

Young Lives Forever Changed

at Summer Camp, Thanks to You

Braden Hinz* did not want to be at summer camp. Thirteen years old, blond, fit and athletic, Braden was a great hockey player and knew it. Surrounded by a 'culture of cool' at school, online and in the dozens of video games he played every week, Braden knew the last thing he needed was to spend a week in the woods with some church kids getting ready for Confirmation. But there didn't seem to be any getting out of it. His mother was having one of her stubborn moments.

That was six years ago at Camp Edgewood, one of three summer camps run by the Eastern Synod and partially funded by your benevolence gifts. The others are Camp Mush-a-Mush in Nova Scotia, and Lutherlyn Camp in eastern Ontario.

Pastor Bonnie Schelter-Brown sees hundreds of kids like Braden every year. Kids whose worlds are defined by their iPods, their social media profiles, or by who's in and who's out at school. Kids who might attend church regularly, but can't figure out what it has to do with them.

But Bonnie knows something else about these kids. They're searching. They're at a vulnerable age – full of bravado and quick to rebel against their parents and teachers, but full of questions about God, the world, the universe and their place in it. It is the perfect time to reach out to them with Christ's message of love and compassion, and inspire them to lead lives of love and service.

** Names and details have been changed for privacy purposes*

At the Synod we hear from many people concerned about the lack of young people in church Sunday morning. Pastor Bonnie would put your mind at ease. "I know they might not always be in church. But if they're at camp, I don't worry. That's where they grow their faith – in the woods, away from the pressures of their daily lives, in a place where it's OK to believe in God."

This summer an 18-year old Braden came back for his sixth summer at Camp Edgewood – this time as a Counsellor. "He's grown into a young man of deep faith, and it's wonderful for our younger campers to have such a solid faith mentor," says Pastor Bonnie.

But the magic works both ways. During a special candlelight service in the woods, Braden hugs Bonnie tight after sharing the peace. He looks at her and says "this is the only place in the world I can really be myself."

That's the power of summer camp – and this is the gift you give to hundreds of kids each year through your benevolence offerings. Thank you!

How to Give to the Benevolence Fund

A. Some congregations provide offering envelopes with a separate line for Benevolence. If your congregation is one of these, you can add a special gift to your regular offering and mark the amount on the Benevolence line. If you use pre-authorized remittances (known as PAR or POP), ask your congregation's financial secretary how to add to your benevolence giving.

B. Some congregations build a congregational Benevolence commitment into their annual budget. When you increase the total amount of your regular giving, whether by envelope or by PAR/POP, your congregation will be able to make a more generous benevolence gift to the wider church.

Please know **your gifts are appreciated beyond measure**, and are doing good works across the Synod and around the world. We hope you will continue to give generously to support this important work.

Thank you!

