



Doe River Datapoint

Milbourne Family Ministry Update

— Fall 2019 —



Going, going, gone! Another camper takes the plunge...

Adventure Quest 2019

This year was DRG's 25th camp season! Once again, we praise the Lord for many changed lives!

In numbers:

- **259** students trusted Christ as Savior
- **368** students turned over past hurts and failures to God
- **567** made other significant decisions to advance their walk with God
- 997 campers: Individuals and 11 groups from 19 states
- 9 weeks for DRG staff and about 63 college students serving as summer staff, plus 2 weeks of staff training

In words:

"I surrendered my heart to God and accepted him as my Lord. Doe River Gorge has turned my life in a whole new direction."

~Addie, age 12, Virginia

"I was lost and came back to God this week."

~Abby, age 12, Tennessee

"The spiritual experiences were more than I could have possibly imagined. I realized the immeasurable depth of God's love."

~Dylan, age 15, North Carolina

"I forgave my mom for not always being there for me and my dad for being a gambling addict."

~Riley, age 15, Michigan

"DRG is much more than a summer camp. It is a fun place where God is constantly lifted up and youth are inspired to live to know Him and bring Him glory."

~Randy, Youth Leader, Georgia



The 2019 Summer Staff "Family".



Lily Pads: New lake activity this year.



Teambuilding: Helping each other over the wall.

Family News

Winter / Spring

The **kids** continue **homeschool** with a mix of classes from King-sport Christian Academy (KCA) and Elizabethton co-op. Jon also has his first dual-enrollment class (college class/credit also meeting high-school requirements) at Milligan College.

Nancy continues as Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), working one day a week in Bristol, VA.

November: Jon needs to start thinking about college (!) and we make visits to 3 different engineering schools.

Holidays:

Thanksgiving family gatherings in PA. Christmas at home.

March: **Spring break trip to PA** to visit Mom M and ministry partners.

Jobs: Mid-spring, both **Jon** (17) and **Kate** (16) find part-time **jobs** at Tenntek, with very flexible hours to fit around their school schedules. Tenntek is a subcontractor to Snap-On Tools, assembling parts for ratchets.

Summer

Camp and Jobs: The **kids** continue their TennTek jobs part time and also assist at DRG with **staffing** of camp **activities**. Jon even fills in as a counselor one week and also dives in to help Mark with a big project (back page).

Late June: We make a quick trip to **NJ** to attend the **wedding** of Nancy's nephew and also spend a day with Mom M in PA.

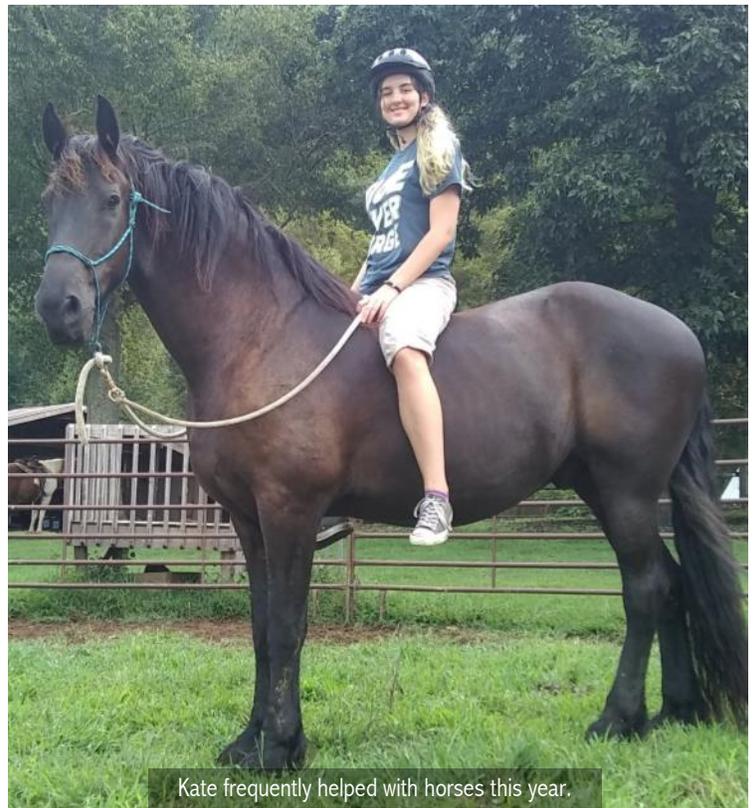
LIFE Conference: **Jon** and **Kate** spend a week in Orlando, FL with our church youth group to attend this big youth event of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, held every third year.

Vacation: Late July/early August we make a camping trip out west. More info and pictures on next page.

