

10-2009

A Daily Reminder

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Recommended Citation

Doran, Deanna, "A Daily Reminder" (2009). *Lake Union Herald*. 496.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/496>

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A Daily Reminder

BY DEANNA DORAN

As a recent Bachelor of Social Work graduate from Andrews University, I ventured out looking for “that social work job.” As a field assistant in the department, I interacted with different agencies in southwestern Michigan. When Judith Stanton called, looking for a social worker for Camp Rosenthal, I immediately reconsidered my options for the summer.

Camp Rosenthal is operated by Chicago Youth Centers and geared toward helping the under-served youth of inner-city Chicago. The children and most of the staff are transported from Chicago to Dowagiac, Michigan, where the camp is located. About 600 kids and families attend each year, so I knew it would be a packed summer. I anticipated it would also be full of lessons.

When I interviewed for the job in February 2009, the summer seemed so far away. When I actually sat through staff training week in June, I realized this summer was going to be different from any I had experienced in the past. There I was—a fresh college graduate from central Illinois—and I was supposed to be able to listen and advocate for the staff and the campers? The enormous responsibility started to weigh heavily on me, and I began to ask myself, “How will I make it through the summer?”

But I did make it through and I can say, without a doubt, that today I am a different person. I love Camp Rosenthal. That’s all there is to it. I love the kids, the staff and occasionally the food. I wouldn’t trade this experience for the most sought-after internship or the highest-paying summer job. As young kids sat across from me pouring out their dreams and goals for their future while playing with Play-Doh and markers, I realized this wasn’t just any camp.



A butterfly craft made by a child at Camp Rosenthal serves as a daily reminder to Deanna Doran (second from left) that her God will meet all her needs and more.

This camp changes lives. I saw emotionally scarred children reinvent their dreams and chart a new course for their lives.

Though portraying Christ wasn’t the main agenda at Camp Rosenthal, it was a frequent topic of conversation. Fellow staff members knew I was a Seventh-day Adventist because I didn’t work on Saturday. A humbling sense of responsibility washed over me each time a fellow staff member searched

me out looking for answers about God and religion.

This summer wasn’t just a job; it was God’s personalized plan for me. I wouldn’t trade the experience for anything, even though at first my comfort zone was undoubtedly compromised. I cried for those kids, laughed with those kids and loved those kids. Summer 2009 was a milestone for many reasons. God taught me what being a God-fearing fisherman is all about.

As I glance at my car’s rearview mirror, I see a butterfly craft made by a child who attended Camp Rosenthal. It serves as a daily reminder that my God will meet all my needs and more. My degree from Andrews University didn’t just help me find a job; it offered me an experience of a lifetime.

Deanna Doran is pursuing a Masters of Social Work at Andrews University. Her hometown is Decatur, Illinois.