



Christian Encounter

NEWSLETTER

STUDENT PROFILE

Ally

Born in Kansas, Ally was only with her bio mom for nine months. Because the living conditions were far from ideal, Ally's aunt from California came and removed her from the squalor. (We will refer to Ally's aunt now as "mom.") Back in California, Ally had a year with her new parents before her parents divorced. This left Ally's mother in the lurch with a toddler to care and provide for.

In first grade, Ally was diagnosed with ADHD. "I had to take at least seven different meds before they found one that worked....But I was always tired and had no appetite."

"Being diagnosed with ADHD marked a lot of the rest of my life. It affected what classes I was in and the friends I had. It affected my mood - I was in a never-ending cycle of anxiety and depression. I was too tired to complete a task."

Ally was consistently placed in special education classes when they were offered. These classes were intended for a wide

range of disabilities and were not able to cater to the needs of each individual student. "We wanted to feel like we could do things," says Ally. The classes felt restrictive without the amount of support required for students like her.

Being left-handed, Ally had a hard time with writing. She would put down one-word answers on assignments, and essay submissions were a few sentences at most. She put off her schoolwork because it felt like such a monumental task. Eventually, her IEP stated that she was no longer expected to do homework. "I didn't care about school - no one was genuinely trying to help me anymore."

Without homework to complete, Ally filled her evenings playing video games. When she entered high school, she began associating with the wrong crowd. She would find herself caught up in situations wondering, "What is happening with my life? How did I get into this situation?" (*cont. on pg. 3*)



GUEST CONTRIBUTION

"Dirt"

By Joseph Snyder, former student and intern

The following is a reflection of Joseph's time here as a student. It is an allegory of his battle with depression and how his counselor helped him face this battle.



Growing up I lived on a very big farm with a lot of freedom. I had many different brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts and uncles. The farm was so big that I would see some family every day, while others I might see only once a year.

When I was little I was quite happy, nothing to complain about, because I loved all my family and they loved me.

However, there began to be times when some of my family would leave this farm and I would never see them ever again. Every year people would leave, sometimes one person, other times several people. So it began to affect me, and I began to be sad, but I didn't know what to do.

Eventually some of my closest family left, and that really affected me. I began to close myself off from the rest of my family, because I didn't want to be hurt by more people leaving.

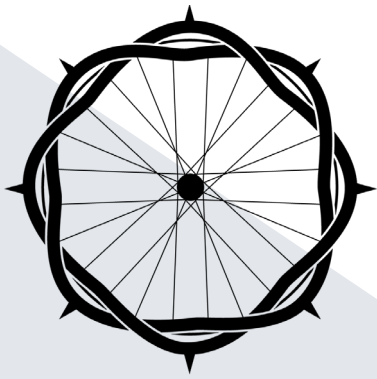
So I started wandering around this farm by myself. I would do this a lot. Out in the forest one day, I found this old well that was very deep. It was so dark that I could not see the bottom. It was intriguing. So I started coming back to this well every day.

One day I leaned over too far over the edge of the well and I fell in. I fell way down and landed in some water. When I looked up all I could see was total blackness, because not only was the well immensely deep but the trees blocked out the rest of the sun as well.

So I sat in the well. I was so far down that I could not hear anything on the surface. The silence was oppressive at first, but eventually I got used to it and grew to enjoy it.

I do not know how long I sat in this well, but it felt like years.

Every once in a while I would hear a voice from above calling down. I would look up and see a tiny face way up at the opening of the well. Sometimes the person would call down and ask me if I needed them to throw down a rope so that I could climb out. But I refused, because the well had become my new home. (*cont. on pg. 3*)



The 44th Agony Ride

Our annual Agony Ride bike-a-thon is coming up quickly! Last year's ride brought in just over \$450,000 for student scholarships thanks to your astounding generosity! We think hitting half a million might be within reach this year. Will you help us get there? Our team of staff riders is featured below. To sponsor them or another rider, visit agonyride.org. We hope you join us again this year! *July 24-25, 2026*

Scan to see
who's riding!



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Nate Boyd, Executive Director

Mileage goal: 325 miles

My eight-year-old daughter has been planning for years to ride with me as soon as she turns 16. At her age she doesn't understand the full significance of the Ranch and the Ride, but she knows the Ranch students, and she loves them. That's enough for her. And that's enough for me too. As soon as you know just one student, you understand the immense importance of this bike ride. The amount of money we raise will determine how well we can care for them.



