



STUDENT PROFILE

## Zaeda

When Zaeda was twelve, her after school routine started with making sure her little sisters were fed and taken care of. Her half-sisters were two and four. Then she would mop the floor, fold the laundry, and consider the homework she had for the evening. Mom had to work late. She would fix a simple dinner, tackle the dishes and get the girls ready for bed.

Zaeda had just recently transferred to the public school system and was once more facing the daunting task of finding her place in a new school. She had moved schools frequently as a child, having to make new friends every year, never sticking around long enough to put down roots.

By the eighth grade, Zaeda mostly kept to herself, keeping others at a distance. Her anxiety was mounting from continued instability in the home, and worsened when COVID disrupted

the school year. Zaeda needed an escape and began turning heavily to substances.

Soon her dad realized what was happening and sent her to New Orleans to live with her aunt for the summer, hoping the change in scenery would do some good. When Zaeda returned to California a few months later, incidents at home forced her back and forth between her dad's and stepdad's houses until it was determined more serious intervention was necessary.

Zaeda's mom filled out an application for Christian Encounter, and Zaeda interviewed on a Monday and came that Friday. "When I got here, I was so hardened and cold. I refused to read the Bible. I struggled with authority and wanted to be defiant to anything that was asked of me."

Zaeda was placed in a dorm room with two female interns and for a time was the only student in the room. *(cont. on pg. 3)*



DIRECTOR'S VIEW

## The year in review

For several years now, I've put together a recap of the past year for this December newsletter. It's a fun way to share with you some of what has been accomplished. It isn't just for outward communication, though. I've realized this recap has been an important exercise for me. Jesus says in Matthew 5, "Every day has enough trouble of its own." Many days I feel stuck in this trouble, and it's hard to move my eyes up beyond the difficulties of each day. It's too easy to lose sight of the bigger picture of what God is doing. After 365 days of "enough trouble," it nurtures my faith to step back and observe.

God doesn't remove all trouble, but He does redeem it and work through and despite it. Writing this recap each year has pressed deeper into my heart the constancy of God's help and work on behalf of this ministry. It helps train my mind and heart to remember and have hope even

when I'm slogging through troubles.

### January

We started the year off by taking the young men into the mountains to build igloos. This annual trip is a staple of the Ranch calendar because it never fails to make an impact, both on individuals and on the group as a whole.

### February

A few weeks later, the girls went on their trip. Speaking of impact, after a long conversation under the snow-covered pines, an intern walked with a student through the process of deciding to place her faith in Jesus. Her new joy was palpable as she told each person back at the Ranch over the coming days. Then in February the



staff duplex rebuild was completed, and we gathered to dedicate the new homes with prayer and celebrate the impact on the ministry (*above*). Next we launched the long-awaited Girls' House, which is a next-step ministry for our former residents focused on discipleship and growth. *(cont. on pg. 2)*

# Year (cont. from pg. 1)

## March

A group of students from Patrick Henry College in Virginia visited to do service projects and invest in the students. This group was led by the president of the college, who found time to encourage and build up the Ranch staff and leadership too. Then, during spring break between school quarters, we set academic pursuits aside to dedicate a week to a series of sessions on these words of Jesus: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." We also began remodeling the admin office, improving efficiency, storage, and layout. We capped off the month by celebrating together as a young lady was baptized.

## April

The month began on a bittersweet note as we said goodbye to two interns who had completed the maximum two years, Faith and Aldin. Soon after, the whole Ranch family took time to have fun together and went bowling. This was followed by another baptism and more rejoicing.

## May

Guest groups started arriving to use the campground facilities in the Angels' Meadow Venue, which we offer at no charge. Another key infrastructure project was knocked off the list as the second asphalt project was completed. Once again, a couple of donors stepped up to shoulder the burden and give a profound gift to the Ranch. It is a joy both to give and to receive!

## June

At our graduation celebration four high-school grads—Levi, James, Brooke, and Katelyn—received their diplomas and gave speeches expressing gratitude for the dedication of the school staff, the support of the community, and the transforming work of the Lord. In a fitting conclusion to the weekend, after church the next day

we celebrated another baptism.

## July

Our annual Family Camp was another great time of fellowship, fun, and families ministering to each other. Campers got to observe one of our young men who had completed over a year in the program get "prayed out" during church on Sunday. A couple of weeks later the new residence (ADU) was delivered for set up. At the end of the month we hosted the 41st Agony Ride. As always, it was an intense and impactful weekend of selfless service and sacrificing together. The all-time fundraising record was broken yet again, as our community of supporters gave so generously to the ministry of the Ranch. It was a special treat to have 20 former interns ride this year!



## August

A group of Russian and Ukrainian refugees came for a retreat at the Meadow, closing out a streak of ten groups enjoying the meadow in consecutive weeks, including an evangelism camp, InterVarsity college group, family camps, kids camps (left), a wedding, and more.

