



Camper and Staff Memory Book

SMA Session 3, 2025



A Message from Camp Director Jud Millar:

Session 3 was absolutely packed with adventure and connection. From July 20 to August 2, our campers dove into every opportunity—whether it was climbing, kayaking, hiking, or simply hanging out with new friends. The bonds formed in Session 3



were proof that it doesn't take long for a group to become like family at SMA.

Campers, you amazed us with how quickly you jumped into camp life. You brought energy, humor, and a willingness to try new things that made every day exciting. The friendships you formed in just two weeks were so strong and real—it showed us once again that camp friendships grow faster and deeper than almost anywhere else. We miss your laughter and hope you're bringing those memories with you into the year ahead.

Parents, thank you for trusting us with your teens during this short but powerful session. We witnessed so much growth in such a small window—campers finding their voice, encouraging their peers, and gaining confidence through new challenges. Your kids helped create a warm, inclusive environment that lifted everyone up, and we are grateful for the role you played in making that possible.

On the final day of the session, we asked each camper to take a moment to reflect on their experience at SMA. Enclosed in this Memory Book you'll find those reflections, along with highlights of the activities we shared, written by our incredible staff team. These words and stories capture the magic of the summer and remind us why camp is such a powerful experience for young people.

- Jud, Anne, Wyatt, Molly and Jack!

Camper Reflections

Rosalie

I love SMA because the counselors are not really there to dictate us we can play, laugh and tease each other. I also like camps for the people who are there because even if I didn't really speak English I managed to find people who can explain to me and no one left me alone, in addition the activities of the day and I have never been on activity – canoeing until this session.



Noah

The SMA session 3 2025 was very good. The highest point of the session was the overnights. The activities were very fun. The food was good. My favorite activity was Sup and Sail. I liked playing basketball with my friends. The evenings activities are a very good idea. It was very fun. The dance party was my favorite evening activity. The barbecue was fun.

Gabe

I've had lots of fun session 3. I've made a couple mistakes along the way, but they have taught me many lessons, and I hope session 4 is good.

Annie

2025 was my first year at SMA summer camp and it was overall a good experience! One of the things I loved the most was the cool activities and the way everyone can hang out with everyone. I thought it would be weird to be friends with people older than me but really it helped me get more comfortable talking with new people. I also thought that the counselors were really nice and made camp more fun! They hung out with us after dinner, at activities and the late-night chats are definitely something to remember. At SMA they give you the opportunity to learn how to manage your time better and how to expand your circle! Before evening activity, we all pick what things we are going to do the next day and you never know which people you will end up with so I get to meet new people during the van rides and the activities! Overall, we did so many cool things like late night ice cream, shopping, camping overnights, white water rafting, skits, and camp-wide games. I am so glad that I got to be a part of SMA's fun traditions and meet nice people from all over the world.



Tucci

This session was fun! I was so happy to get closer to the staff this session and even campers! All activities were fun to do. I loved talking with Marina on the magic carpet during Sup and Sail. I also loved talking late at night with all Little J girls and Jules.

Benji Miller

Joining the traditions this year was super fun, doing paper plates & dance prep was just a fun experience. When I come back I won't be in Tussey anymore which will be odd since I spent 3 years in that cabin. Whilst on water masters, I had fun on Raystown.

Ratio this year was surprisingly fun this time. I loved hanging out with Piggy and I can't wait to come back!



Graelyn:

This has been a really fun time and I'm excited to come back next year. I had a lot of fun crafting even though I was against it at first. I also had a lot of fun getting ice cream and making new friends. I'm so sad to leave this place, feels like my second home even though it has only been two weeks. I made so many new friends and will be sad to leave, but I am excited to come back next year and have another amazing two weeks at camp.

Best wishes, Graelyn
Session three 2025

Anna Knight

Session 3
8/1/25

Camp is kind of odd. It's so good it's bad. I've had so much fun here and it's so heartbreaking to leave. I think SMA is the best experience I've had—maybe in my entire life, which means obviously it's VERY good. But that only makes it even worse to leave. All year, waiting to come back to camp is going to be miserable, so I guess I just know camp is amazing. Making new friends that I'll hopefully stay in touch with forever.

The dough-filled with fun and talks late, ice cream, silly kitchen pranks, laughing, then running around the hill after dinner, and counselors always finding ways to make it fun, rain or shine. Literally, the dance, the lake, the talent show—I could name so much more but I suppose I've proved myself wrong. It's not camp that's bad, it's everything else in comparison to camp, but that's the part that makes camp even better.

