

What a summer it was!

by Carl Foster, Board Vice President

Can't thank you enough!

First, a huge thank you to Weatherford International and the Washington Office of the International Law Firm of Fulbright and Jaworski. Without their generous corporate support there would have been no LBH summer camp this year or last. *Thanks ever so much!*

We have no doubt that this is such a great public service that it should be publicly funded. But until that time comes along, we are forever grateful to both these sponsors and many others throughout the area. We continue to believe that our services are keeping kids off the street, off drugs, reading books all summer, and benefiting from adult supervision throughout the summer months. This beats the less constructive alternative of too much unsupervised playtime. Our camp begins the day after school closes and keeps right on going until the day before school begins in the fall.



A world apart

If I were asked to describe this year's summer camp and how it differed from previous years, I would need just two words: "Moms working." Moms working is a good thing, no doubt about it. But here is what it means to us and their children. To begin with, our moms don't have jobs with benefits; some don't even have

regular hours. They only report to work on the days when they get a call in the morning. Transportation to and from work, the location of that day's employment, and when the work day ends are constant concerns for our moms.

For us it means extended hours of operation for our camp. We did our best to provide coverage

while mom was out working.

In previous summers most of our kids had a mom waiting for them when we brought them back home in the late afternoon or early evening. This year we often had moms calling us saying their bus was

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This year's summer camp was made possible by the generous support of:

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**We couldn't have done it
without them!**

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running late and could we hold onto the kids an additional half hour or more? The most common call we had from moms this summer was about extending our hours of service. Could we pick up early or drop their kids off late, instead of our regular pick-up/drop-off times to help cover the mom’s work hours? We never said no to any such request all summer.



We take great care regarding where and to whom our kids are released at the end of the day. We insist we know who will be watching our campers once their day with us is done. When we bring a child home we insist on turning that child over to another adult. If not Mom or Dad, it has to be an adult pre-approved by Mom or Dad.

This summer we also had a tremendous number of requests for enrollment later in the summer, when other programs were finishing after five or six weeks into the school break. LBH summer camp runs from the day school ends in the spring until the day it begins again in the fall. Not many camps provide that kind of inclusive coverage.

Making good times

Our kids had a grand summer, even though it was blistering hot from start to

finish. Our kids swam at North Beach in Maryland and at various private pools.

Yes, we went to movies and museums, but this summer we read more than ever. We stayed in and read, read, and read some more. All of our kids finished their summer reading ahead of schedule — thank you, staff!

For the first time we took all of our middle school kids on a multi-day overnight trip. The resort we visited had its own movie theater, gym, driving range, 4-wheelers in the wilderness, ping-pong and pool tables, a huge outlet mall nearby with lots of discount shopping, and two loving grandmas who kept cooking for our kids all day long. But the biggest hits of this vacation were the pool and a parrot named Amanda, who repeated



everything the kids said — including imitating how they laughed and screamed while they were in the pool.

Ah, that pool that never closed!

The kids spent soooo much in the pool that they literally stayed in the water until their 11 p.m. bed time!

Yes, it was a good summer for our LBH campers!

My take

by Xernalia Kayodé, Youth Services Director

A few months ago I found myself reading a fitness article that stressed the importance of consistency, progression, and change. It was in that article that I fell in love with the quote said by author Jim Rohn, “*Your life does not get better with chance, it gets better by change.*” When I think about my very first summer camp experience with the [Little Blue House](#), I definitely see the change Rohn was referring to.

I absolutely love being around our campers. Having put in my fourth summer camp, I have seen a great deal of change in many of them. Quite a few of our campers come from rough, unstable, and often chaotic households; so anyone can see how difficult it can be for a child to want to listen to and understand, let alone follow, directions. Over the years, they have been taught how to behave correctly, be polite, and to speak well — all things that they need to know how to do in the regular classroom.

I have seen so many of our students, walk through the doors of our organization either angry, shy, or struggling academically, who have been promised by adults to



consistently work with them, but ultimately who give up on them. But not us! Not at the [Little Blue House](#)!



Thanks to our properly trained staff and consistency within the organization, I am amazed with everyone’s progress. Our summer camp is not just about the glitz and glamor of weekly trips to the beach, or large buttered popcorn at the movies.

That student who was angry and emotional all the time in the beginning was ultimately seen by myself and staff as making great strides by calming himself down immediately following disagreements with peers. That shy camper is now quite the social butterfly amongst his friends. And for those campers who struggled in the classroom, we thought it would be best to place them in summer school before they could attend our summer camp.

When I looked at the smiling faces of our campers each morning, I looked into the eyes of those who were once self-doubting and told by others that they would not have a great chance in life. But just as [Jim Rohn](#) once said, we are not focusing on their lives and improving them by chance; the [Little Blue House](#) is focusing on improving their lives by changing them.

