



OCTOBER 2025

Christian Encounter NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S VIEW

Q&A with new Outreach Coordinator Jackie Turner

By Nate Boyd, Executive Director



I'm happy to introduce Jackie Turner as our new Outreach Coordinator, and some of you may recognize her. Jackie is stepping into the role formerly held

by Zach Malech, who is preparing to go to the mission field in Japan. She first set foot here as a student in 2008, returned as an intern in 2013, and has now joined our staff team.

N: Jackie, we first met in February of 2010, the day I arrived as an intern. You were a senior student and approaching the end of your time in the program. How does it feel to be on staff fifteen years later?

J: I walk around and see people who have loved me with Jesus' love for years. I get to partner with something bigger than myself, that has eternal value. And I think

Being at the Ranch feels like coming home physically and eternally.

to myself: "I wasn't even worthy of this, but who is? Your grace brought me to something not of my own, but by Your hand." Being at the Ranch feels like coming home physically and eternally.

N: Do you remember when you first heard about the Ranch?

J: Yes. There were so many generations of brokenness in my family. I needed to

learn to forgive, because I was carrying so much anger. Unforgiveness would lead to my own destruction and pain for others. I had just started to feel some connection with the people who were helping me get to the Ranch, and it felt like a tragedy to leave. I felt like I was getting abandoned again, because abandonment was all I ever knew growing up. I remember sitting at the Ranch, feeling dissociated and numb. I felt awful. But the Holy Spirit was already at work.

N: What's one hard memory you're thankful for?

J: On an Igloo Trip I accidentally knocked a staff member over into the snow. I used to not care about stuff like that. But I was heartbroken that I had knocked her over. So much softening was happening as my heart was opening. She didn't get up angry—she got up with the most sensitive and soft face. Instead of what I'd known, being literally sold, excluded, and pushed to the side, there was love. It allowed me to experience God's love that doesn't leave. I was learning extravagant

love is exceedingly and abundantly stronger than the tragedies.

N: What have you done since finishing the Ranch program in 2010?

J: The first job I got while living at the Christian Encounter Girls' House was at Hotdog Heaven. I applied because heaven was in the title. Then I started tutoring former gangbanger kids in continuation school, and I quickly came to love working with kids who were going the wrong direction.



That led me to serve in different ways through The Salvation Army, working with youth, at summer camp, with the homeless, and doing street ministry. I started doing fundraisers for Christian programs in Uganda, India, and Paki-



Jackie doing street ministry in Sacramento.

stan, sending Bibles, hotspots, and TVs that would allow remote Bible teaching and ministry. I graduated from William Jessup University with a B.A. in Pastoral Ministry, then I got my M.A. from Western Seminary in Ministry and Leadership. (cont. on pg. 3)

FIFTEEN DAYS IN THE WILDERNESS



All during wilderness, I was reminded to trust the Lord, to keep my eyes on Jesus.... This should be our daily and constant prayer—to continually ask the Lord to help us and to actually trust that He will, because He wants to. - Hannah

Courage isn't just climbing a big rock or jumping off a cliff into water.... True courage is found when there is conflict with those you love because it takes courage to resolve, to love, to forgive. - Ethan

I found I was surprisingly confident when I was made leader of the day, but then I also had to learn to ask for help from a different perspective which was hard for me to do. - Ally

I learned that I can let people in and love me and let people be willing to help me when I need it the most. - Monica

Instead of being upset at getting my pants and hiking boots soaked, I chose to thank God for that experience and asked Him to teach me something from it. He showed me what joy through hard times is.... - Charlie



There were two separate groups on this year's trip - this group's trip was marked by a couple participants' decisions to get baptized which drew a passerby into conversation who then also got baptized.

