



# Christian Encounter Ranch NEWSLETTER

## STUDENT PROFILE

### Kayla

When Kayla arrived, she was an older student at 20. She was profusely grateful simply for somewhere to stay. She was agreeable and compliant, willing to do what was asked of her. Kayla had graduated high school at 19 having worked hard to catch up after missing four years of school in her pre-teen years. A year later, she had hoped to be farther along on her way to asserting her own independence. She had worked different jobs, including management at a chain restaurant.

However, outside of work, Kayla's life was vastly unpredictable. She felt the most in control when she was at work. She knew what to expect and what was expected of her. She could maintain a sense of order and cleanliness and check off the boxes. Outside of those double doors, chaos reigned.

Kayla was introduced to a guy a couple years ago by someone she trusted. As time passed, his lifestyle became her

lifestyle, and the choices she was making were unrecognizable to herself. The relationship eventually became abusive. Kayla was stuck and she didn't know where to turn.

When Kayla was at a pregnancy care center in town, the woman at the desk recognized her. She saw her need for support and presented her with options to get help. The application process went quickly, and in July 2020 Kayla set foot at Christian Encounter.

Kayla had bounced around from place to place so often in the past year that it seemed this may also only be a temporary situation. The people seemed genuinely kind and caring, but Kayla kept her guard up. Her aloof demeanor caused division between her and the other students. Then came time for everyone to don their backpacks and head into the wilderness for two weeks.

*(cont. on pg. 3)*



## DIRECTOR'S VIEW

### Not bound by numbers

Recently a friend needed to find a residential program with a different scope than Christian Encounter. In his search he found two programs whose descriptions matched what he was seeking.

The first charged \$80,000 per month. I wish this was a typo. On top of a cost so high it tests belief, the timetable for program acceptance is not affected by desperate need; it's driven by how fast money changes hands or insurers do paperwork. This means a family's crisis matters as much as they're willing to pay, and a teen is valued as much as the money they bring. This is simply standard business practice. It also devastates families.

The second program declined admittance because of fear their all-important success metric would be compromised.



*A student's admittance into the program is never based on the family's ability to pay.*

Come to find out, some diagnoses trigger an automatic rejection by many programs because it's too risky the teenager won't turn into a success story.

The contrast with Christian Encounter is stark. For decades, Ranch leaders have refused to be driven by these numbers.

While program success metrics are useful tools for PR departments and can gain entry to high-dollar insurance networks, the danger of the tail beginning to wag the dog is far too evident. The metric displaces the mission. Our mission is hearts healed by the sacrificial love of Christ, not just behavior modification that looks good in the metrics. True and lasting lifestyle changes grow out of hearts shaped by the Gospel.

As for tuition, we charge on a sliding scale. The decision to accept a student is made by the counseling department, which never even sees if families have the ability to pay. *(cont. on pg. 3)*

# The 39th Agony Ride is in the books

After an all virtual Agony Ride in 2020, we were eager to return to the Sierra Valley. We heard that summer programming was seeing low enrollment across the board as people picked up long delayed travel plans. But riders still showed up despite physical limitations and lack of training due to life circumstances. And we're on track to hit our second highest fundraising record ever. You, our Agony community, continue to inspire us in your dedication and love for the ministry. We simply can't thank you enough!



Due to road construction and ever-changing smoke conditions, riders were temporarily rerouted away from Vinton S.A.G. (pictured here).



(Above) This year, Beckwourth's S.A.G. crew was comprised almost entirely of former students and interns.



(Top left) Veteran rider Tom Deeble still returned this year while anticipating surgery scheduled less than two weeks after the ride. Tom had a cane ready at each S.A.G. Sagers assist him as he mounts the saddle for another leg.

(Left) Riders head out at sunset from Beckwourth S.A.G. as the smoke from nearby fires begins to move in.