Fall

Nancy begins new/old **SLP** work, returning to her former contract company, with new owner, new school, and all good changes! This year she's right here in Carter County, just a 12 min. drive, and has been able to move up to 3 days per week.

Jon (12th grade) and **Kate** (11th grade) resume **homeschool**. Jon is taking all **dual enrollment** classes: 3 at Northeast State and 1 at Milligan. Kate has 2 DE classes at Milligan, math at home and the rest at Elizabethton co-op. **Jon** begins **college applications!**



Kate frequently helped with horses this year.

Nancy and Kate help with **AWANA** (kids' ministry) at church.

Jon and Kate both help **staff** DRG's *Day Quest* Saturdays that continue after the camp season into early September. They also help staff DRG's 22nd annual **Father/Son Retreat** in mid-September, with 88 attending this year.

Nancy helps lead **worship** at church from time to time. She is also on the leadership team for the **Perspectives** course being offered in our area this spring. We experienced this as a family last time and highly recommend it if you want to be ignited about God's plan for the nations! www.perspectives.org

Thanksgiving

We are looking forward to spending holiday time with family in PA.

We are ever thankful for God's ongoing blessing and provision in our lives. This year in particular we are grateful for the changes in Nancy's employment and the good schooling situation for the kids.

We are thankful for the many, many, lives impacted not just this year, but through now 25 years of DRG programs, most of which we've had the privilege to be part of. And as always we are thankful for **your** prayers and partnership that help us help keep things going at DRG.

Gratefully,

Mark & Nancy Milbourne

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Additional Partnership
Need: \$450 / month

Financial Partnership (tax deductible)

Payable to: "Doe River Gorge"
Attn: Milbourne Account
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Hampton, TN 37658

www.doerivergorge.com/milbourne/

We'd enjoy hearing from YOU! Drop us an e-mail here.

Vacation

Since our big camping trip west in 2013, we'd wanted to make another before the kids finished high school. With Jon becoming a senior and a family reunion being held in Colorado, it was this year or likely never! So in late July, we travelled to Steamboat Springs, CO for the 3 day reunion event. Then to Boise, ID to visit friends there. On the return home we were able to revisit the Tetons, Yellowstone (WY) and the Black Hills (SD).



Loveland Pass, west of Denver on US-6. Visible below is I-70 just east of Eisenhower Tunnel, the highest point on the US interstate system



Hiking in the Tetons

Tech Crunch

The new phone system that Mark organized early last year has been working well. In February, he was able to upgrade and expand the campus WiFi system. Further data network expansion is currently in progress with the addition of the former sawmill property (next article). Planning is also in process for office server replacement and workstation software updates over this coming winter.



Damage to nearby tree from the same lightning event.

Late spring is always very busy with guest groups, finishing projects, and final preparations for camp season. This year brought some additional excitement with a lightning event that fried network and internet equipment in the office as well as the paging system in one of the lodges.

Mark tries to keep some spares of the most critical items and was able to restore phone system and basic office functions in less than 30 minutes, but it took several days to restore full speed and full functionality as well as the paging. As they say here in east TN: "Lahtnin' run in on it!"

DRG was also blessed with a very full slate of guest groups this fall which, for Mark, means coordinating their AV needs and, for many, train rides.



The Christmas Train

This project has not been publicly announced. Please do not mention publicly or on social media and other online venues.

Several years ago, DRG began to explore ways to expand its impact during the non-summer season and, at the same time, generate revenue to operate and sustain the ministry. In 2013, we learned of Dry Gulch USA, a camp near Tulsa, OK, that had created an event called *The Christmas Train*. This event shared the true story of Christmas with thousands of people while, at the same time, generating significant revenue. Because DRG already operates a railroad, director Terry, with a few board members, visited Dry Gulch during the 2013 Christmas season.

The train travelled thru 40+ large murals and a few 3-D displays, synchronized to audio narrative in the train, which depicted the Christmas Story and shared the Gospel. The event was very popular, selling out as many as 60,000 tickets each season!

Upon seeing the impact of *The Christmas Train*, further research was done to see if a similar event would work at DRG and, by spring 2014, the decision was made to gradually implement it,

continued next page...

realizing it would take 5-10 years to acquire additional RR equipment and expand track and infrastructure. But by the fall of 2014 a restorable steam locomotive had been acquired as the first major step. And over the Christmas season, Terry made a return visit, this time taking Mark and two other staff members to see the event and learn more from Dry Gulch staff.

Another DRG group visited Dry Gulch in 2016 and were told that the decision had been made to sell the camp. This was not due to lack of success, but rather a change of focus by the owning church in Tulsa. Knowing of DRG's desire to implement a *Christmas Train* and wanting to see it continue intact, the church was willing to sell the entire package to DRG for a fraction of its value!

