NEW YORK
METROPOLITAN
REGION
A WORLD OF KIDS

Young Life is reaching a world of kids in the New York Metropolitan Region (NYMR). The following pages show how kids from cities in our region have been impacted by summer camp and our faithful Young Life leaders. We hope these stories bless you and help us all remember the priceless value of our Young Life Mission.

— The NYMR Leadership Team

Thank you for reading these stories and for your support.

For more information on Young Life in the New York Metropolitan Region, visit online.younglife.org
Youseff attended Lake Champion with the Bridgeport Young Life group. After a few rough spots at the beginning of the week, he wanted to leave camp. His leaders stuck with him and encouraged him to be open to the rest of the week. Yousef stayed… and his life was forever changed. At the end of the week, Yousef told his YL leader. “You showed me a couple of things the last couple of days. First, you are a true man of God and second you care so much for all of us. I realized that I am not on this trip by accident but there is a purpose. I would like to be a leader one day.”
DOMINIC, a 14-year-old high school freshman, attended Lake Champion in August. Although he had attended church for most of his life, Dominic was battling with the idea of God’s existence and if Jesus was real. Because of what he learned and experienced at summer camp, he stood up at the end of the week and declared his devotion to Jesus. As he enters the new school year, he now knows that God loves him for who he is, wants to get to know him on a deeper level, and wants to tell others about the love of Jesus!
DONALD, came to Young Life a few times at the end of the school year and loved it. He saw pictures of camp and said, “I’m going” but then we never heard from him or saw him. We later learned that his house had burned down. So, two days before camp, a Young Life leader found him, bought him clothes and told him he had a free trip to camp! At camp, Donald was like a boy at an amusement park; his head was spinning on what to do during free time. When his leader had a conversation with him and asked him what he thought about Jesus, he said, “everything I learned about Jesus I learned in Young Life.” He expressed his desire to believe and now attends a weekly guys small group to grow in his faith! Thank you for making it possible for Donald to go to camp and experience the abundant life Jesus offers!
JUNIOR is a high school sophomore who lives in South Norwalk. He began attending Young Life through an invite from his friend Bryner, who attends Campaigners.

Junior’s first impression of Young Life was that it was “boring church;” however, as time moved on, he began to appreciate our sincere and relevant approach. In fact, he did not miss a meeting throughout the school year and quickly became a lead influencer within the group.

Junior attended camp at Saranac this summer. He could not have been more impressed. From the food to the activities, he could not believe that camp was truly designed for him and his friends. He was particularly struck by the fact that the work crew served so diligently and were not paid.

Junior experienced an incredible week away from pressures at home that include fighting parents and bearing the weight of caring for his younger siblings. By the end of camp, he said that he wants to follow Jesus for the rest of his life and “do what the leaders do someday.”
TUTIE lives in the projects of the Bronx, among drug dealers, addicts, and violence. Her mother passed away when she was young. Tutie has shared with her YoungLives mentors her goals: to move out of the projects, to not become another statistic, to finish high school (she had to leave school when she became pregnant) and to have a career. Before going to camp she fell into a depression and became pregnant again: the girl that had so many dreams and goals was no longer the same.

At YoungLives camp, she and her daughter had a refreshing week of peace away from the stress at home. She remembers the camp speaker’s message that God loves her passionately. Tutie, at eight months pregnant, participated in as many activities that she could at YoungLives camp – even dancing in a show for the entire camp! In addition to having fun, she openly shared her struggles with life and the father of her children during the Cabin Times.

Tutie has been to camp before and this year invited a friend in her community to join her. Camp allowed her relationship with her mentors to flourish. As Christ’s ambassador, her mentor connects with her regularly to encourage Tutie in the dreams she once had.

Recently, Tutie gained the courage to do something major. She applied and was accepted to a 2-year residential mother and child program outside of the Bronx where she can return to school and gain important life skills. She is very afraid but feels as though this will get her on the right track for reaching the rest of her goals and provide a better environment for her children.

YOUNG LIVES,
NEW YORK CITY
Three years ago DOMINQUE met a Young Life leader in Brooklyn. Dominique is an excellent basketball player and a good student. In fact, he was set to receive his high school diploma on June 27th - the same day Young Life basketball camp was set to start. Accordingly, he was not planning on attending camp.....until he began to persistently “pester” his mother about attending camp. At last, she said he could attend after graduation. So, his passion and commitment to attending camp led him to board a Greyhound bus by himself after graduation and travel fifteen hours to camp. Long story short, Dominique solidified his relationship with Jesus at camp. He's now a college freshman looking to share the love of Jesus with others.
CODY met his Young Life leader on the freshman football field of Danbury High School. His tackling and his personality were equally tough. Hardened by the loss of his brother due to an overdose, the divorce of his parents and his mom having a disability, Cody resisted any type of close relationship.

Then, Cody went to Saranac. At the end of the week, Cody explained that his week at camp was the best week of his life. He also indicated that he was ready to surrender his life to God. Leaders assured him that he was still loved by God and Young Life. Two days after camp, Cody texted a leader that he had surrendered his life to God.