So, I will wait a whole year, a whole boring year, to come back to camp and have it be as fun as ever.



Becca Bader

Session 3 2025

This was my last session at SMA, and I was so glad I came back! I've made some really good friends here. Seeing and getting to hang out with old friends and familiar faces and meeting new ones was so much fun. The cabin vibes and the friendships I made there were awesome. This session went by so fast because of it! The community here is so wonderful and unique. And you get to do so many cool things! I've gotten so much better at rock climbing over the years and it is satisfying to come back and conquer walls you couldn't do the year before. Not to mention white water rafting on the Yough with the main girls team! All camp activities like disco bowling and French Revolution are so much fun. While I might not have gotten to do all the things I wanted to, as much as I wanted to, everything here is so much fun because of this place and its people.

Theo Reichman

SMA

SMA session 3 2025 has gone by very fast. From giant swing to wrestling on the magic carpet, this is my favorite session thus far. I have made many new friends even from

other countries and reconnected with old ones. I have overcome challenges white water rafting on the Yough. In conclusion, this session at SMA has definitely convinced me to return next year.



Emeric A.

I had a pleasant and exciting time here. I enjoyed getting close with my friend Arie as well as looking after the bunnies. Thank you SMA for a great two weeks!

Mike

Session 3 ~ 2025

Session 3 is coming to an end and there is so much to reflect on. This session was filled with fun, from meeting new people to doing lots of fun activities. Although this session was filled with highs, I was sick for a lot of the session and it sucked that I had to say goodbye mid-session to many friends. I am also very sad I have to say goodbye to everyone else tomorrow.

Although these things are all sad I like to look at the highs and be thankful for all the good things and times I had. I enjoyed various activities with friends from intense riding to chilling on the magic carpet at SUP n SAIL.

Thank you everyone for all these great memories and I can't wait to meet everyone again.





Stella Fredricks 2025 Session 3

This is my first session at SMA and I have been having a lot of fun! There is something about the community here that is truly magical. Yesterday was the talent show and seeing the traditions of the people who have been here multiple years was amazing! It really made me want to come back and spend more time at camp. Either way though I can't wait to get home to sleep in my own bed and see my family again. It will definitely be a bittersweet moment at camp.

Overall I have had such a fun time with activities here and everyone has become so close, like a family away from family.

SMA S3 2025

Lucia Gurmendi

This has been one of my favorite sessions at SMA. I had a lot of fun with my friends. We

have done so many fun activities, like doing art studio, waterskiing. The overnights are so fun, because you get to camp with your friends and have fun outside camp.

This camp year I got to spend a lot of time with old and new friends I made at camp, and I hope I come back one day as a counselor or AOP so I can help new campers have such a good time as me.



Bex Ballow

Session 3 2025

So this year was pretty crazy. I knew this was my last year at SMA and I was trying to make it count. I met so many new people and got to do so many fun things, especially being a third year and in Furnace. I did so many traditions which made SMA way better.

I feel like I savored every moment but it still passed so fast. Now that it's over I look back at SMA and it really is a home. I hope I can come back one day as a counselor.

Lucas Vasagam

SMA 3

This year was my first year at SMA as well as my first time at a sleepaway camp. This was a hard experience at first from feeling homesick and being anxious of when I was leaving.

But it was a good experience because I made friends, tried new activities, and had fun on the vans and playing games. My favorite activities were soccer, wakeboarding, and mountain biking.



Arie van Tinehart

Session 3 Reflection (2025)

I explored new activities that I could only experience here such as outdoor climbing or white water rafting, to be my favorite parts of my stay here. However, again, I was wrong. I soon realized that the greatest, biggest part of camp is simply being with new people. I have enjoyed at least as much fun with the activities. One reason I enjoyed during my stay at Stone Mountain Adventures was how easy it was and the benefits that came from being off of my phone. It made me feel more present. I also really enjoy talking to the staff. It feels that they really enjoy their job. I also feel that I can connect to

them easily and they really care about the campers.

Melissa Miller S3 Reflection 2025

Before camp this year I was going through an extremely stressful time. I felt like everything in my life was going wrong. Coming to camp was like a sigh of relief. When I got here my battery immediately started recharging. The people around me, especially the staff, reminded me what true, loving relationships are.

