His story really inspired me to chase my dreams and don't let others try to slow me down. He was a successful man that



wasn't born into that life, but instead he worked hard to gain all he has.

- *Oscar Sanchez*

Taking Chances in Life

Jeff's bravery to do intense, new things keeps him wanting to complete many challenges. He dreams of climbing up K2 in Pakistan and skiing down it one time, being a ski guide and giving tours in the Alps and taking them on the spine and ridges of the alps, sailing around the world, and riding down Mr. Toads in the Tahoe area. He wants to do exciting things in the future, but he has already done some amazing things in the past.

- *Zach Kriston*



Dear Parents and Family,

We have missed you so much. You are very close to our hearts and we will always love you. We all appreciate your support in the past forty days, letting us come here and have the experience of our lives.

All of our challenges -- which were climbing Dick's Pass, riding a zip-line, climbing 90-foot wall, rafting on raging water, and being away from you -- changed us. We are freshly evolved from non-appreciative, immature kids to mighty and caring young adults. Now that you are here you will see that we have changed and grown. We are all excited to go home with you and share our experiences.

The Pa Pa Rooskis

Queridos Padres y Familia,

Hemos echado tanto de menos. Usted está muy cerca de nuestros corazones y siempre te amaré. Todos apreciamos su apoyo en los últimos cuarenta días, por dejarnos venir y tener la mejor experiencia de nuestras vidas. Todos los desafíos, como acampando el paso de Dick, colgando de la zip-line, escalando la pared de 90 pies, andando en los rápidos, y estar lejos de ustedes - nos ha cambiado. Hemos frescamente evolucionado de no apreciar a la vida, y ser inmaduros a fuertes y apreciativos. Ahora que están aquí, van a ver cuanto hemos cambiado y crecido. Estamos muy emocionados de ir a casa otra vez y compartir nuestras experiencias.

The Pa Pa Rooskis



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