Suzanne Hartley, School Principal

Mileage goal: 325 miles

I see students every day who step into hard things and leave their comforts behind in order to heal relationships and hurts. I have the privilege of walking alongside them, often awe-struck at what God is doing. I have seen that it is the hard times when the most growth occurs. I love the Agony as an analogy for that- people choosing to do hard things for a greater good. They endure the struggle in order to receive the fruit.

Zoya Lee, Communications Coordinator

Mileage goal: 320 miles

Mother Teresa once said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." I thought of this quote after I got to spend some time with a couple of former students from over a decade ago. They each shared new and exciting chapters in their healing journeys, and I got to share mine. The beauty of where stories interweave and how the Lord allows that is a tremendous gift. My healing isn't just for me. Nor is our students' healing just about them. The Agony is, to me, a picture of us belonging to each other.



Jensen Near, Director of Student Life

Mileage goal: 250 miles

After each Agony Ride I get off my bike swearing it will be my last time on a bike. Yet after the swelling subsides, the thought sneaks in: "The next time I ride the Agony...." I'm riding again, because every time I show up in the Sierra Valley, I know I will tangibly experience the love of Christ through riders and sagers, and that I will see students experiencing that for the first time. I wouldn't miss out on that for the world!

Austin Sather, Facilities Director

Mileage goal: 350 miles

Something that students can struggle with as they arrive here is wondering if God really cares about them. The Agony Ride highlights God's love for them. It is a tangible event of what the body of Christ looks like. Riders laying down their comforts to keep riding, sagers serving the riders and encouraging them to keep going, trackers and rovers making sure the stations have what they need. All of this so students can be at the Ranch and know just how deep the Father's love is for each of them.



Ally (cont. from pg. 1)

Ally got in a fender bender her junior year and sustained back injuries from the crash. Naps became increasingly frequent after school, and Ally would oftentimes sleep through dinner.

Before she graduated high school, Ally and her mom had dinner with friends of the Ranch in Chico who shared about Christian Encounter. Begrudgingly Ally came for a tour, but she had no intention of returning.

Ally took her first stab at independence in Georgia. It was a year before she returned home after being unable to find suitable employment. At this time, her mom once again put the Ranch back on the table. Ally complied.

Ally recalls the difficulty of being a new face in a new place. But she warmed up rather quickly to a student named JJ. His warm demeanor and his kindness were inviting and friendship was built quickly. Unfortunately, Ally only had a few months with JJ before he finished the program. She couldn't contain her tears when he departed, and only then did she realize how much he had meant to her.

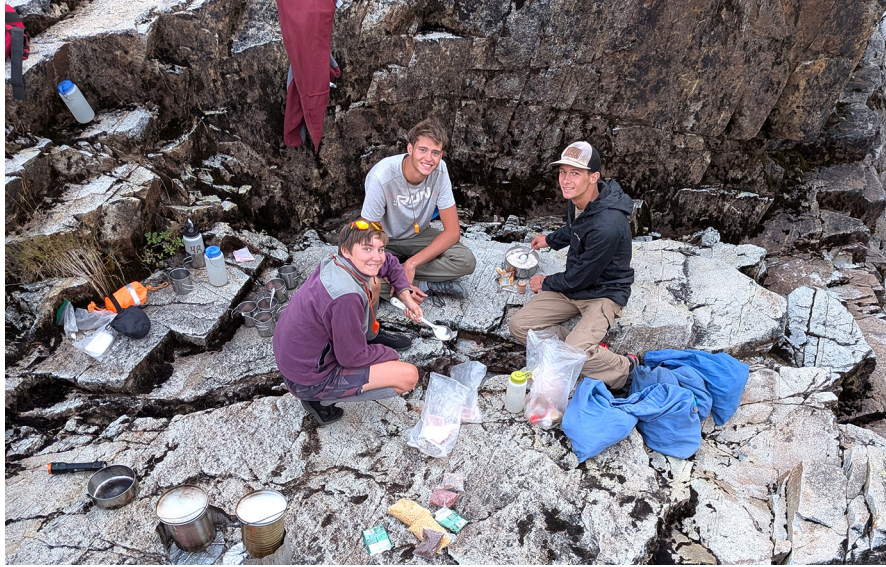
A big crack in Ally's foundation growing up was not having a father. After her

mom's husband had left when Ally was two, she would continue visiting him until she was 14. "Then I realized I was the one initiating, and he wasn't pursuing me, so I stopped visiting." At the Ranch, Ally struggled to watch the young

when I say I can't, I probably can. But my thoughts are stopping me."