I felt a huge weight lifted off of my shoulders this session and I'm back to being care-free and happy. This year at SMA is my 5th year and I've made the most meaningful connections by far this summer.

Thank you SMA!!



Parker Callahan
S3 2025

This session has been an amazing two weeks. It reminded me that taking a break from technology and screens can lead to a great experience.

Some of my favorite activities were rock climbing, the adventure overnight, and the French Revolution game. I have made some awesome friends here and I can't wait to come back next year.

Mark Apostoiov

Session 3 SMA

SMA was a great experience for me and I learned a lot from staying here. My favorite activities during my stay here were rock climbing, tennis, and SUP & sail.

It was an unforgettable and memorable time for me.



SMA 2k25 Session 3 Reflection

Alec Conklin

This was one of my best sessions. It was my 6th year and I couldn't be more blessed to have been able to spend the time I have here. Although I have another year, this year

feels like the end. The majority of my friends are not coming back next year so I have a lot of goodbyes ahead of me.

I'm really glad though, as this year I was able to fix all of my previous mistakes and rekindle relationships that I thought I lost in the past. Really glad I came.



Benjamin Petit
S3 2025

This year I had a lot of fun meeting new people and reconnecting with old friends. The yough was really fun and even though I've done everything twice already it was still really fun and I enjoyed being with friends. I also explored a lot around camp and found many new places.

Kern
SMA Session 3

This year has been great! I was able to reunite with my friends from last year and even meet new friends. The Yough was even more tough than last year, I felt like much more

of a part of the community this year and I somehow got better.

Gavin Parsch

Session 3 2025

For my 2nd year here it was awesome. I feel like this is a place I can call home. I will never leave but I have to. I am able to express who I am and what I do. I am so glad I am able to come here.

Thank you for the memories.



Kai Reid

S3 2025

This session was super fun and went by super quickly. I got to do a bunch of fun activities like SUP & Sail and swimming in the creek. Also, I also got to hang out with many people from far away from me and/or got to know other people I didn't know that well.

It's also super interesting to hear from France and other countries. It is a more fun type

of stuff that I'm not usually able to do normally, like swimming.

Spencer

Session 3 2025

I can't describe how amazing this session was. I met so many new people and reunited with old friends. I was able to connect with these friends through amazing activities like the overnights, the Yough trip, and the barbeque.

I honestly had so much fun and can't wait to come back next summer for the fifth year.



Alex B.

Session 3 2025

I was very excited to come back to SMA this year. After coming for 3 sessions last year, it was so great to meet with friends from session 3 and 4 last year, who I thought would not be back. I didn't fall off on the Yough and I loved going on the wake board a lot and staying up on the wakeboard and the wakes.

I'm very excited for SMA Session 4!

Lucas Lundier

S3 2025

This session was very exciting and fun. I enjoyed playing French Revolution. I got the flag two times! White water rafting was very fun and dinner at Sheetz!



Alana :)

S3 2025

Session 3 has been really fun. I started getting a lot more into rock climbing and want to start doing it at home. I was here last session too, so when session 3 started and all my friends left I really did not want to stay at all, but over time I had a lot of fun and am looking forward to coming back next year.

One of my favorite memories was the skit my cabin made with the theme of "SMA on Broadway." We did a parody of the Hamilton musical with Jud as the main character. It was funny and I had a lot of fun making it.

Ben T.

SMA Session 3

SMA Session 3 went by fast, but still had lots of moments of self-reflection, bad decisions, and lessons. To balance out the bad we can save the best for last. The most enjoyable moments with Matthew. All jokes (or bad decisions) aside, the good includes the fun, regret (some of it), and most of the laughter. Being as whole camp is obviously a great learning experience.

Peace out, Ben T.



Noam:

At first, I thought that being French and not speaking English would hold me back from making friends, but in the end it was very easy. I made lots of friends.

The activities I loved too!

And I even pushed my limits by doing a backflip.

Arthur Hthgz

At the beginning I was a bit ashamed because I didn't know anyone and I don't speak English very well. But in the end I made lots of friends and English wasn't really a problem. I loved the activities, especially the white water rafting and the nights when we slept in the forest.

I would love to do it again next year.

Thanks SMA!!



Zachary Deud

SMA 3 2025

This was my first year at Stone Mountain Adventures and it's been great. I still had a blast meeting all the people. The people are nice and I was scared in the beginning, but I'm fine now and the activities are so fun and we can go out of camp.

