



June 3, 2009

Rendezvous strengthens relations, opens doors

BY NATE TAYLOR

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Brittany Phelps grew up thinking police were sometimes the bad guys; but after four years camping at the Laramie River Valley Rendezvous, her opinion toward law enforcement couldn't be more different.

"It was a really good experience for me," Phelps said of the camp led by local law enforcement and firefighters. "I started as a camper, and I just got to meet so many great people, and it's really great to see the police and National Guard in a positive light because everybody sometimes thinks they're such bad guys."

Now 22 and a student at Colorado State University, Phelps looks back on her experience at the weeklong camp as one that was beneficial for her and children like her, who grew up in single-parent or low-income homes.

"My mom looked forward to me doing that kind of stuff," she said of the camp. "You meet a lot of people who are in the same situation as you."

Since attending the rendezvous as a camper, Phelps has served as a camp counselor. She says she doesn't know if she'll be helping with the camp this year, but she encourages young people in Larimer County to sign up for the experience, which is free.

The camp for the past 18 years has focused on children such as Phelps and at-risk children who might need some positive reinforcement and experiences.

"Our main goal is that the kids who get involved in this program develop self confidence," said Bob Younger, a Fort Collins police officer and president of the camp. "The camp helps them avoid the pitfalls of falling to peer pressure. The more confidence we can build in kids, the better chance they have of not succumbing to those pressures."

Younger said applications for the camp, which is July 6-11 in the Rawah Wilderness west of Fort Collins, are due June 10.

The 40 students who attend will spend the week participating in team-building activities, whitewater rafting, camping and horseback riding. The camp is led by 30 volunteers, most of whom are in law enforcement in Larimer County, firefighters or members of the Colorado National Guard.

Another former camper, Fort Collins resident Brad Mcleod, said he enjoyed having someone willing to just listen to him.

"They went from being authority, bad-guy people to someone I could just talk to," Mcleod said of the law enforcement officers. "These are people who just care, and there are no strings attached."

Additional Facts

Interested?

- > Visit www.lrvr.org for more information
 - > The camp runs July 6-11
 - > Applications are due June 10
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