However, as 2017 unfolded, one potential buyer of the camp wanted the train as well, leaving DRG in a holding pattern until early the next year, when the eventual buyer was one that did not want it. So in the spring of 2018, with the train finally available, Mark travelled again to Dry Gulch with a DRG pre-purchase inspection team.

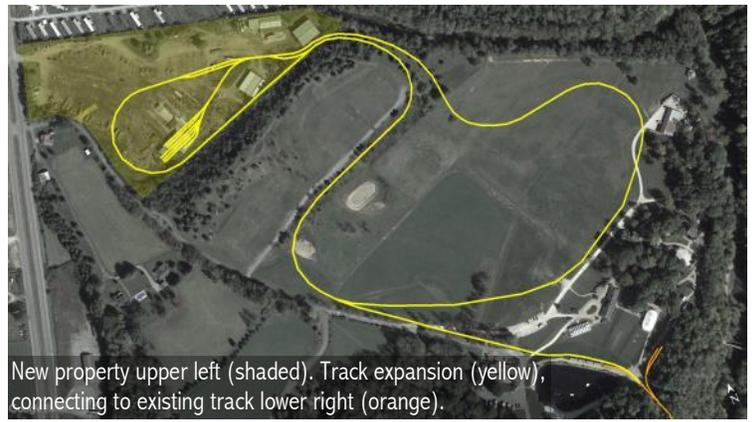
Negotiations continued and in August 2018, the DRG board, taking a very big step of faith, approved a contract to purchase the entire *Christmas Train* package! This included 2 steam locomotives, 10 cars, 1.7 miles of track, RR shop tools and supplies, the murals and lighting, as well as all related decorations, costumes and furnishings used around the camp during the event. The contract was phased over a full year to accommodate fundraising and the logistics to move everything.

A RR contractor took up all of the track, but many hands were needed to pack and ship all of the decorations, costumes and other non-RR items. So Mark was recruited as part of a group of 16 that went out for a week in February for this task, as well as preliminary planning for moving the RR equipment.

The other big factor in this project was property. Early on it was realized that the best expanded track layout would include the former sawmill property between DRG and the highway. This 15 acres had gone into a trust upon the recent death of the owner and the trustee was not open to any reasonable offer. So DRG had just about given up and was looking at ways to expand the track without it. But this spring, just as arrangements were beginning to be made to ship everything (and a place was needed to store it), things suddenly changed, and the property was offered



Mark and volunteers laying track in the former mill shed



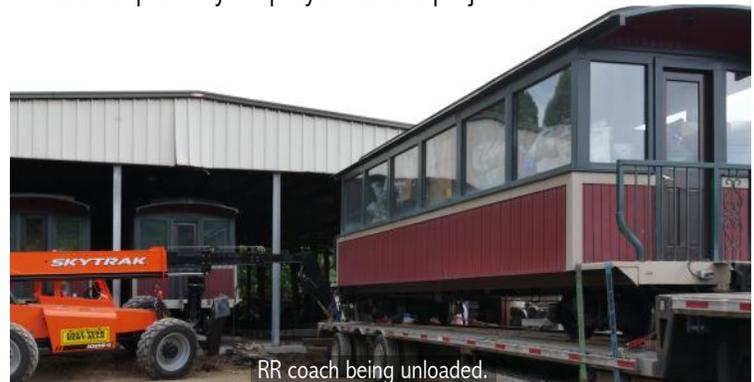
New property upper left (shaded). Track expansion (yellow), connecting to existing track lower right (orange).

with very favorable terms. It is often said around DRG that God is rarely early, but never late!

So this spring and summer was EXTRA busy for Mark and other DRG staff and volunteers (including Jon), preparing for "The Arrival." The former mill shed on the new property, while needing some repair, was fairly well-suited to store the equipment and, with eventual upgrades, become the permanent "Train Shed." It took a big hustle to clean it out and lay track, but 4 tracks were ready to receive the cars in late June and then one more for the locomotives in mid-August.

In all, there were 57 truckloads of trains, track, RR shop items, mural frames, and decorations/furnishings! So the acquisition phase is complete and DRG is now fundraising and planning for the necessary construction. "Some assembly required!"

This is by far the biggest project in DRG history. And in many ways it is bigger than the initial effort to start the DRG ministry. In addition to the Christmas Train program, the expanded track and infrastructure will enable increased public scenic rides into the gorge during the other three seasons of the year, introducing many more to the DRG ministry while earning yet additional revenue. It is very exciting, but also at times rather overwhelming! Please keep us in your prayers as this project continues.



RR coach being unloaded.



Mark guides truck to unload a locomotive