Mia

This session was actually amazing. I felt as though I truly belonged in the SMA

community. I will truly miss this place when I go. SMA really is my summer highlight. I will be looking forward to this next year.

Nic V

For my first time at SMA I enjoyed this place. The activities were fun and entertaining. The overnights were great, I loved the mountain pies and s'mores, the parties were good and I really loved this place. It helped me learn patience and how to keep myself motivated.

Thank you to everyone who was at S3 2025. Praise Jesus, Amen.



Jesse Good – Session 3, 2025

I came to this camp in 2022 with an abundance of social anxiety and insecurities. Now, in 2025, I'm leaving this camp with overwhelming confidence and friends that will last for a lifetime. This camp has helped me find who I am and who I want to be. I've experienced a range of emotions here that have helped shape me as a person and

learn from my (and others') mistakes. I'm going to miss this camp so, so, so much—not only because of the people, but also the whole experience and being immersed in it.

Julia Zocchi – Session 3, 2025

Session 3 of SMA 2025 was my fourth session at SMA. Last session I was nervous to say goodbye to my old friends and have to welcome a whole new group of campers. By the second day of this session, I was already enjoying my time as much as possible. I loved doing art studio, SUP and sail, sports, hiking, and wakeboarding. This session I went on the wake overnight; it was really fun, and I made a lot of memories with my friends.

My best memories of this session were the talent show, art studio tie-dye, wakeboarding, and getting closer with lots of new people. SMA Session 3, 2025 helped me to remember just how special this place is and why I will miss it so much.



SMA 2025 – Session 3 Reflection Fionn

My second year at SMA was really fun! I made a lot of new friends. Going on the wake overnight was really cool because I got on the boat and wake boarded, did waterskiing,

and rode the wakeboard during the bike masters. I basically learned wheelies, which was really cool. There were a lot more fun things we did!

Helaina M. FitzPatrick – Session 3, 8/1/25

This was (so far) my favorite session I've ever attended. I made new friends and branched out more. Going home is sad, but it's what makes SMA enjoyable. This is the first year I've been truly disappointed to be going home. SMA is so special. The days are busy without being stressful, the quiet moments that make you sit and enjoy nature, the campers from other countries, and the tight-knit community. Sadness is fleeting at camp; there is always something more to interest you in. Such as wakeboarding, which I learned how to do this session. While I am excited to see my family and my cats, I will miss waking up in Little J with my friends and the exciting adventures of the day. I know I'll be back!

Love, Helaina



Elijah

My favorite thing here was the wakeboarding and SUP and sail. My favorite overnight was the wakeboard overnight. The people and counselors here are really nice. Mountain biking is pretty fun, you can even ask Mason.

Hannah Digenarro – Session 3, 2025

This is my first session at SMA. I was in Little J with Zoey and Jules. I love all of the fun memories I made with my cabin this session. During the past two weeks, I have tried so many fun and new things. I tried kneeboarding and rock climbing for the first time. I went on a canoeing overnight, which was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed SUP and sail and most of the other activities that I tried. I made so many friends here at camp that I am so grateful to have. Evening meetings were a lot of fun too. I loved playing Jud games. Yough Day was a blast! French Revolution was also a lot of fun. Sheetz is my new favorite thing in PA. I also loved Secret Friend and buying so many fun snacks for them. Overall, I truly love it here at SMA, and I hope that I can come back next year!!



Bradley – Reflection (Session 2, 2025) Zachary Deud

SMA 3 2025

This was my first year at Stone Mountain Adventures and it's been great. I still had a blast meeting all the people. The people are nice and I was scared in the beginning, but I'm fine now and the activities are so fun and we can go out of camp.

My second session this summer here was good. What they said—and what they meant—was much more exciting than last session because there were more people. I really wish I could have stayed another session.

I don't want to leave yet. I made a good friend this session. I can't wait to come here next summer, and I hope this place will never change.