How I spent my summer vacation

As we've done in the past, we asked our summer associates to write about their experiences, and here is some of what they said.

Julia

I was one of the lucky staff members to be part of the first summer camp at LBH. Four years later I had the opportunity to come back to discover that what sometimes felt like a chaotic house was now a structured, peaceful place. The children in the earlier years had to learn what “routine” meant, how to be still, or why it is important to say “please.”

Today, those same kids knew that when 11 a.m. came, it was time to read, and as the days passed, they even asked for it! Others exchanged their “Yeah” for “Yes, Ms. Julia.” The older ones helped us with the little ones, and they didn’t ask for anything in return.

The moment the kids entered

through the door they lined up giggling, waiting their turn. They knew Carl will be greeting them with a hug and a personal good morning cheer.

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This blue house on Irving Street offered them the daily life activities that they would otherwise not get. The Little Blue House was home for these kids, and let me confess it felt like home to me too.

Julia has a Masters in Family Counseling from the University of Maryland

Sydney

Joining the Little Blue House was been an eye opening experience for me as a new staff member, but this isn't my first time working with kids. I was a camp counselor at the YMCA for two years and I have been baby-sitting on and off since I was thirteen years old. I thought I had the whole "kid thing" all figured out, that is, until I met Tyler.

At the beginning of the summer, Tyler resented me for reasons I could not begin to understand. Simple requests such as, "Please get in line," elicited anger from him, and it felt as though it was directed just towards me, not other staff members. It wasn't *what* I was asking, but the fact that it was me asking it. Even more confusing was how, even though he was my hardest kid to work with, there was something about it him that intrigued me and made me want to try to understand him.

Tyler can be very physically clingy, in an endearing way, and has the ability to win anyone over with a funny line and a big goofy smile. Even more amazing is his ability to read people. He knows exactly what buttons to push for different people and how to push to the limit. I saw him use this skill as part of an act of kindness.

One day, LBH took the younger kids on a trip to Costco to pick up some supplies and treat them to pizza. As we were wandering the aisles, I saw Tyler move to

the back of the group to put his arm around a girl who was new to LBH and very shy.



We still sometimes struggled with understanding each other, but my experience at the LBH has taught me that building a relationship with these kids doesn't come easy.

I believe he could tell she really needed a friend.

That moment convinced me that there is more to Tyler that meets the eye. It inspired me to work harder to crack the tough demeanor and discover what's underneath. Soon after, Tyler and I had a "special day" where just he and I hung out, without the other kids, trying to get to know each other in a different setting. We rode the Metro and had lunch together, wherever he wanted. Tyler was a completely different kid. He even opened up to me about something — which he had never done before — that was bothering him at home.

We still sometimes struggled with understanding each other, but my experience at the LBH has taught me that building a relationship with these kids doesn't come easy. They make you earn it. That's ok with me.

Sydney is a Junior at American University

Stephanie

Working at the [Little Blue House](#) was the best way I could have ever spent my summer.

At first I was unbelievably nervous. I knew working with the [middle schoolers](#) would be challenging because it is such an awkward time in a child's life — stuck between being a little kid and a big kid. Plus as a new staff member with children who have been at the [Little Blue House](#) for many years, I knew the kids would challenge me every step of the way.

What I didn't realize at the beginning of the summer was how much I would grow to care about each of [my kids](#) and how much they would teach me about myself and the world around me.

There was one child who was a particular challenge. [Adam](#) tested my authority on more than one occasion. He routinely went against my directions and talked back. He would give me a hard time during the day, but while driving him home he was a completely differ-



ent child. He lives farther away from [LBH](#) than most of the other kids, so he was always dropped off last.

Once it was just [Adam](#) and myself in the car, he would ask me all sorts of questions and was incredibly sweet, nice, and respectful. Although he lives so far out of the way and driving him home extended an already long workday by another 15 minutes, I grew to love this part of the day. Sometimes, we would just joke around and not talk about anything important. Other times, I didn't talk at all and he would tell me about trips he has gone on with his [dad](#) or ask me questions about my life.

Because I knew this sweet side of him, it became hard for me to accept his sometimes bad attitude while doing activities at [LBH](#). It proved a huge struggle for me, especially frustrating when he would act out because I knew [Adam](#) was such a good kid.

One particular moment with

him truly made me see him in a different light. At the end of the day, the **middle schoolers** all sat down with their **group leaders** to “**scale**” each other. This was when each child discussed their own as well as someone else’s behavior. On this particular day, as **Adam** was rating himself, he said he deserved a two out of ten for his behavior. I was surprised because, although he had a time-out, he didn’t have a terrible day. He explained to me that he was a “**bad kid**.”

