



JULY 2025

Christian Encounter NEWSLETTER

STUDENT PROFILE

Natalee

Natalee was born in College Station, TX. Her father was out of the picture before she was even carried to term. Her early years were tumultuous, being in and out of her mother's home before ultimately being permanently removed. Natalee was in second grade and had two younger sisters by then. She had also tragically lost her younger brother when he was only an infant.

Natalee and her sisters stayed together until she was in fourth grade, when they were separated and Natalee went to live with her grandparents. After that she only saw her sisters once a year on her sister's birthday.

One day, when out to lunch at Chick-fil-A, Natalee was introduced to some family friends. She began to spend more time with this family over the course of the next year. Sometime later, on one of these occasions, the family had prepared a scavenger hunt for Natalee. By the end, she had gathered several pieces to a puzzle. Once she had completed the puzzle, she turned it over, and on the back was an invitation to officially become a part of their family. Natalee burst into tears. She

had found her "forever family."

Natalee was formally adopted during her sixth grade year, at age 12. After she transitioned to middle school, she quickly got in with the wrong crowd. Her parents enrolled her in boarding school in an attempt to give Natalee more structure. When she was expelled from boarding school near the end of her freshman year, Natalee blamed her parents for all that was going wrong and continued in her path of defiance.

There was more disciplinary action, more rebellion, and more eroded trust. "I had a lot on my shoulders, but I just couldn't accept that the majority of the hardships and consequences I had to endure were a result of the things that I had done. I continued to place the blame on my parents."

Natalee arrived at Christian Encounter last August. When she got here, Natalee immediately sized up the student body and looked to get in with those who controlled the social hierarchy. She was determined to land on top, where she would be untouchable and could call the shots. She fed off the approval of others. However, Natalee was unable to stay within the structure provided and would often end up in the counselor's office.

It would be several months before Natalee's behavior began to shift.

In March, an opportunity was presented to her that she would have never thought to ask for. She hoped for a positive outcome and yet had zero control over it. She prayed angrily, then cautiously. *Could God really be that good?*

As the details began to solidify, Natalee began to reflect more on God's care for her as a heavenly Father.

Then words from the pulpit on a Sunday morning gave her a deeper understanding of His heart. Aaron Nunn, the speaker, shared, "Whenever I sin, I feel hopeless and unworthy, and I can stay stuck there." But then he spoke of God's forgiveness and how He no longer sees our sin once we repent. Natalee shares, "That's how I felt....Now



whenever I sin, I repent immediately. I can walk forward and not look back. I've never walked like that."

Natalee began to reckon with past actions and seek reconciliation. As she began to learn to live as one who has been forgiven, her joy began to erupt. "Now I want to be Your daughter!"

Natalee is beginning to recognize that true joy comes from walking in obedience, choosing to submit her will to His. "I want to be the best me I can be. I can do it as long as I say, 'God not my will, but yours be done.' When I leave, I won't plummet, because I set a structure for myself where I say, 'Not my will, but yours be done.'"

"This place has given me a lot of hope for what my future can look like if I seek to follow Him every single day. I never thought that I would be where I am today."

Zoya Lee

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. - Lamentations 3:25-26





Year-end celebration & graduation 2025

Before coming to the Ranch I struggled with bitterness, hurt, emotional immaturity, loneliness, and self-deprecation. I was disrespectful and irresponsible. During the Girls' Igloo trip in February, a turn began to happen. I gained a lot of self-confidence and began to let other people see past my walls that I put up to protect myself. I felt so free and for the first time in a while, I felt joyful. I found that the walls that I put up in self-protection can be just as harmful as what I am trying to keep away. - Hannah, high school graduate

What do I do in the midst of all the griefs and blessings? How can I be rejoicing? Because my God does not fail. Where I love inadequately, he loves steadfastly. Where I am harsh, he is gentle. When I am impatient, he is long-suffering. Where I am weak, he is strong, and more than that, his power is made perfect in my weakness. Not despite it, *in it!* Meaning he uses my weakness to his advantage. How generous is He to allow me - us - to join Him in His work. Redemption, healing, reconciliation, growth, and miracles, brothers and sisters! God is doing these things through you and me! And this reality overwhelms me - to the point of rejoicing.
- Wynter Moseley, one-year intern



"What is cultivated in an internship, at the Ranch, is supposed to last forever. The healing that takes place that we get to be a part of. The way we are met with forgiveness at each level here. What we have here is a tiny glimpse of what Heaven will be like...."
- Grace Bunn, two-year intern

I broke trust in every situation and I had lost control of my actions because the pain of my past became the sin of my present, and it seemed like it would become the chains of my future. I was lost, I felt anxious, scared, I was tired all the time and I felt alone.