Evie Delano – S4 2K25 Reflection

SMA!!! This is my fifth and last summer here and I cannot fathom how much I have grown over these years. This camp has seen me go from a 13-year-old who had no grasp on who she was, to a 17-year-old who can finally describe herself in a concrete form. At SMA, I learned to play my days away (Jud's words!) and how to appreciate every inch of life and what it offers. I find myself actually looking forward to activities I avoided years ago; I find myself enjoying the company of others without searching for noise to drown them out. The past 2 weeks that I have spent here have been unforgettable. I have made new friends, strengthened old friendships, and gotten to know myself even more. I made a point to try everything this year and I have successfully done everything needed to get the SMA award, even enjoying canoeing in the process, which is not something I would ever claim before this summer. The canoeing overnight, white water rafting, small candlelight, the talent show, hammocking, wakeboarding, rock climbing, and just being in the presence of the people I love have been highlights for me these past weeks. Also Sheetz, of course. Even as I write this now I am blown away by the memories I have made here. I am going to miss SMA more than words can express. I hope to cross paths with this place again, and to take a little piece of it home with me in my heart. I am so grateful I stayed for both session 3 and 4 this summer!



Asara Obra SMA3 Reflection:

This session was amazing! It was a last minute decision for me to come back and I now know it was the right one. I had such a blast with my friends. We packed in so many awesome activities—wakeboarding, rock climbing, and more! The activities were super fun, but honestly, some of the best memories came from just hanging out with my friends during power hour, white water rafting, and playing Jud games.

Lilly SMA3 Reflection

I seriously loved this session. Doing all the 3rd-year stuff like the dance and paper plates was awesome. I've had so much fun at SMA, and white water rafting was definitely one of my favorite parts. I can't believe I've been here a whole month—it feels like I just got here, but also like I've been here forever. I'm really gonna miss SMA!



Staff Reflections

MAX

SMA 3

This session has been my favourite session by far. I had so many good moments. For example, the talent show was fun. My favorite performance was the one I had with Alex when we did the Freshmen Salesman at the talent show. I loved to do Sup in Sail with all the campers and had a great time talking to them. It was so exciting to tell real time stories to all the campers in the cabins. It was also fun to eat mountain pies at the overnight. I will miss everyone and keep this adventure as a special experience in my mind.



Thea

Session 3

Yo! Session 3, I had Lyme disease and I was very exhausted.

I had a lot of fun with all of the kids. It was the best Yough trip ever.

I wish my poem was better this session. I was pretty sad about that, but it's okay.

I loved canoeing 4 times and I had so much fun.



Mason Craig

SMA 3 Reflection

Session 3 was nothing short of awesome. It was the biggest group of kids we've seen yet. Getting to see familiar faces from last summer and the constant action going on — there was no shortage of excitement going on. Definitely my favorite session of the summer so far, and I'm looking forward to what SMA 4 has in store!!

Watson - Session 3 2025

This is my first time staying at SMA for a full summer, so it was exciting to see so many new faces since as an AOP I only worked here for sessions 1 & 2. At this point in the summer I have learned new lessons like how to cope with burnout. The remedy is written in Jud's song: live in the moment & go with the flow. This is something I am trying to be especially mindful of considering today is the first day of August. This summer has gone by in the blink of an eye. My goal for the next session is to make sure I don't waste a second no matter how tired or frustrated I get at times because I know when I go back to school I will be reminiscing about SMA all the time.

André Luna Nava

1/Agosto/2025

Session 3:

I may say that I started this session before it even started, in the intersession when Jud spoke with all of us and said that we should try to hang out more with the kids and not just between counselors. His advice changed my whole session because that's what I tried to do and so far this is the session that I've felt more connected with. I sat on the tables in total many times, included the McDonald's breakfast in the Yough day.

I acknowledged deeply into the kids how talented they are. There's many things that I may mention. I'm going to keep it simple, because I could say a memory with each of them (at least).

Also, from the frustration that I felt, I learnt how to handle with patience. I learnt the importance of instead of yelling at someone that's been misbehaving, try to connect

after that and explain that they're privileged of being here, that they're awesome, listen if they've something to say, and let them know that we trust in them and let them know that we expect more from them. (In a mature way). And as I say it at the end of each session: I will do it better next session.

Trey Niccolini SMA Reflection

This session tested me in many ways. I found myself with a knee injury early on in the session which forced me to avoid the activities that I would normally gravitate towards and instead focus on things that were less physically demanding. Although this was initially a rough situation for me, through the support of the camp and staff team, I was able to have an amazing session. This session has given me a whole new appreciation for the camp and everything that goes on around here, and I am so grateful that I was still able to lead activities and give the best experience that I could for this group of awesome campers. Shout out sunburnt thighs.