## 39th Agony Ride stats

### The numbers:

57 in-person riders, 11 virtual riders  
11,379 miles ridden  
\$220,000+ raised in gifts and pledges

### Leaderboard:

**Men:** Jonathan Palmer, 331; Dustin Rauser, 318  
**Women:** Amy Blackburn, 240; Maddie Johnston, 240

### Money raised leaderboard :

Jonathan Palmer - \$16,823  
Tom Blackburn - \$15,819  
Salena Berger - \$9,267  
Roger Brouwer - \$9,000  
Grace Blackburn - \$8,622

**Join us for the Agony's 40th anniversary next year!**

Mark your calendars: July 29-30, 2022

## Kayla (cont. from pg. 1)

With only the essentials on their backs and the day's destination before them, Kayla saw her teammates plainly, as they did her. She recognized that she would need to lean on others if she was going to make it through the trip.

As Kayla continued on at the Ranch, she began to recognize she was in a safe place. Safe from physical harm, but also safe to process her pain. When she shared her story, she found that people didn't turn away or take advantage of her vulnerable state. Instead they listened, they cried with her, they encouraged her to keep going.

When the four-day snow camping trip came around in February, Kayla braced herself for the challenge of enduring the cold. "I didn't realize how strong I was

until I got out there. We were marching around our makeshift kitchen to stay warm at night when I thought, 'I'm not going to be stuck here forever!' I could control my thinking and choose to enjoy the trip!"

Kayla states, "When I came here, I didn't think I had any control over what



Wes and Kayla take on cross-country skiing at Royal Gorge Cross Country Ski Resort in Soda Springs.

I did or how I felt. I would always find a way to justify my actions. But I realize now, I do have control, I do have a choice. I'm practicing how to choose to take responsibility [for my actions]. It's been a key part of my healing here."

Kayla has enjoyed participating in classes at the school, and the sense of accomplishment it has given her. It has also given her a trajectory for her future. Kayla is looking forward to her second backpacking trip with Christian Encounter and for the opportunity to pursue further education in the fall.

Zoya Lee

## Numbers (cont. from pg. 1)

This is profound and intentional and the exact opposite of industry standards. It means if a student is a good fit, we bring them in, even when they can never pay a single penny. This is a core commitment of the Ranch, and it's made possible by our community of generous and faithful supporters, each of whom is declaring these young lives have value.

Ultimately, the Ranch is different because for 50 years we have chosen to function and minister as much as possible like a family. Family members are not valued because they bring in money or check off boxes indicating success. They're valued because of who they are--souls that Jesus died for, created for purpose, significance, and glory.

Nate Boyd, Executive Director

## MEMORIALS

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

In memory of Forrest Dahl, given by:  
Dan & Shelly Haagenson

In memory of Bill VanLeeuwen, given by:  
Richard & Michele VanLeeuwen

## HONORARIUMS

In honor of Mike Petrillo, given by:  
Wayne & Carolyn Bigelow

In honor of Shawna Majerus, given by:  
Michael Majerus

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*50th anniversary celebration  
Sept. 24-26, 2021  
Register online today!*

TURN OVER FOR WEEKEND SCHEDULE

# Celebrating 50 years of ministry

SEPTEMBER 24-26

Please RSVP on our website so we can plan meals accordingly. Check out the weekend schedule below. Please note the official program for the event is Saturday evening. We can't wait to celebrate together!



## Friday:

- 4:00 Check in
- 6:00 Dinner
- 7:00 Get settled, mingle
- 8:00 Campfire open
- 8:30-9:30 Campfire: music & intros

## Saturday:

- 8:00-9:00 Continental breakfast
- 10-12 Activities open\*
- 12:30 Lunch in the Meadow
- 2:30 Ultimate frisbee game: current Ranch family vs. formers
- 5:00 BBQ dinner catered by Broken Fork BBQ Co.
- 6:00 "Celebrating 50 years" program
- 8:30-9:30 Campfire: open mic stories & testimonies

## Sunday:

- 8:00-9:00 Continental breakfast
- 10:00 Church in the Meadow
- 12:30 Lunch in the Meadow
- 2:30 Activities open\*
- 5:30 Dinner
- 7:00 "Music through the decades"
- 7:30 "Untalent Night"
- 8:30-9:30 Campfire: weekend wrapup & sharing

*\*Activities include: property tours, zip line, archery, boating, NID tubing, visit the trough store, view visual history timeline*

*RSVP online at [christianencounter.org](http://christianencounter.org)  
or call us at 530-268-0877*