As Ally tested her limits, she began to grow in confidence. Her relationships were strengthening, and her counselor had become like a father figure to her. In

June, Ally was given an award in recognition of her efforts in the program. When August rolled around, the 15-day backpacking trip proved to be her biggest challenge yet. The uneven terrain was terrifying to Ally. Knowing which rocks were safe to step on took patience and experience. As the trip went on, Ally became more sure-footed and was more comfortable asking for help. She was even able to help other teammates.



children at church on Sundays running around so carefree. They had fathers - and that was just normal to them. But Ally knew it wasn't a given for everyone.

When it was time for the Girls' Igloo Trip, Ally balked at each task given her. However, with the support and encouragement of those around her, she was able to learn new skills and help the team build the igloo. "I learned that even

Ally has grown in fortitude and become more resilient in the face of adversity during her time at the Ranch. "I've been making a lot of adult choices, which I never would have made had I not come here. I never thought the Ranch would hold such a great part in helping me grow and mature."

Zoya Lee

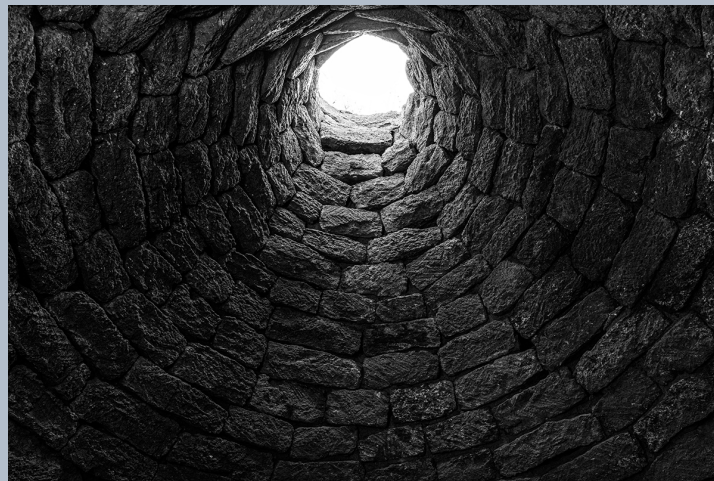
"Dirt" (cont. from pg. 1)

Then one fateful day I experienced something a little different. I looked up and saw a light and another face. A man called down and asked me if I was okay.

I said that I was. But this time the man stayed and talked more with me.

He left that day, but he came back a few days later. Eventually he started coming every day and asking me questions about my life down in the well. So I would tell him.

Over a time something began to change, but the process was not noticeable at all. You see, somehow I began to notice more details. I began to see the leaves of the trees above me. I began to see the features of the man more clearly,



as well.

There came another fateful day when the man came to visit me, as he had been doing. This day was very strange indeed. For when he came to visit me, I looked up and the man was only about an arm's length away from me. He saw that I

noticed this, so he asked me if I wanted him to pull me out. I thought about it, and I said, "Yes," because I trusted him.

So he reached down and pulled me out. It was quite easy. I stood next to him and admired my freedom for a moment. However, I was a little confused. I turned to look back down the well. It was now quite shallow.

I asked the man about the well, because I had thought that it had been very deep. This is the answer that he gave me: "Indeed. The well was deep.

However, every day that I came and visited you I threw down a handful of dirt."

Ah, now it made sense. Smart guy. For the first time in a long time I smiled.

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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.



MEMORIALS

In memory of Alison Arcadi, given by:
Leslie Anderson

In memory of Don Dittmore, given by:
Robin Jennings

In memory of Edward Fulenwider, given by:
Karl & Debra Fulenwider

In memory of Louis Morgan, given by:
Betty Morgan

In memory of Jim Parker, given by:
Lynne Ellis-Gray
William Barbour
Robin Jennings

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

HONORARIUMS

In honor of Shawna Majerus, given by:
Michael Majerus

In honor of Joy (Taylor) Marroquin, given by:
Sharon Jacobsen

In honor of Marion Parker, given by:
William Barbour

Spring Serve Day

Come join us as we work on our property and tackle various projects! Lunch is provided.

Saturday, May 16th | 9am - 1pm