Diego Sma session 3 reflection

3rd session is done and one more time i am reflecting about how the time pass so fast and we don't realize about it. This session was super fun with the frenchies Noah, Noam, and Arthur (ouioui) they were Super cool, all the kids were pretty good campers. I will remember myself playing cards with Alana, talking with lily about life, playing chess with Arthur (ouioui), looking Bradley being ready for the 3er world war, watching benji doing wakeboarding, I remember when we went to the lake and we did tubing with Zeke, Benji and Bridget that was pretty awesome until the rainstorm appeared so we had to go back.

I am so happy that i won the race at yough for the 3er time in a row, since the moment i saw my team i knew that i could win and we made it. I remenber my winner team they were becca, helena, emeric, ari and bradley perfect team to win and we did, thanks guys now it just missing one more race and if a win i could proclaim my self as the yough race king lol. Ok definetely i will miss you all guys, i don't like to say that is my last year at SMA because we never know i said that before and look at me here i am again lol, well see you hopefully i will see tou again,, take care and have fun!

SMA3 Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Julia Henschel

I honestly don't even know what to say — Session 3 is already over for me, and it just feels unreal how fast time has flown.

I don't want to say goodbye tomorrow. And honestly, I don't even want to think about saying goodbye to this amazing team in two weeks.

SMA is such a special, magical place. Being here has helped me learn more about myself, and I'm so incredibly grateful for everything you've given me in return.

We've laughed together, had deep conversations, and shared some unforgettable moments.

I've even found new values here — ones I didn't expect, but that I know will stay with me and help me grow into a better person.

To all of you campers — thank you. Thank you for making me feel like what I do matters. Thank you for letting me laugh with you, for trusting me, and for letting me be a part of your journey. Watching you grow has been a gift.

To the amazing team — thank you for always being there. For supporting me, for listening, and for seeing me for who I am.

And Jud — thank you for being such a big part of this whole experience.

This place... and all of you... you really mean the world to me.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Julia Henschel

KIM Reflection SMA Session 3 2025

This session was a lot different than the other session because it was way bigger. There's a lot more going on every day which adds some more fun. Everything feels so busy and alive and it makes this place into this beautiful camp. In those moments I realize that it's not about the place where you are but about the people that you are with. You could be in the ugliest place on earth (what doesn't apply to this camp obviously) and still have the best time of your life when you're with the right people. And SMA brings so many beautiful souls together to spend a nice summer. I made so many new friends and relationships at camp, in the staff team and with campers. With every session I spend here I appreciate it more to be here and to add another summer to my favorite times of my life.

My favorite activity this session was being on the boat even though there were some problems with the weather and the boat. It's still so much fun to spend time with the wakemasters on the lake and to have a great time. I also really enjoyed the white water rafting trip. I had a lot of fun with the kids on my boat as we were singing a lot. Even though it may didn't sound good, at least it was my warm fuzzy of the day.

I am excited for the final session of this summer even though I wish it wasn't the last one already.

~ Kim Alina Schnalke

ZOE - Reflection;

This session has flown by so quickly once again, this time it was a little different as the group was almost double the size of last session! I feel as though with a large group there was a lot more involvement and excitement around our day to day activities! I feel as though even with a large group I was able to create so many memories and connections with the campers especially Asara. I was able to connect on a deeper level with the campers who stayed on from session 2 and session 3 (Lilly)! Despite some bumps in the road... I really enjoyed my wake overnight as well as the talent show, I love how excited everyone was to be involved it created an awesome atmosphere of really talented people. Although I did face some challenges with tiredness and managing the kids was a bit tougher this session due to the volume of kids / different personality types. I think it was a great learning opportunity for me to understand what different kids need in order to gain respect on both my side and the campers. I do wish I was able to get out on the boat a bit more this session as I wanted to work on some tricks with the wakeboard but I can definitely make this a goal for session 4! I also really loved the Yough, although I was unsure about being a captain at first, I am so glad Jud pushed me to do it. I now feel more confident and capable to be a captain and want to put my hand up to be a captain for our last Yough in session 4. I am sad that session 3 has come to an end but I'm also excited for what's in stall for our last session of SMA 2025!!!

Alex Ramirez

Hi! I'm Alex and I'm from Puebla Mexico (clap clap). This is my third year as a counselor and I'm really grateful for everything I lived and everyone I met this session.

Session 3 was a blast! I got to see so many old friends and I'm really happy and glad to see them grow up.

