

EXTENDING

by Holly L. Johnson

Maybe you've had campers wear the same clothes every day or try to go all week without showering. But do your high-school campers have to carry their own water or eat only rice and beans for several days? Students at Eagle Lake Camp (Colorado Springs, Colo.) do all of the above.

Courtesy of Eagle Lake Camp

It's all part of the Step Into My Shoes program, and the experience helps teens understand what living in poverty is like. At the same time, campers receive information about children waiting to be sponsored by Compassion

International and learn about life in those children's respective countries. Halfway through the program, Jared Brown of Compassion International comes to Eagle Lake with a student who has graduated from Compassion sponsorship. "The last session lasted nearly two hours because the campers kept asking questions," Brown says. ►



Photo by Chuck Bigger, courtesy of Compassion International

COMPASSION

A young boy with dark hair and eyes is sitting on a patterned blanket. He is wearing a red, white, and blue striped polo shirt with a small logo on the chest and blue jeans. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a rustic wooden structure with some lights visible in the distance.

PUTTING YOUR CAMPERS
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE GREAT COMMISSION

**"I'M NOT AFRAID TO
TRY SOMETHING
NEW WITH YOU."**

—Jared Brown, Compassion International

As regional director of event marketing at Compassion, Brown serves as the ministry's national relations partner. He works with a specialized marketing team to partner with events all over the United States, helping to facilitate, maintain and grow relationships with other organizations. And Brown creates programs for individual camp partnerships, working with camps to tailor the Compassion message for their setting and ministry emphasis.

"We provide information, training and resources to equip them appropriately," Brown says. "They help create and design the presentation for their camp, and we offer various forms of support to help them achieve their vision."

Introducing Compassion

Compassion International has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name since 1952. Founder Rev. Everett Swanson established a program for Korean orphans after being moved by the profound

suffering he witnessed while on a preaching tour in South Korea. The program allowed caring people to meet the children's needs for food, shelter, medical care and Christian education.

This approach to ministry remains the model for Compassion's focus on individual, international child development. The organization is best known for its one-to-one child sponsorship program. The ministry identifies a sponsor as "someone who has made the decision to personally invest in the life of a child in need." When a child is sponsored, he or she is provided access to a church-based program that offers a range of life-changing benefits from education to health care.

Compassion and Camps

By partnering with Compassion, camps and conference centers are able to provide an avenue for campers and guests to follow the biblical call to care for the poor as an expression of following Jesus—and to join in living out the Great Commission to make

disciples. Practically speaking, a partner camp presents the Compassion message as part of its programming, aiming to educate campers and guests about the scourge of poverty and Compassion's work to combat it. And the camp ultimately presents the option of sponsoring a child in need, encouraging the camper to discuss sponsorship with parents.

CCCA member camps have pursued partnership with Compassion through approaches as varied as their locations and ministries. South Mountain Baptist Camps (Connelly Springs,



Photo by Tungporn Wiroonchatapanth, courtesy of Compassion International

N.C.) primarily operates in summer, and the leadership includes Compassion presentations as part of their events. “They wanted banners, child packets, materials and training on how to present,” Brown says. “Their heart was simply to share about Compassion.”

Student Life (Birmingham, Ala.) employs another strategy. Student Life is a mobile camp, reserving space at different locations for every week of ministry. About 1,000 people typically attend each camp. Each week the camp leadership brings in an older Compassion student—one sponsored through Compassion’s Leadership Development Program for college students—to describe his or her sponsorship experience. The result has been more than 25,000 sponsorships in 10 years.

Working with Parents

One aspect of partnership Compassion proactively addresses with camps considering partnership is the topic of parental involvement. Because the most common format for camp programming is the kids-only variety, it’s important to discuss the outreach of Compassion without giving parents a financial shock at the end of the week.

“When you work with younger children, don’t ask them to sponsor a child without the parents present,” Brown says. “Just teach them, and then tell their parents what they learned. We have special parent packets available to distribute to those who are interested.”

For teen audiences, Brown suggests telling students that if they have the means to consider sponsoring a child on their own, to take a regular child packet and discuss it with their parents.

Camp Benefits

Versatility is a hallmark of partnership with Compassion. There is no set ►

EXTRA INFO

COMPASSION SPONSORSHIP AT A GLANCE

Compassion works in 26 countries.

The children Compassion serve receive these opportunities and benefits:

- Regular Christian training, including hearing the gospel.
- Educational opportunities and help.
- Health care.
- Hygiene training and supplementary food if necessary.
- Caring and safe environment to grow in self-confidence and social skills.
- Personal attention, guidance and love.

Each child has only one sponsor, which is why the sponsor’s prayers, letters and support mean so much to a child. Compassion believes that the relationship that develops between sponsors and children is instrumental in a child’s growth and development. This one-to-one relationship provides children with the message that they matter, that they are valuable and that someone outside of their family cares about them and their future.



Courtesy of Eagle Lake Camp

EXTRA INFO

HOW TO LEARN MORE—AND GET INVOLVED

- View the video “One Act” and other testimonials at www.compassion.com/sponsor_a_child/video-testimonials.htm
- Visit www.compassion.com or call 800-336-7676.
- Contact Jared Brown at jbrown@us.ci.org or 205-434-4420 to discuss how your ministry can partner with Compassion International.





Photo by Eldad Girma, courtesy of Compassion International

blueprint that defines what this partnership must entail or look like. In fact, Brown says Compassion will go out of its way to help you develop a partnership model that fits your ministry style, structure and audience. For example, if you offer men's and women's retreats in the off-season, you could start with presentations for an adult audience and then work an adapted version into your youth programs in the summer.

"I'm not afraid to try something new with you," Brown says. "I worked with Eagle Lake to develop the Step Into My Shoes program—we've never done anything like it before. We can do that for you too."

Compassion also is committed to providing camps with financial support, should they desire it. Generally, the amount of support is based on a goal of sponsoring a certain number of children

in a year—whatever number is realistic for a given camp. The partnering camp is free to accept or waive the support.

One partnership benefit that can't be measured is education—not only the development of a camp's ability to demonstrate a global emphasis and concern to its supporters, but also to cultivate a biblical worldview in its campers.

"As a youth, I was completely unaware of what was going on in the world—what poverty is and what it does," Brown says. "We want to help students learn discipleship, to see a way they can practice the Great Commission and advocate for children. We want to empower them. When they realize they can make a difference, and get a goal set in their mind, they can do it. They will make it happen!"

Brown has seen a great deal of determination from students when it comes to sponsoring children. One 16-year-old girl got a job at Chick-fil-A just so she could afford to sponsor four Compassion children. A 13-year-old boy mowed lawns to earn money to sponsor a child, and one very committed 11-year-old gave up Christmas money and gifts so he could cover the cost of a sponsorship.

Individual child sponsorship is a powerful relationship that camps and conference centers can help facilitate. Find out what role you can play through partnership with Compassion—and know the joy of releasing a child from poverty in Jesus' name. ●

EXTRA INFO

POVERTY—AND HOW YOU CAN DEFEAT IT

- Worldwide, 600 million children are living in extreme poverty.
- Almost half the world—more than 3 billion people—live on less than \$2.50 a day.
- 1.6 billion people—a quarter of humanity—live without electricity.
- 6.9 million children under 5 years of age died in 2011—nearly 800 every hour.
- The cost of eradicating world poverty is estimated at 1 percent of global income.



Holly L. Johnson is a freelance writer who lives in Colorado. She and her husband have the privilege of sponsoring a very smart little boy from Togo through Compassion International. Email her at hollyjwriter@gmail.com.