



SEPTEMBER 2022

Christian Encounter Ranch NEWSLETTER

STUDENT PROFILE

James

The corn stalks towered over James. At age five the vast fields of corn on their property in the small New York town were his playground. He built forts with his siblings and they pretended they were pioneers in a new land.

James shared much with his siblings, but his skin color set him apart. James's parents had adopted him from an orphanage in Liberia when he was nine months old.

James met his birth mom for the first time when he was eight. His parents and two older siblings flew together with him to his home country to learn more about his heritage. It was then he also met his two older sisters. James and his adopted family joined his biological family in visiting the village where James was born as well as the surrounding areas.

The second visit to Africa was when James was 14. By this time, James's adoptive family had grown to include three more adopted siblings. The family of eight made the overseas trek together. Up until this time, James had been under the impression that his biological father had passed away years ago. In conversation with his biological mother, he learned that his biological father was still living and that arrangements could be made for them to meet.

When his biological father arrived at the compound where they were staying, he extended his hand in greeting to his son, with three other kids in tow. It was their only point of contact in his ten-day visit.

Back in New York, life resumed as usual. James's family had moved to a larger property with more acreage when the family had expanded. James helped tend to the animals and continued in his hobbies of baking and playing piano. His family's house church began to get together with another house church in the area on a monthly basis and his community continued to grow.

In his high school years, James began to look for new ways of self-expression, and he started to test the boundaries his parents had set in place. Conflict arose between James and his parents. As their communication began to break down, James began making choices that ultimately broke their bond of trust.

James's parents started looking for out-of-home placement for their son and presented Christian Encounter to James one evening. In the face of flying to the other side of the country, James promised he would give counseling another try. His



parents were unwavering in their decision. In a matter of days James and his father were on a plane to California.
(cont. on back page)



THE 40th AGONY RIDE

101 riders in person | 12 virtual riders | 19,274 miles ridden



\$354,755 raised
in gifts & pledges



A nod to fundraising

In 2016, friends of the ministry Michael and Stephanie Lewis developed the Agony Ride website you see today, which changed the fundraising landscape by creating an online presence and allowing donors to interact and engage with riders during the ride itself.

In 2018, we surpassed the \$200K fundraising milestone for the first time. Then in 2020, despite the Agony Ride go-

ing entirely virtual due to the pandemic, we broke \$250K in fundraising. This year, this record was shattered by over \$100K, with gifts and pledges totaling \$354K+ at time of publication. A new individual fundraising record was also set at \$21,563 by long-time rider Jonathan Palmer.

We are in awe of God's provision for the ministry and filled with gratitude for each rider, sagger, and sponsor that make the Agony Ride what it is today, 40 years in the running.

All glory be to God!

A commemorative start

To kick off the 40th anniversary ride, three of the original six Agony riders from 1982 led the pack: John Yates (on the recumbent), Bob Walsh (on the tandem with his wife Julie), and Mike Boon (far left), the only rider to have ridden in all 40 Agony Rides.

Following them were two other riders who rode in the early years on the original route from Death Valley to Mt. Whitney: Caryn Galeckas, who has been at every single ride, and long-time staff member Marion Parker on a recumbent (pictured left with long-time rider Bill McQuerry), who came to the Ranch in 1976. Next was long-time Executive Director Mike Petrillo, who came to the Ranch in 1978, accompanied by current Executive Director Nate Boyd, 2nd highest fundraiser (pictured right with rider Tom Blackburn, 3rd highest fundraiser).

Ride Stats

Leaderboard:
Top man: Ted Anderson, 342
Top woman: Zoya Lee, 312

Money raised leaderboard:
1: Jonathan Palmer - \$21,563.32
2: Nate Boyd (CER staff) - \$21,451.42
3: Tom Blackburn - \$19,558.65
4: Zoya Lee (CER staff) - \$13,129.09
5: Chris Palmer - \$12,001.90
6: Caryn Galeckas (CER staff) - \$11,474.74
7: Grace Blackburn - \$11,210.07
8: Roger Brouwer - \$10,833.64
9: Gary Robinson - \$10,627.00
10: Aaron Pellerino (CER staff) - \$8,794.93



THANK YOU TO OUR AGONY CORPORATE SPONSORS!











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Business office position opening!
See backpage for details

Christian Encounter Ranch is a non-profit, non-denominational, residential community helping 15- 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.



James *(cont. from pg. 1)*

It took some time for James to adjust to the new rules and to a new community. He had demonstrated great courage in flying across the country, but settling in and building new relationships with complete strangers didn't come easily for him.

Not even a month after his arrival, James experienced the Agony Ride - the Ranch's 24-hour bike-a-thon. He witnessed another community of strangers show up and willingly sacrifice for him, whom they had never met. That was significant to him.

At first the structure of the Ranch felt restricting, but over time, James discovered that he felt more free. There was a freedom to be fully himself, to share what

was on his mind. He experienced this time and time again, and saw that was others' experience as well.

"I think I've made a lot of growth. The biggest thing has been being able to be vulnerable with people and being able to use my voice."

James enjoyed the adventure of the four-day snow camping trip earlier this year, learning the value of teamwork and making new memories together. He has also had the opportunity to watch the Sacramento Kings play live, as well as getting to take a trip out to the Pacific Ocean last fall. And to kick off his senior year of high school this month, James and his peers will be participating in a 15-day backpacking trip in the Tahoe National Forest.

Though we may not know it at the time, sometimes God gives us the courage to step into the next thing even though we may be kicking and screaming on the inside. And when we are ready, he will give us the faith to step into the next thing, too. Pray that God will do this for James.

Zoya Lee

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Hebrews 11:6

Business office manager position opening

Do you love Jesus, care about at-risk youth, and value financial stewardship? We are looking for a high-integrity, high-skills individual to run our business office and manage the resources God had given us. Come use your accounting and business management skills to expand the Kingdom of God through a unique ministry!

If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact Nate Boyd at 530-268-0877 or nate@christianencounter.org.