I did not believe that a child who was only going into the seventh grade could be a bad person, or would even think that he was a bad person. I told him this and he replied saying that he has been on a bad path his whole life and that he would always be bad.

I had no idea what to say. I knew a really great kid who sometimes acted out and had some trouble listening to directions, but not a kid that I felt was on a bad path in life.

From that conversation on, I realized that giving **Adam** constant

time-outs was not the right approach to dealing with his issues. He *expected* to be put in time-out. Instead I tried to adapt to what he needed most. I began pulling him away from the group more so I could really talk to him and see how he was feeling.

At the **Little Blue House** we have a strategy called **D.A.T., distance angle tone**. This is when we sit with the child at eye level, hold their hands, and speak to them in a soft or normal tone. I came to understand putting him in time-out somehow proved to **Adam** that he was a bad kid, and I am certain he is not.

Working with children is challenging because each child needs something different from you. At **LBH** I learned different ways to reach my kids and try to give them what they need to be successful. **Adam** is just one of the many kids I met this summer who has really had an impact on me and how I approach people.

Stephanie is a Junior at American University

Burke

I was part of the original summer staff for the LBH's first summer camp four years ago. In returning this year, I thought the LBH was a familiar place for me and I knew what to expect. In the first summer, we switched groups and kids a lot. I had never done a full summer with a specific group of kids and I remember being very nervous, not sure how to do my job well.

The kids that I met my first summer had a profound impact on me. They were new to the LBH. So was I. Everything that I worried about was completely wiped away by how open and curious they were. The kids seemed to be afraid of losing me. They kept asking when they would see me again.



I got to see them open up as we spent more time together. They asked me questions about ALL sorts of things. By the end

of the summer I was eager to see how they would do in the coming school year and could not wait to see them again in the winter.

This year in summer camp I got to work with a great group of kids, many of who have been in the pro-

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gram before. It was a terrific experience watching everyone learn and grow as they get older; in that respect I have learned a lot doing this job.

From the time that I started working here I have learned more about how to teach and educate than I could've possibly imagined. The experiences of spending time with the kids, going out on various day trips and educational experiences, have provided a tremendous wealth of knowledge. Every year I've been part of the LBH summer camp has been a new and enlightening experience, and I wouldn't change my three summers here for anything else I can think of.

Burke is a Senior at Florida International University

Lexi

I have to admit that I entered work at the Little Blue House apprehensively.

Training had left me with the impression that some of the kids might be difficult and challenging, and work might be miserable.

In my very first hour with the kids, I found I was wrong. Completely wrong.

I had more than a dozen middle school kids, and yes, manning the behavior of twelve 12 year olds is a scary thought. Our kids have very limited information about the world outside of their immediate surroundings and some come from very challenging neighborhoods. Some of my kids have endured hardships. Some of my kids could be harsh or rude when they were frightened or confused. But they are still just kids.

These kids did not make my job more difficult. They made it extremely rewarding. I had no idea that a job could even be this fulfilling. It was the first job I've ever had that I didn't mind taking home when I left. I had the kids on my mind all of the time. I found myself constantly telling stories

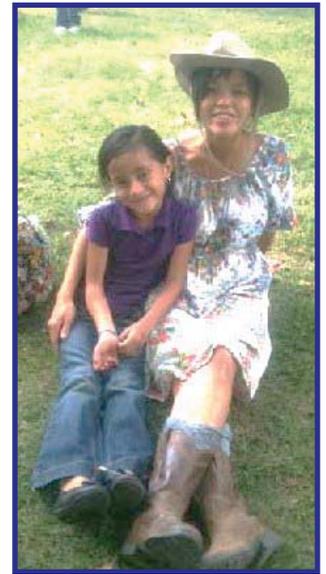
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about them — to my friends and family, neighbors, strangers I meet at the grocery store.

Prior to the LBH, I worked as a journalist editing and recording sound for national news organizations. I've met one-on-one with Bill Gates, Henry Kissinger, legislators, presidential appointees, and an Egyptian prime minister. I never, ever thought I would be working with children. But I am so grateful that life took me here. The kids taught me more in one summer, than in seven years inside of a radio booth. Looking back, I feel like I was so busy trying to make a living that I forgot how to live.

There are very, very few times when a know-it-all like me will say this: but I have never been happier to be wrong.

Lexi is a 2010 Graduate of Florida State University



Lunchtime meetings, adventures and . . .



Dr. Morris Jackson
at American
University



Board member Billy Jacobson



C-SPAN founder Brian Lamb



Longtime LBH friend Richard Smith



One day the ball park, another the County Fair,
and one more for a trip to the chocolate factory



... outdoor fun!



A sunny day exploring all Annapolis has to offer



Weekly trips to North Beach and to the pool helped us stay cool all summer long