I cut both feet [on the rocks], and they were where I had major pressure points. Every single step after that was painful. [Intern] Madi encouraged me: "Every time you take a step, just say the name of Jesus." So that's what I did. Step after step, whispering, "Jesus ... Jesus ... Jesus." It reminded me that when we're in pain—physically, emotionally, spiritually—we can literally call on His name. - Aaron

CER's annual 15-day backpacking trip serves as an opportunity for our students and interns to unplug from the responsibilities and distractions of daily life and experience the great outdoors. CER has been leading wilderness backpacking trips since the 1970's.



Jackie (cont. from pg. 1)

Things changed in 2013 when I wrote “Inside the world of the abandoned child” for a worldwide adoption agency. I was able to reach over 70 million readers around the world. Other communications went viral, a lot of publicity followed, and eventually a movie was made about my life. This was a scary time, as I was publicly sharing things that had happened to me even though the people who hurt me were still out there. Eventually I decided to step back from the media for a time.

Seven years ago I was praying about what to do next. I wanted to share the Gospel and minister to youth and families. I did a Google search and discovered Acres of Hope, which is a place that breaks the cycle of homelessness for single moms and their children. I applied and was hired as the outreach coordinator. In that role I was able to share the Gospel and work with single moms and their kids, and my story opened up doors for ministry. I was able to use my communication experiences directly for the Kingdom of God.

N: What made you want to come back and join the staff team?

J: I remember when there wasn't enough money, and the staff had to take pay cuts, but they kept working anyway. One day at lunch there was alfredo pasta, and it was so good we all ate three plates. After we were full, I saw the Food Service Manager back in the kitchen scrape the burnt pasta off the bottom of the pot to feed herself last. She walked out with her plate, with a smile on her face. I made a commitment that I was going to come back and work here some day, and I was going to love the kids and love the staff like they loved me.

The Ranch is the longest family I've ever known. Here I've seen how God places the orphans into families. Here I also get to be closer to my adopted family. I'm now surrounded by the family the Lord has given me.

N: Your new role doing outreach for the Ranch has a clear purpose, but do

you feel like God has given you some particular vision or calling of your own to work toward in outreach?

J: I keep coming back to the message of Haggai: don't build for yourself, build up the house of the Lord. When there's a place that's actually living what God said: setting the captives free, loosening the chains of injustice, binding up the broken-

is a place to build up.

The Ranch has been here 55 years, and we need to build up this place so more kids can adventure, learn, heal, and experience Jesus and His love in a way that will transform them and impact the world around them. With that, perhaps the Holy Spirit will flood not only the Ranch, but the places surrounding it. I'm outreach

coordinator here because I believe God has called me to continue building His kingdom and expanding His house here.

N: Anything you want to say to the broader family of people who care about the Ranch?

J: Thank you for investing in me when I was a student. Thank you for encouraging me when I was an intern. You sowed into me back then to help me change, now keep sowing in today so I can help others change. And don't cut this out, Nate! Make sure you include this! God has brought me back full circle. I'm here to do my part—will you help me?

N: I won't cut it. Thanks for being on the team, Jackie!



Jackie addresses the congregation in August 2010 upon completing her time as a student at Christian Encounter.

hearted—a place where youth are being transformed from adverse situations to serving God and living for His glory—that



High school building expansion project complete Starting the school year in a newly renovated spacious classroom has been such a gift to our students and school staff. We look forward to using this space for years to come!

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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.



STAFF TRANSITION



Grace Bunn (left) rejoined the staff as Girls' House Leader last month as Danika Young (right) transitioned out in preparation for her wedding in late September to staff member Paxton Fitzpatrick. Grace can see the Lord's hand guiding her in her twenties—first coming as an intern, transitioning into the role of Girls' House Leader, then going home to Alabama before returning to CER at the start of the year. Grace served another stint of internship before assuming the role of Girls' House Leader this fall.

We are grateful for Danika's time on



staff and rejoice with her and Paxton in this new season!

MEMORIALS

*In memory of Leo & Mary Barsotti,
given by:
Jim & Carme Barsotti*

*In memory of George & Shirley
Wallace, given by:
Curtis & Roxanne Hartwig*