



SEPTEMBER 2025

# Christian Encounter NEWSLETTER

## STUDENT PROFILE

### Adam

Adam was born into an abusive home. Both parents were addicts and alcoholics, and Adam and his brother were often left to fend for themselves. His great aunt came into the trailer once to find three-year-old Adam and his younger brother sitting on the floor eating a bowl of cereal to feed themselves because mom was passed out on the couch. In another instance, Adam had been trying to make dinner, and almost lost his thumb using a kitchen knife. His great aunt had to rush him to the E.R.

When Adam began to attend preschool, he would show up with big bruises. When questioned, he would reply that he was clumsy, merely repeating what he had heard at home. Not too long after, CPS came to remove Adam and his brother from the home.

Adam and his brother spent some time in the foster care system, never staying longer than a couple of weeks at a house, feeling cast aside, never really understanding why they couldn't live with mom and dad.

During this time, they would visit mom at rehab and dad would come see them from time to time. Adam noticed

that at the home he lived in, the parents lived together, while his own parents did not. As a child, he couldn't understand why.

Though Adam and his brother had begun to settle in this home and were later adopted, Adam's timidity and lack of physical affection drew concern. At seven, he was diagnosed with depression. Adam would be in and out of counseling for years to come.

By 15, Adam grew reckless, and his behavior escalated to the point where he was facing possible felony charges. He immersed himself in the world of BMX for a couple of years, spending several stints in the hospital as he sustained concussions and other injuries from riding. All this while, his youth pastor, former CER staff Charlie Cazin, had been sharing with him about Christian Encounter. After another stint at the hospital, when his dad took him for a drive, Adam knew it was time for a change.

Adam recalls going on the CER wilderness trip two weeks after he arrived, hiking with strangers and without amenities. He talked with one of the students, JJ, for hours about life and faith over the course of the 15 days. "I wasn't willing to reach out, but other people

were willing to help me."

When school began, Adam dreaded the classroom. His schooling had been delayed, and he had not learned the alphabet until he was ten. His dyslexia presented further challenges. Because he

couldn't read, his tests were dictated to him. Writing assignments were laborious as he carefully crafted each letter, painstakingly spell-checking each word before putting it on paper. He began meeting with intern Kristen weekly for reading lessons.

Six months in, Adam walked into class to everyone singing him "happy birthday." He hadn't told anyone when his birthday was. As his classmates sang, he looked at the faces of the people he had been doing life with, and realized, "This is my family."

As Adam's reading progressed, he gained more confidence and the opportunity to grow. When he read a paragraph aloud in class for the first time, tears welled in his teacher's eyes, and his own tears fell as he realized his classmates too were moved by his improvement and his courage to be vulnerable in this way. Intern Cassie bought Adam a dyslexia-friendly Bible, allowing him to engage with the written Word in a new, more personal way. *(cont. on pg. 3)*







## Ride Stats

### Leaderboard:

**Top man:** Kevin Williams, 407  
**Top woman:** Beverly Hann, 324

### Money raised leaderboard:

- 1: Jonathan Palmer - \$30,402
- 2: Roger Brouwer - \$26,261
- 3: Caryn Galeckas (CER staff) - \$16,572
- 4: Tom Blackburn - \$16,298
- 5: Grace Blackburn - \$16,275
- 6: Karen Wells - \$15,151
- 7: Salena Unitt (CER staff) - \$14,954
- 8: Gary Robinson - \$13,305
- 9: Gregory Thomas - \$12,025
- 10: Paul Farinha - \$9,278

## Agony Ride 2025

There are the stories you don't hear about, like the woman who has no ACL but still rode 72 miles. Like the rider whose brakes and gears were about to completely give out and a mechanic used some gorilla tape, getting her 200 miles. When "Wall-E" crashed, there were two motorcycle rovers and a medic on site within minutes, getting him in a make-shift splint before taking him off the course. (He had surgery and is recovering well.) A 77-year-old man with several stents was able to ride through the night

for the first time in years because his riding partner kept him at a pace that was sustainable. (This was his 13th ride.) A sagger flew out from the midwest this year because in the face of the hardship her family has walked through, she needed to be a part of something "really good."

There are hundreds of stories like these. This year presented extra challenges with a little rain and hail, but the storm clouds never fully settled in the valley, allowing the ride to continue. In fact, the perseverance of the riders through the elements testified even more loudly to the students as they watched riders come in wet and cold. They saw people endure hardship on their behalf - and then they got to serve them.

We had 139 riders this year, including those who rode virtually. 27,860 miles were ridden, and the amount raised in gifts and pledges is currently at \$446,194. Jonathan Palmer, at his 20th Agony Ride, is the first person to reach \$200K in lifetime money raised.

Jonathan reflects, "What we've done is turn the problem of evil into this philosophical question where we ask, 'Why do bad things hap-

pen?' instead of taking a step back and saying, 'Bad things happen, they grieve God's heart, so what are we going to do about it? ... We can't win everything, but we can fight back.'

This is why Christian Encounter exists, and why the Agony Ride continues. Thank you to all who partner with us in this endeavor, for giving of yourselves so others may find life.





## Adam (cont. from pg. 1)

As Adam continued to grapple with all he was learning, he shared with a staff member, "I don't know, everything doesn't seem stable anymore. Everything I knew to be true doesn't make sense anymore."

"I used to want to be famous. Competing in BMX gave me that opportunity. I thought I had everything, but then I realized I didn't have anything at all."

An old memory repeatedly came to mind of when he used to help his grandpa gather and sort black walnuts. After gathering, he would need to break the hull to remove it and clean off the remaining hull before seeing what was inside. The cleaning process required scrubbing or agitating the nut to remove the excess. Adam felt that this was what God was doing in his life at the Ranch, removing the hard exterior and the dross to get to what was really underneath.

"I've been pounded by love, like waves against a cliff. Eventually the waves overtook me, and my walls came down."

Adam shares, "I've been learning to let go of who I thought God was and learning about who He really is. I used to think God was angry with me because I've made mistakes. But He's used the staff, interns, and students to show me He loves me so much!"

Adam is excited to learn what it means to follow Jesus and to know Him more. Pray for him as he sets out on his second wilderness trip this month and considers his future with his 18th birthday just around the corner.

Zoya Lee

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

## MEMORIALS

*In memory of Alison Arcadi, given by:*  
David & Nancy Kennedy

*In memory of Trevor Cecil, given by:*  
Rick & Angela Schaumann

*In memory of Jerry Clayton, given by:*  
Roy & Deb Clayton

*In memory of Kathryn Joyanna Miller, given by:*  
Dan & Shelly Haagenson

## HONORARIUMS

*In honor of Shawna Majerus, given by:*  
Michael Majerus

# \$446,194

RAISED IN GIFTS & PLEDGES



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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.*



## Counseling position opening

We are looking for an LMFT or LPCC to step into our Lead Counselor 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](mailto:nate@christianencounter.org) or call 530-268-0877.*