

Hartford City Mission Summer Newsletter, 2018



NEW L.I.T. PROGRAM A SUCCESS AT CAMP NOAH!

Former Campers empowered to shine, inspiring year-round program

Over the years, Camp Noah has used neighborhood high schoolers in the role of Street Leaders, so when the current HCM Leadership staff proposed adding a Leader-in-Training (L.I.T.) program as part of this summer's camp, it seemed like the natural step towards closing the circle as a holistic program, really equipped to serve the needs and to maximize the growth of the C.O.G.s (Children of God) aging out of camp.

Similar to past Street Leaders (many who came out of HCM's Young Life program), seven of the inaugural group of nine L.I.T.s, have attended or volunteered in at least one or more HCM's programs. Even the two that were new to HCM, were connected through past or current participants.

Camp Noah Co-Director and L.I.T. supervisor, Carl Felton, sees the L.I.T. program as something that not only benefits the L.I.T.s, but the staff and camp as a whole. "The L.I.T program had a huge impact on camp. Camp Leadership, Station Leaders and Team Leaders can't do it all. Having L.I.T's gave everyone else on staff the space and opportunity to focus on the bigger tasks, while empowering C.O.G's through training that allowed them to gain necessary skills little by little with the hope that one day some of them, will lead camp in the near future."

Former Camp Noah Director, Cheryl Maida, back this year as our Craft Station Leader, reflected on the growth she has seen from the L.I.T.s she worked with over the years.

"Seeing 8th graders who I have watched grow up in Noah After School and Camp Noah, now being leaders to the younger children, was the highlight of my work at camp this summer,," shared Cheryl. "The L.I.T. program gives the teens the opportunity to interview for and work their first job, while being surrounded by people who love and support them."



Team Leader Alex and L.I.T. Nichelle
with Team Sludge



L.I.T. Therese with C.O.G. Chad

From Day 1, she noticed the L.I.T.'s putting in the hard work that would continue all summer. "I was so impressed with the ways I saw them grow during camp. From the way they memorized their lines for Bible skits, to the way they interacted with campers and were always willing to help when we needed it, they are well on their way to building great resumes and having job experience that most teens their age do not have."

April Jefferson, one of our Camp Assistant Directors, worked closely with Nichelle and Therese (Nehemiah After School graduates). She was impressed with how hardworking, innovative and consistent they were each day. "In the beginning, they asked MANY questions and now I realize that was them processing, as part of their understanding and learning." Pretty quickly, both L.I.T.s owned their role at the daily registration table, making helpful suggestions on how to make registration flow smoother, based on their experiences. April was encouraged by their growth and confidence in the process, sharing, "I think that's what being a "L.I.T." was all about."

Reflecting back on the summer, Cheryl enjoyed seeing Marcus, who she had for many years as a camper, working with one of the youngest teams. "He really stepped up to the

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Do you own a business?

It is not too late to sign up as an event sponsor!

A full list of sponsorship and advertising opportunities is available for the event. For information on how to become a sponsor, purchase an advertisement, reserve a seat, or get other information please contact our Executive Director, Dave Ambrose, at

860-246-0132 or davea@hartfordcitymission.org.

GLIMPSE OF ETERNITY

A story from Camp Noah's Emcee and Game Station Leader—Sam Hayashida

Every summer HCM puts on a six-week Bible camp for kids in the North End of Hartford called "Camp Noah." I was the emcee and game station leader this year. My emcee role was to beatbox, judge dance battles, run around shouting, and keep around 70 campers engaged during the hour of large group time we had every day.

One of the campers this year — "Sam" — had Down Syndrome. He was silly, slower than the rest of the students, and kind. I sat down next to Sam during snack one day. He was holding a tiny bag of chips. He turned, looked at me, smiled, and offered me some of his chips. I took some and thanked him. Then he kept offering me more and more — smiling each time — until the entire bag was gone.

Because of his Down Syndrome, Sam wasn't always able to keep up with the rest of camp. He was often the last one to arrive at a new station. He needed lots of help with his crafts. When everyone else was playing a group game, he would usually sit off to the side. But there was one part of camp that he was always fully invested in:

Whenever the worship music started playing, Sam would start passionately dancing. It didn't matter whether he knew the song or not. And he didn't care how he looked. He would just dance, and dance, and dance. Sometimes other campers would look at him and snicker. But he didn't seem to mind.

At the end of the summer all the campers' families and friends were invited to come watch them show off what they had learned over the summer. It was a true, messy, beautiful celebration — full of laughter, ice cream, games, competitions, and various exhibitions by the students.

The evening was about to end. For the grand finale, the kids all lined up to perform a dance they had learned over the summer. The music came on. The kids started dancing. Parents were cheering, and clapping. Kids were smiling, proud of what they'd learned. Then, at the end of the dance, all the kids suddenly spread out, creating a space in the middle of the room. The final section of the song began playing. And then the instructor gave the cue: *"alright Sam, freestyle!" ... and Sam started dancing.*

The entire room erupted in applause. And as I heard the crowd cheering Sam on, and saw him beaming with pride, and continuing to passionately dance and dance... I caught one of those rare glimpses of eternity. For a moment, time slowed down. This kid who was usually mocked... was being lavished with love. Everyone was smiling. I felt a tear roll down my cheek.

