

A Heartwarming Connection: The Family Liaison/Camper Relationship

By Deborah Shapiro

Being a member of the Family Liaison Committee has been a profoundly rewarding experience. I have been privileged to help Wildflower campers and their families find respite from their grief through ongoing support and the gift of camp. Eli and his mom became a part of the Wildflower family when Eli was 14 years old, one year after his father passed away. He was shy and quiet and very protective of his mom. As an only child, he wanted to fill the shoes left by his dad . . . to be the new man of the family. He was worried about leaving his mom during the summer but curious about what camp had to offer.



Eli's first camp experience was a one-week camp, Heroic Journeys, an outdoor-adventure program in Colorado for grieving children. He loved it. He loved the adventure, the new experiences and the opportunity to share his loss with other children with similar experiences. That first year was a turning point for Eli. He started to become more confident and more willing to pursue his interests in travel, Spanish immersion and community service.



Eli has been a Wildflower camper for 4 years. Each year we sent Eli to a different program giving him varied and enriching experiences that matched his interests. With Wildflower's support, he has become a self-assured, thoughtful and accomplished young man. He is 18 years old now and applying to college. Upon his return from his final camping trip this summer, he wrote this letter to Wildflower.

I want to thank you and everybody else at Wildflower who helped me attend my transformative trip with Deerhill. I'm amazed at how emotionally attached and connected I got with my Deerhill friends in such a short time. My expedition pushed me to grow and develop emotionally, spiritually and as a more mature and globally-aware person. Whether it was canoeing 56 miles on the San Juan River, building a bread oven at The Zuni Pueblo, or summiting Centennial Peak in Colorado, I was connecting with and learning about the people around me. What I learned from my group mates has helped me develop a better understanding of myself. I am honored and feel very lucky to have attended this program and would love to share stories and pictures with you.



Eli's school requires graduating seniors to complete a Capstone Senior Project. Eli has asked us if he could work with us so that he could give back for all Wildflower has done for him. I know I can speak for the entire Wildflower community when I say, "Eli, we would be honored to have you!"