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Personal Statement

Rock 'N' Water

I heard a speaker once say that he took advantage of every opportunity handed to him. These opportunities were not limited to just school but everything from travel to community service. I was in eighth grade when I heard these words of wisdom, and I did not take them lightly. I decided that I would take every opportunity handed to me and also find my own. I realized that I wanted to get out and try new things. Every summer since then I have decided to do something new. I have traveled to Africa and Mexico, been a counselor for mentally disabled youths and adults, and gone to many camps. These opportunities were truly amazing, but little did I know that the summer after my junior year an even more amazing opportunity would be handed to me.

Every summer since I began high school I have gone with the youth group from my church to a camp called Rock 'N' Water, an outdoor adventure camp. We would backpack in the wilderness, rock climb, hike, explore canyons, slide down waterfalls and river raft for a whole week with absolutely no showers. This trip was always the highlight of my summer because I was able to do things I never thought I could do. This camp was made an amazing camp by the staff who worked there. Each year our youth group would be assigned new guides and each year we would be amazed at how awesome they were. I realized what an opportunity it would be to work at this camp and learn from these people all summer long. I emailed the owner Craig, and he remembered who I was because he had been the guide for one of my trips. Craig was so excited to hear that I wanted to apply and told me not to wait. I filled out the application and mailed it to him along with a letter stating what I could bring to the camp and why I wanted to work there. He called me a few days later and said I had been hired as one of the six volunteers they were hiring that summer.

Before becoming an actual guide at the camp, one has to volunteer for a summer so they can receive training. I knew this when I applied and my friend who had volunteered told me that it would be the most challenging and rewarding summer of my life. Only at the end of the summer would I understand the truth of that statement. I knew that my summer would be unlike any others before but I did not know exactly what it would entail. I would be living away from my family in an environment completely different from my home for two and a half months. I am from the city and the camp is located in Northern California in a very small town called Coloma located on the American River. Many people thought I was nuts to spend my summer there, but I knew I would not regret it.

I departed two days after school let out on June 22, 2002. I had said goodbye to my friends the day before at graduation, so I left that morning at about 8:00. I had an eight hour drive ahead of me to spend with myself, so I had plenty of time to chicken out and turn back. It surprised me that that idea never crossed my mind the entire drive. I arrived at 3:00 in the afternoon. I was soon busy unpacking my things.

The female guide area was everything I had expected from a wilderness camp. There was a large cement slab covered by a sturdy tarp. Many people would have



minded sleeping outside all summer, but I had no problem with it since I love the outdoors. I put my cot and other belongings in the empty space between two other female guide's cots. I looked around at all the other female guide's belongings and I began to wonder if it would be easy to make friends with these people. I had left all my close friends for the summer so I was a little anxious to see if I would make friends quickly.

Making friends was much easier than learning how to set up rock climbs, or how to tie different knots. Craig spent the first part of the summer training us. By the end of the summer I knew how to set up different climbs, lead a creek or canyon hike, navigate through the wilderness, drive the shuttle loaded with river rafts, cook meals for a mass of people and clean up afterward, operate a rope swing, save a drowning victim, give CPR, prepare a river raft, flip a river raft in the water, and best of all guide a river raft down the river. On top of all of this I also had to learn all the safety rules for each activity. By the end of the summer I had gained not only muscle but skills that still help me everyday.

Learning these valuable skills was not the only great thing I learned at this camp. I also learned how to be a guide for campers. The rest of the summer Craig put us on trips with campers to shadow or learn from experienced guides for a week. I was able to be the guide instead of the camper and it was a very different perspective for me. I realized how much I enjoyed working with kids of whom most were junior high and even high school age. It is so much fun to help kids do things that they never thought they could do, like climb to the top of a difficult climb or paddle through a class 3 rapid. I enjoyed this so much that I am probably going to go back next summer and be a guide.

This summer was not all fun and games and there were some very difficult times. One of these times was when Craig took the volunteers to the wilderness for a week to train. We had a backpack with one change of clothes, a sleeping bag, a bathing suit, a toothbrush, a flashlight, a hat, and the shoes on our feet. We put together very simple meals and split them up in our backpacks. Then we headed off into the great unknown with no tents to backpack in the wilderness for a week. We had no idea where we were going, we just followed our fearless leader Craig. It was the most difficult week of the summer for me. We hiked up mountains and in mosquito infested creeks under the hot sun. I learned the importance of water that week! At one point in the trip I was so exhausted that I just wanted to stop and rest. We had come to a very steep downhill portion and I thought I was on my last leg, but we got to the bottom and there was a huge, beautiful waterfall. I was speechless and I jumped in the water and sat under the waterfall. I was completely revived and finished the week with a new energy. That week taught me so much about nature and what an awesome gift it is. I also realized that life was just like that trip and that I may get tired but that I need to keep on and take advantage of what life has to offer.

I have put into words only what I can in two pages to explain how I spend the time I have outside of school, but I can truly never explain the deep impact this past summer has had on me. I met my best friends Megan and Mandy, learned new skills, tested myself and others, learned how an awesome camp runs and learned I can do even more things I never knew I could do. I realized that I could apply everything I had learned to everyday life and college is one of those things. I have a goal and I am going to reach it, I just have to step out and do it.



good overall...perhaps you should not make those lists...