[At the Ranch] I grew in places I thought weren't necessary and I also grew in places I never thought had been hurt. The healing I needed to happen, was with scars I didn't know I had and now I am working forward. Even when I slip up I know that the consequences of my actions are to help me grow. I am learning to accept correction and discipline with open hands. - Phoebe, high school graduate



MEMORIALS

*In memory of Karl Heinz Fincken,
given by:*
Lore Fincken

*In memory of Lucy Hartley, given
by:*
Caryn Galeckas
Suzanne Hartley
Sharon Rea

*In memory of Emil Fredrickson,
given by:*
Caryn Galeckas

Alumni Award: Steve Neal

This year's Alumni Award was given to Steve Neal ('95-'96). Steve currently resides in Colorado Springs with his wife Jamie. They have two children, Fern and Jose. Read more below.

When I first came to the Ranch at 15 years old, I was filled with anger and fear. I remember a few months after going to the Ranch, I was mowing the lawn up at Angel's Meadow and I was so angry at everybody there. Reflecting on things

later, I realized I was really angry at myself. Truthfully, I hated myself and I hated the way I was living, but I felt powerless to change, which is why I acted out in anger. One night, sitting outside of the boy's dorm, I finally broke down. It was when I reached the end of myself that I found God. I decided I wasn't any good at living life my way, and I was tired of hurting everyone I cared about, so I gave up control and surrendered myself to God. From that point on, everything changed. Things were still hard, and I had a lot of pain and brokenness to work through, but I moved forward with peace and joy instead of anger and fear.

Months later I was mowing Angel's Meadow again, but instead of grumbling under my breath, I was singing songs of praise to God.

While visiting the Ranch this year, many people asked me what my favorite memory was from my time there. A current intern also asked if there was an event or a conversation which made the difference. These were impossible questions for me to answer. Why did I finally turn to God and surrender my life to him? What was it that made the difference between those two experiences of mowing Angel's Meadow? It was no single event or conversation. It was the collective experience of life at the Ranch. It was meals, work program, schoolwork, fishing, hiking, games, music, laundry, outings, and downtime - all with people who showed me

Christ. They were the hands of Jesus as they served with love. They were the feet of Jesus as they guided and modeled wisdom. They were the mouth of Jesus as they spoke the truth of his Word. It was the culmination of countless events and conversations during my time at the Ranch which helped me see and know Jesus, so that when I broke, I knew where to turn.

I am passionate about sharing Jesus with others, and it's because of how the staff, interns and many others at the Ranch shared Jesus with me.

A couple of weeks ago, I also graduated, having just completed a Masters of Divinity. I am married to an incredible, godly woman. Together we have done foster care and have adopted two amazing kids. I shepherd, serve and preach as an elder in my church. And I've been blessed to travel to remote places to share the love of Jesus with people who have literally never heard his name before. I am passionate about sharing Jesus with others, and it's because of how the staff, interns and many others at the Ranch shared Jesus with me. I have been continually overcome with emotion while visiting the Ranch. Mainly, my heart has been filled with gratitude. I'm just so thankful.



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Christian Encounter is a non-profit, non-denominational, residential community helping 16- to 24-year-olds by providing love, spiritual guidance, high school education, counseling, and 24-hour supervision. Internships are offered to young adults 21 years and older. We are a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, and all gifts are tax deductible.

ACSI



Position opening: Lead Counselor

As our Lead Counselor, Kevin Phillips, moves toward retirement, we are looking for a LMFT or LPCC to step into this position. We would also consider a registered AMFT or APPC who would be interested in being trained up into this position. This is a key leadership role at the Ranch, with tremendous potential to lead young lives toward healing in Christ. It includes counseling the students and interns, primarily the young men. This is a full-time position and includes benefits.

Requirements include: Love for the Lord and for young people; readiness to step into complicated and challenging situations to carefully discern the best path forward; ability to oversee student admissions; desire to work in concert with the discipleship team and serve in an immersive ministry community.

Interested? Have a lead? Email nate@christianencounter.org or call 530-268-0877.