

Doe River Datapoint

Milbourne Family Ministry Update

Fall 2021

Campers on a rail ride up the gorge to go tubing on the river



Climbing at the Vertical Challenge Course

2021: Getting back to “normal”.

After the loss of overnight camp programs last year, we are VERY grateful to report an essentially “normal” camp season this year, thanks to the summer “lull” in COVID.

- **987** campers (just a few less than 2019!) attended *Adventure Quest* or leadership programs. This was individuals and 9 groups from 19 states.
- **313** students **trusted Christ as Savior**
- **335** students turned over past hurts and failures to God
- **511** made other significant decisions to advance their walk with God
- **56** served as resident summer staff, plus many local volunteers helped fill gaps. **Staffing** this year was **VERY challenging** as most recruitment venues disappeared when campuses went virtual. But while we were very short staffed, we also saw an **unprecedented** level of **unity**; everyone really pulled together to see the summer thru.

It is always difficult to capture what happens in the hearts of campers, but hopefully these quotes give a glimpse!

“God pulled me out of darkness.”

~Alex, age 13, Tennessee

“I realized ending my life would be going against God’s will for what my purpose is.”

~Sophia, age 12, Alabama

“I feel like a part of me was missing and I found it! I placed my faith in Christ ...”

~Addison, age 15, Missouri

God made me in His image and didn’t just toss me aside.”

~Tristen, age 13, Georgia

“I finally gave Christ all of me.”

~Maya, age 11, Tennessee

“During LEAD, I chose to trust Him, read my Bible, and continue on my quest to be a real, godly man.”

~Calen, age 16, Tennessee

Our *Day Quest* event, most Saturdays June thru August, opens the lake activities, climbing wall, train ride and other activities for families, church groups and company picnics. It was the only “normal” thing we could do last year and this year, **attendance was very strong**, better than not just 2019, but 2017 and 2018 as well.

The *Maze of Life* corn maze / fall festival event, introduced last year to much success, also returned this year and over 5 weeks drew in many more. Similar to last year, the booklet given out as a guide thru the maze also presented the Gospel message. And as usual, **Mark** and his RR crew were kept busy providing **train rides** for both DQ and MoL which continue to be great ways to **engage with the community**.

The annual *Father / Son Retreat* was also held in September, with 91 attending, and a first ever *Creation Retreat* in late October had 55. **Guest groups** also are **returning** this year and, for the most part, things at DRG “feel” **back to normal**.



Family News

Winter / Spring

Holidays: The **COVID** surge keeps us home and catches **Mark** the week before Christmas. Thankfully his symptoms are mild and the rest of us remain healthy.

Jon continues **full-time employment** at TennTek (a subcontractor to Snap-On Tools, making parts for ratchets). Right after Easter, he joins the Boone Lake Association's cleanup crew.

Kate works part-time at TennTek while completing homeschool (dual-enrollment and co-op), and **graduates** in May!

Nancy continues as Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) most weekdays via teletherapy mixed with, as fading COVID enables the county to re-open schools, back in-person at Central.

Travel: The COVID fade also enables us to enjoy **Easter in Florida** with Mark's brother Steve and his family. And at the end of April, Mark and Nancy squeeze in a visit to **Mom Milbourne in PA**, our first in over a year, as her care facility is finally able to allow visits again.



Summer

Jon continues his BLA **lake cleanup** job, gaining a fine tan!

Kate begins **barber school** at Crown Cutz in Johnson City. She also continues to work one day a week at TennTek.

Nancy gets a break and catches up on home projects.

The short-staffed situation at DRG often keeps Mark from getting a day off each week. But he is still able to be home most evenings, or if not, take some of the afternoon off.

A break in the camp schedule over July 4th weekend enables all of us to visit Mom M and wish her a happy 91st birthday.

Fall

Jon moves in at **UT Chattanooga** to study engineering. He seems to have gotten plugged in well and off to a good start.

Kate continues to enjoy barber school and even won a recent competition. She expects to finish in April and likes the path she is on. Some **COVID** that went around the school catches her in August, but with just minor symptoms. She and her boyfriend, **Garrett**, begin to make plans for a future together!

Nancy resumes **SLP** work at Central, part time most weekdays.

"Tie-athalon" and IT blessings

The steam locomotive is down to finishing touches and made a few test runs this year. As flagship for *The Christmas Train* project, everyone is eager to see it steam up the gorge. But the track needed more crossties to handle its weight, about 250, or 10x what routine maintenance calls for in a year. Yikes! Mark was able to borrow an inserter machine from a RR group in PA and one regular volunteer was able to recruit extra helpers to trench them in. The next phase, in the spring, is replacing many old ties.

The big IT project for Mark last winter was relocating email and some other services to the cloud and then replacing the on-site document server.

And a big blessing this year was a large batch of relatively new computers, laptops and monitors, excess from the upgrade cycle of a nearby large organization. This enabled Mark to provide upgrades to many of the DRG staff.



Mark and the "Tie-athletes"

She is also involved with the team organizing and offering the **Perspectives** course again. See www.perspectives.org

Vacation: The September **wedding** of Mark's nephew is perfectly timed (during a lull in the busy fall DRG schedule) and placed to revive last year's plan (killed by COVID) to camp in New England. This is our first "empty nester" trip; the kids fly up to Rhode Island just for the wedding weekend. Beforehand we enjoy 3 days in the **White Mountains** of New Hampshire and after, 3 more in **Acadia National Park** on the Maine coast, and a day with Mom M on the way home.

Merry CHRISTmas!

We may never be rid of COVID, but we are thankful that for us and DRG, this year was much more "normal" than last. And we rejoice that 313 more are celebrating the birth of their Savior this year. As always we are **thankful for your prayers and partnership**. We pray that your Christmas season is joyous, Christ-centered and if not "normal", then better than ever before!

Gratefully,

Mark & Nancy Milbourne

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

Additional Partnership
Need: \$375 / month

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