Cody is now attending Campaigners, learning what it means to live for Christ, and is excited about his friends experiencing the same.
JENNIFER moved to New York City from the Dominican Republic two years ago. She jumped into life in New York, learning English and making many friends at her school. Going to Lake Champion with a cabin full of her friends was the highlight of her summer! What we didn't know was the underlying pain in her life that she had been carrying since her family fell apart only eight months before. At camp, we learned of Jennifer's anxiety-induced insomnia that had developed from carrying her quiet burden. Throughout camp, we watched Jennifer take risks on the ropes course- but mostly we watched her take risks in sharing her story with her friends and leaders. By the end of the camp week, Jennifer was sleeping through the night- and soaring because she felt so good! At camp, she learned to trust her friends, her leaders, and to know that God will never leave her.
Two nights before the Stamford group was leaving for Young Life Latino Week at Saranac, ETHAN, with health form in hand, knocked on his leader’s front door and said, “Is it too late to go to camp?”

Ethan had been coming to Young Life since the spring. Dealing with an extremely rough life at home, detached from both parents, he was always getting into trouble at school and partying. He showed up at the bus for camp with a small bag and $90 that he borrowed from a teacher. The first night at camp, Ethan tried to sneak out of the cabin to smoke cigarettes on the roof at 1:00am. Upon “being caught” by his leader, Ethan apologized and said it was hard for him to be somewhere unfamiliar.

As the week unfolded Ethan was transformed. From arms folded and skeptical to big smiles and singing as loud as he could, the transformation was obvious. On the last day of camp he wrote a letter saying, "I want to except God/Jesus into my life, but I don't like disappointing him. I disappoint enough people in my life and I don't want God/Jesus to be another. I love him. I do feel a change. There are a lot of things that I do that can be changed and I am willing to do it and learn more. This trip made my view of life way wider...the leaders are like another set of parents. I don't have much of that and they made me feel part of a family. Can't wait until Campaigners."

Ethan did indeed attend the first Campaigners meeting after camp and brought his girlfriend Sheryl. He openly told the group how he knew that Jesus had saved him from "death" in his life and given him a new start. On his Facebook account, Ethan posted, "For the wages of sin is death," to remind himself that those things will never give him life.
Robert

Thank you

June 29-10

Children’s Village,

New York City

I have no other word. But this place is amazing! I can’t believe I’m here. This place is like heaven/like a dream. Everyone is so kind. You wake up in the morning walking around and people will just say, “Good morning, have a good day!” I feel so good to have someone recognize you and the staff here volunteer to go to have someone volunteer to come to the hospital. This and volunteering are amazing. I feel so good when I see her running around and doing activities all day. It is cool to do activities and go outside. I don’t eat much. Get us food to eat and get us to go out. This was the best experience. Understanding of getting help. Blessed all of my life. God Bless you. Thank you for bringing me here.
CHELSEA met Young Life leaders only two days before camp. Her friend Nelchelle had invited her to camp. After a brief conversation between the leaders and her parents, she decided to attend Lake Champion. At camp, she told her leader her “whole story” and how she had been abused and struggling with issues of identity and sexuality. Chelsea was convinced she had “blown her chance” at heaven. Then she heard and experienced the love of forgiveness of Jesus at camp. She called out to God. And she was convinced God called back to her. She is now walking in faith every day with Jesus and her Young Life leader back in Harlem.
Externally, ANTHONY had the time of his life with his leaders and five hundred other campers and leaders at Lake Champion. Internally, he dealt with feelings of depression, anger, and hopelessness. On the last night of camp, Anthony approached his leader with tears welling up in his eyes. He took his time to speak, wanting to be careful to not say something silly. He struggled for a while to get the words out to describe how he really felt inside. He opened up about his life and his struggles. He admitted having no one to turn to and no one he could really trust. He said he had never experienced such unconditional love and acceptance before. There was something different about his leaders and the dozens of volunteers who served him food and kept his room clean that struck him. Then he made a decision that will forever change his life - he decided to trust his life to Jesus.
BOBBY has grown up in Red Hook Houses - the biggest housing project in Brooklyn. His father was a drug dealer in Red Hook and has been in jail for much of Bobby's life. In the past couple of years, as Bobby has grown into a young man, he has felt immense pressure to live up to his father's "legacy." Bobby has had some legal trouble himself and came to camp, knowing that he would likely be sentenced to jail when he returned to Brooklyn. Throughout camp, as Bobby talked with his leaders, he recognized ways God had been loving him and protecting him over the past couple of years. He expressed a desire to follow Christ, but worried that he would "fail." On the last night of camp, after an altercation with another camper, Bobby sat with leaders and cried out to God, praying a heartfelt and powerful prayer: "Father - I need your help. I can't live my life like this anymore. Please forgive me for everything I've done wrong. Father, please help me to live for you." Since he has been home, Bobby has continued to experience God's love and answered prayer.
LUCY, a 16-year old mom from Bridgeport, has been in foster care for a few years now. Her childhood was very difficult and she rarely experienced love and acceptance growing up. Lucy and her 5-month-old daughter, Naveah, came to camp for the first time this summer with YoungLives. At camp, she made new friends with other teen moms who are facing similar challenges and understand what she is going through. She also spent quality time one-on-one with her mentors who talked to her about God and the struggles she is facing at home. It was a great opportunity to give Lucy the chance to relax and be a teenager again. When her daughter was with the childcare volunteers she was able to try new things, like the zip-line, that she had never done before. Since camp she has been regularly attending Campaigners-the YoungLives Bible study- and continues to open up with her mentors about the challenges she's experiencing juggling school, motherhood, and family issues.
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