If I had more space, I'd tell you about the other experiences like this that I had over the summer. Moments when something clicked, and I suddenly realized that I was watching God heal the world, right in front of my eyes. Suffice to say, these moments did happen. And they left me teary, and changed to the core. I leave camp Noah utterly convinced that God is alive, and that He wants to do a great work — both in Hartford, and in the world.



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plate and demonstrated a great work ethic that I was so proud to see. I'm so grateful for the L.I.T. program giving Marcus the opportunity to use his gifts and abilities and grow as a leader this summer".

Like April and Cheryl, the L.I.T.s saw a difference in themselves from the beginning of Camp to the end. When asked "What are two things you learned about yourself this summer through being an L.I.T.?", their responses varied from "I learned that the kids see me as encouraging.", "I could see myself doing office work as a future job, based on my tasks at camp", "I am good at de-escalating a situation", "and "I am better with kids than I thought." A few of the youth answered even more personally, sharing that they have been challenged to be "better versions of themselves" and have been inspired to continue to work on cultivating a deeper relationships with God. As a camp staff, we saw all of this and more to be true.

"Camp itself was greatly impacted by the help of the L.I.T.'s. This was the smoothest summer I have ever seen in nine summers of running Camp Noah. The L.I.T's are definitely the missing link we have been looking for, and I am so excited to see how camp will continue to improve now that they are on board!", Cheryl shared.

This summer's growth and empowerment is a large part of what inspires HCM to look to expand the L.I.T. program beyond Camp Noah to a year round program, continuing this fall. Executive Director Dave Ambrose, believes, "The L.I.T program is so much more than just a part-time job, it's about filling the need for culturally relevant programming to support youth as they strive to overcome employment challenges associated with growing up in an under-resourced community as well as developing the skills needed to become a transformational leader in our community."

Dave has been hard at work these last few weeks trying to secure the necessary funding to start a year round L.I.T program. Our hope is to kick off with our first cohort (5-10 C.O.G.s) this fall. The program will be open to applicants who successfully served as L.I.T.s this past summer, and C.O.G.s who have successfully completed HCM's Nehemiah after school program. Cohort participants will have access to leadership development, Bible study, and job readiness classes. They will then be given opportunities to put those skills into practice, through being paired with an HCM Staffer or one of our ministry partners for around 4 hours of work each week.

If you would like to make a donation towards the L.I.T. program, please use the enclosed reply card and envelope or visit our website, www.hartfordcitymission.org/donate.html



L.I.T.s Marcus and Zion with Aazante and Justice



HCM's 20th Anniversary Gala

Date: Friday, Oct 26, 2018

Time: 6:00 pm

Location: Downtown
Hartford Marriott
200 Columbus Blvd,
Hartford

Come celebrate what God has done over the past 20 years as a result of his people coming together in unity

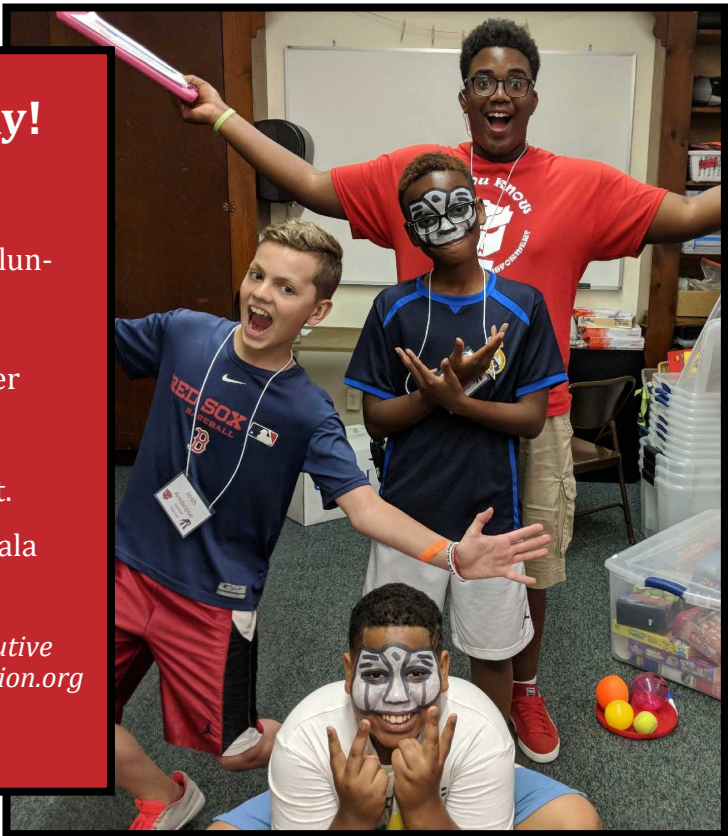
Purchase your tickets today! www.hartfordcitymission.org/gala.html

You are part of the HCM family!

Please support us by:

- Praying regularly for our students, parents, volunteers, and staff.
- Volunteering weekly to support one of the After School Sites or Young Life.
- Making a donation - HCM is a 501c3 non-profit.
- Advertising your business in the Annual Fall Gala program.

For more information visit our website or contact Executive Director, Dave Ambrose at davea@hartfordcitymission.org



www.hartfordcitymission.org

- Save The Date - Annual Gala October 26!
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