I also grew up a little since my birthday was right at the end of the closing candle ceremony. Hearing the campers and counselors singing happy birthday right after such an emotional moment fulfills my heart. Big warm fuzzy for me!

This session also included so many hard goodbyes but I like to believe they're hard because our time together mattered. I'm sure I'll look back at this session and I'll cherish every detail of it.

WE ARE BRANCHES

Elena Esteban Rezusta

"Way down in the nest, the little birds rest," and here I will stay. You told me, "Take my hand; let's climb these Stone Mountains. The views will take your words away." At the top, I watch the sun slowly hiding. Do you have a spare heart in your backpack? Mine has been beating so hard, I don't think it can go on much longer. Then it starts to rain. "Put this trash bag on," Sonya tells me. Covered in dish soap, on the count of three, we run as fast as we can, sliding down the grass to break the record.

I broke the record, crossed the ocean, and with suitcases in hand, I looked up at the Empire State Building, yellow taxis buzzing below, screens flashing ads all over Times Square. Amid the crowd rushing past, I saw two people walking toward me: Jules and Alex. That's where the story truly begins.

Now it's night, my headlamp lights up the rocks. I'm climbing and I find a good hold. "Take slack." I know you're holding me. I look at the dark sky; the Big Dipper is perfectly clear. And I wonder if, to the east, on the other side of the Atlantic, the kids from Albatros camp are looking at the same stars.

Then I realized this story began long ago, when I sat as a camper in a circle at the foot of the Pyrenees, wondering, "Who am I?" without knowing who I would become. I tapped my foot restlessly, always restless, as if I could already feel it coming; a life waiting to be lived, a blank page in front of me.

Even the shyest kid, who wouldn't speak at first, has shared that here he feels like family. And that's what hits me the most. At first, I didn't know their names; Ben, Bex, and Benji all sounded alike, they were helping me light a fire on the overnight, but suddenly, thunder

rolled, mountain pies were soaked, “Go to the vans!!” We ended up eating pizza wrapped in our sleeping bags. I talked with Becca and Hannah about women, because some stories are universal. We were in swimsuits, cold and muddy, some campers sat on the floor of Goldie; the unexpected events turned into real adventures, music blasting while the normal world slept.

It had only been two days, but they had secretly taken out my phone and made a selfie. What will happen when I return to my city and see this photo of Bex, Benji, and Ben? What will these teenagers be doing, each one in Pennsylvania, New York, and Florida?

“Forward, shift your gear box,” because I can sense what is coming, and now time is going to speed up: “Good morning, Travis and Brooke!” Ayo Piggy!! “Where’s the henna?” Bridget asks. “Go, Annie! We’re already on the nine hundred steps. Bunk junk at Rock Bottom, today is bowling night!! Tiny house!!! The warm water at Seven Point Marina. “Zoe, put me on your shoulders so we can battle Leela and Maddie!” And suddenly, I knew everyone’s name. Evening meeting: “Quiet coyote,” Time for warm fuzzies and cold prickles. I searched for a familiar glance and sat next to another counselor; we looked at each other and understood immediately: “You’re off tonight too, right?”.

We sink into the Q’s couches, a stuffed teddy bear staring at me. Marina says “thumbs up” because the category is “vans” and the number to guess is seven. Jeff climbs the ceiling holds. Trey grabs the guitar and finally agrees to play the song he wrote here as a camper. Watson shares the Reese’s from her secret friend. Counselors come and go as if it’s the living room at home. Thea asks about the worst moment in your life. André and Diego leave again; they’re on a mission to fight the bees. They walk out the door, but deep down, I know these people will never leave my heart.

“Wake up the birds!!” We wake the campers, and it’s already one of the last days. I listen to Madds attentively. “Thanks for understanding me,” she says. The lovebirds say goodbye, and the best friends too: Kiara, Claire, Liam, Zoey...By now, I know them so well: how Robbie plays bass and Boomer the drums, how Abby has probably read ten books, how Arthur and Noah gave their all at Alex’s Lemonade, how Ian joined the muscle-t-shirt trend. And whether we’re at Freezewood or Whipple Dam Lake, Julia and Talia will keep asking to go to Sheetz.