## September

We sent two groups out into Tahoe National Forest to experience rock-climbing, swimming in alpine lakes, and hiking through beautiful forests. These 15 days always create an ideal growth environment. This year was a particular challenge due to three days of rain. The trip leaders were brainstorming an early exit plan when they overheard students say, "We can't leave now!" In the span of a few hours, a team of volunteers quickly formed to ferry dry gear out and move the group to a dry location—which just so happened to be owned by a family from a local church! The family was camping on premises and shared dry firewood and resources, and our teams could regroup and continue. Meanwhile, back at the Ranch, a badly-needed new phone system was installed, so now we can hear people on the other end of the line.

## October

At our Fall Serve Day a crowd of volunteers accomplished a tremendous amount, continuing to develop defensible space to protect from the threat of wildfires, and tackling many other projects as well. Final prep work is now underway for the third paving project, which includes the second entrance to the Ranch and multiple drive-ways—yet another example of generous donors building this ministry for the long-haul. (completed in November, left) (cont. on back page)





# PROTECT THE MISSION, GIVE A GIFT

## TUITION SPONSORSHIP

To give directly to a student in need, give to the Jim Parker Student Scholarship Fund. Your dollars translate into transformed lives like Zaeda's.

### ADDITIONAL WAYS TO GIVE

#### Non-cash gifts

Appreciated stocks and mutual funds, jewelry, vehicles, and real estate are all gifts that can support the ministry.

#### Give tax-free from your retirement account

If you have to take the Required Minimum Distribution, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) allows you to give from a tax-deferred retirement account (like an IRA) directly to a nonprofit ministry. The amount given via the QCD bypasses your personal checking account and so reduces your income and also your tax. Ask your financial institution to mail you a check made out to Christian Encounter, which you can then pass on to us. We will send you a contribution statement for your records.



## Zaeda (cont. from pg. 1)

"I needed these strong women to help me adjust in my first two months." Her interns were firm, yet loving.

Come February, it was time for the girls' igloo trip. After the igloo was built, bickering ensued as the girls quarreled over sleeping arrangements. The interpersonal conflict amongst the girls had been brewing long before the trip, and now, in a moment of desperation, Zaeda stepped out into the cold to say a prayer.

Zaeda recognized that these extreme circumstances had pushed her beyond herself and her need for control. She recognized that her situation that night in the igloo shifted when she cried out to the Lord. "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me." (Psalm 120:1)

As her heart began to heal, she was ready to start diving into Scripture. "It's one thing to believe who people say God is. It's another thing to read the Bible and decide for yourself. I began to see that the Lord is not this angry person when you mess up. I began to understand who Jesus is as I read the gospels."

"I knew in my heart I really wanted to

give my life to the Lord, but I could not give up that control. I wanted everything to be fixed before I went to the Lord." But she kept reading. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24) So many people had failed her. *All fall short.* She could never measure up. *All have sinned.* But Jesus. *All are justified freely by his grace.*

Zaeda gave her life to the Lord in late May.

With her surrender, Zaeda hoped for immediate fruit and evidence of this decision. She was now facing the question, "What does it mean to live my life like a



Christian and to do what Jesus commanded me to do?"

As she read through 1 John, she found the answer: "Love one another." And then she saw this in action at the Agony Ride as she received love from the riders pedaling tirelessly for 24 hours, and where she in turn served them tirelessly. "It was special to experience the Agony while growing as a new Christian."

(cont. on back page)

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## MEMORIALS

*In memory of Dennis P. Davidson,  
given by:  
Susan A. Davidson*

*In memory of Rob Panza, given by:  
Marion Parker*

*In memory of Lt. Gary Stevens, given  
by:  
Marlene Stevens*

## Year (cont. from pg. 2)

Through it all, God has been faithful. Life's troubles constantly pull our eyes down and weigh on us. But when we look at God, we see He has never stopped working. The victories listed above are encouraging and have prompted much celebration here. There's another victory that's even more central to the Ranch, though: every day a student is here is a victory, as they choose the hard and humble work of healing and growing. This is what we celebrate most of all!

*Nate Boyd, Executive Director*

## Zaeda (cont. from pg. 3)

When it was time for the wilderness trip, Zaeda had anxieties of her own about going, but recognized that some of her teammates were in greater need than she was. She clung to the words of 1 John 4:16: "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."

Her teammates testified to her selflessness in caring for others despite having her own challenges. And to this, Zaeda testified to the power of the Holy Spirit living in her.

Zaeda celebrated her one-year mark at the Ranch at the end of October and continues in Paul's words in Philip- pians 3: "I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heav- enward in Christ Jesus."

*Zoya Lee*