We sing “I am living in Utah” at the top of our lungs, trying not to think about farewells. And I think of the campers who are no longer here: Stella’s boldness singing in the barn, Auguste’s dancing skills, Mia’s talent for acting like a guy, Jesse and his first steps as a movie director, Bradley’s laughter at the talent show. I stole their names and printed them forever on my T-shirt... but no matter how much I want to, it won’t have room for all the moments I lived here.

I remember playing Spikeball, soaked because we didn't care about the rain. Riding on Mason's bike handlebars. McCarthy saying, "Let's go to Pam and Bill's house and watch Grease." The amusement park with Henry and Kipp, floating in the lazy river. Being bunk monitor of Mattawanna, "Lights out!!" but of course they had to read the notebook. "Good night, furnace!!" "Hana, dul!" Caroline and Alana shout. Baking pies with Olivia. Not being able to leave Walmart because Asara and Bex weren't there yet. Alex and Lucía giving a hard time to the tour guide at Huntingdon College. Later, sneaking into the greenhouse. "I spun 180° on the wakeboard!!" Kim exclaims. Lily quiet on the bench: "It's okay, some of us just feel more."

I hug these kids tightly over the shoulder, because in this little world that is camp, I got to be the one who took care of them. On that shoulder, I try to gather all the love I have inside me and pour it into them; like when the Olympics Games arrive, the "Counselor Sunday," and the kids pour chocolate syrup on us mischievously. I stay in that hug, and we silently agree that it will last for days, for weeks. Because here, there are seconds that last months, that turn you completely around and leave your seams inside out.

A year from now we'll all be gone, all our friends will move away, and they're goin' to better places. Nothin' is as it has been, and I guess it's just as well, but I miss your face like hell. Rivers and roads, 'til I reach you.

I, who thought I knew nothing, who faced the language barrier... I realize that perhaps there is a universal language, I try to tell Rosalie we understand each other when we speak from the heart. And in the candlelight, the drops of wax burn my fingers. Baffa and Evie look at me, and I see drops, but this time on their faces. It also hurts them how fleeting this is and how special it is, because we create moments with people we will never see again. It hurts because maybe we meet only once in this life.

My favorite day is waking up at 7 AM and crossing all of Pennsylvania to reach the Yough River. Melissa and Spenser already know the drill: pillow in hand. White water rafting: "If you can't row a raft like a raft rat can..." Before the Cucumber, Watson has fallen off the raft. Thea wants to be captain at Dimple Rock. On the bus, cheesy jokes from the rafting staff, "What do you call a cow with three legs?". And I want to tell my brother that, on the way back, the sunset covers the fields and farms, and the four vans drove together in convoy. But in this world, my brother and my friends wait for me on the other side of the planet, and they give me space to fully love this place.

Counselors: you who defied the system, you who have already started living life. I'm not afraid of summer ending; I'm afraid of the distance, that this place will forget about us, that the words will sound foreign. That I won't have Jules every morning to inspire me, to see how

brave she is in choosing what makes sense for her, not seeing Max's tattoo that shifts perspective. "Alive": the only thing we need. The crazy stories at the river, and the peanut butter jar shared.

Kim gave me a camera "to keep the traveling fever." You are the ones who don't settle for what's given, who break stereotypes, who will keep roaming the world. Ambassadors of our cultures in search of new countries. Zoe, it is time to crack open the old. Take the pen in your hands and write your own story: **"make the day awesome"**.

That's what life is about: feeling, sharing, spending a morning hauling gravel together to make paths for the kids who will come. A day off among women: conversations that will be buried forever at the canoeing overnight spot. "Marina, can you carry the firewood now?" Trust blooms fast, and longing comes the day you're no longer part of my routine. Sharing a bathroom with the palm-print curtain: "Hurry, or we'll be late to the staff meeting!" "Are you sisters?" "Yes. There, at camp, we were".

And today you decide to take my problems for a while as you let me rest on a hammock. And I accept, because tomorrow I'll come to you on the way to the Rhino and tell you: I know it's hard, you also carry so much every day; let yourself be loved, lie in the sun, shift with me and go SUP & sail.

And I see myself, and I see that through so many layers there are people who reach my deepest ones. I laugh thinking of how afraid I was, believing that no one could ever pass the individual self that existentialist philosophers wrote about. How ironic that, in an individualistic, consumerist society like the U.S., here at 9803 Old Hawn Road, the system breaks. There's a crack, and isolation crumbles. Kierkegaard spoke of *angst* as existential isolation. I tell him: we are branches of the same tree.

Elena



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