

Soaring to New Heights!

Flight Program



Volume 2 - Issue 1 - November 2010



With the holiday season upon us, we presented a simple question for the guys to ponder: tell us about something for which you are thankful from the last six months with Flight. Within the pages of this newsletter you will find some of our participants' responses and I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed being a small part of each of them. There are countless stories and experiences beyond these short examples; and personally I find it difficult to focus in on any one memory or occurrence that we've been blessed to share together...

In Flight, we strive to serve others and our communities. We stayed busy through volunteering with the Helen O. Krause Animal Shelter, participating in "Basic Rigging for Rope Rescue" for Search and Rescue purposes, training and gaining certification through the American Red Cross for their Disaster Relief Team, as well as providing support for their annual "Ride for the Red" fundraiser, and once again sailing aboard the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater in an effort to



raise awareness and teach youth about water preservation. Additionally, we spent a day helping to revitalize the grounds of the Old Ironmasters Mansion in Pine Grove State Park. Our outdoor volunteer efforts and certifications complement our passion for being outside and protecting the environment, while also complimenting our current certifications in Wilderness First Aid and Leave No Trace ethics. These guys are certainly getting exposed to some awesome opportunities and resume-building activities, which simultaneously help others and our surrounding communities. In fact, we spent all of our weekends in November together camping in our surrounding state parks and enjoying days filled with volunteering, rock climbing, and hiking. Despite the cold nights, it was such a blessing to enjoy the fraternity of camping and being outdoors with one another.



As always, we also continue to expose our young men to culturally enriching activities and events, such as partaking in our first live theater viewing of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest at People's Light and Theater outside Philadelphia. We enjoyed weekends spent together as a family at the beach in Chincoteague, VA and our complimentary tickets to the Harrisburg Senators baseball game as a thank you for our volunteering efforts. Recently we all proudly congregated in Harrisburg to support Chris Chilton in the Grand Review, during which he was dressed in authentic Civil War attire and was marching with other volunteers from across the East Coast as a commemoration of the November 1865 event of the same name organized by the women of Harrisburg to honor the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.) from 25 states who were not permitted to participate in the Grand...



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Many Hands. One Heart.™
DIAKON WILDERNESS CENTER
A LUTHERAN FAMILY & COMMUNITY MINISTRY

*Soaring
to New
Heights*

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Review of the Armies, a military procession and celebration held May 23-24, 1865 in Washington, D.C., following the end of the Civil War. What a proud moment! My personal favorite memory from the summer was attending the Creation Christian Music Festival with Jamile and Ed and witnessing their transformations over the span of that amazing weekend of praise and worship.



However, as rewarding and fulfilling as all of these opportunities have been, the real blessings have been witnessing these young men's individual successes and transformations. We strive to come alongside each Flight member and graduate as they continue to both struggle and succeed in life. Examples such as our graduate, Steven, calling to share the news of his 3.3 GPA in high school, and John sending us updated pictures of his beautiful baby boy. John continues to move up the ranks at his job and James just completed another semester at college while also working full-time at his job. Chris Skates, Brandon, and Tom continue to join us on Flight weekends months after graduating from the program so that they can receive help and support and also to give back to those currently enrolled is simply heartwarming. So, too, is reuniting a father with his son that he had been unable to see for two years because of his inability to afford travel out of state to visit. Ed recently made honor roll at his high school and both Chris Chilton and Tom are continuing to excel at their colleges. Continued education and success at school remain a top priority in Flight and these men exemplify what hard work and dedication are all about. Those are the real stories and successes of Flight... good kids striving to become great men.



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In closing, I will share with you my personal favorite memory of the past six months. We were honored to be a part of both Chris Chilton and Tom Kemper's baptisms and public proclamations of their faith this past August.



This life-changing step will certainly guide and bless them for the rest of their lives and words cannot describe how powerful it is to look back and remember these young men when they were struggling kids while adjudicated to the Diakon Wilderness Center.



To see their evolution from angry, resistant, and manipulative kids just a few years ago to young men now embracing and striving to live an honorable Christian life is incredible. I was fortunate enough not only enter the baptismal waters with Tom and make my own public proclamation of my faith, but also to baptize him on behalf of our church and our Lord. Can anything surpass that? Probably not,



but we'll continue to strive to answer His call while we all endeavor to become positive, successful, and contributing adults.



Sincerely,
Rob Kivlan
 Flight Program Supervisor

The Flight Program is currently accepting applications. For more information, contact Rob Kivlan at Diakon Wilderness Center.
 Phone: (717) 903-5102
 Email: kivlanr@Diakon.org

Be sure to look for us on Facebook, keywords "Diakon Lutheran" or "Diakon Flight."

Interested in donating to the Flight Program? Simply visit this page on the Web: <http://www.diakon.org/give-now/> and select "Flight Program" on the SECURE page.

Succeeding in the classroom and beyond...



My most memorable event since the summer was when my Flight brothers came to support me at my comedy show in Philadelphia. It was first time actually hosting an event at the Laff House Comedy Club. I really felt less nervous when they showed up for support. I also really appreciate Rob helping me get into Thaddeus Stevens College. The Diakon Flight Program is the most important program for kids and young men who are looking for a

way out of their situation and need support, while having a lot of fun during the process.



I also will inform you that my MOST favorite event is when we went sailing on the Hudson River in New York. I've never been sailing before and it was so different being guided by a mass body of water than 4 wheels on tires. I really enjoyed everything I learned about sailing. I also was given some sense of maturity by my fellow peers and supervisor, by being able to venture out on my own. That was really refreshing after being treated like a child all my life, even when I didn't deserve it. I got the chance to demonstrate and prove my maturity and independence and didn't let them down.



Sincerely,

Chris Chilton

Weekends of fun, fraternity, and growth...



Even though I graduated from Flight earlier this summer, I still return to spend time with the guys and get support. It's like a brotherhood that I'll be a part of for the rest of my life. Last time I was with Flight we went to Chincoteague beach and had an all around amazing and relaxing time. We spent some time on the beach swimming and playing Rob-style volleyball (no rules, just fun). We all went crabbing every day and caught over a dozen crabs which we ate the last night. Ed, Dwayne, and I went on a bike ride along the beach and through the town. On our last night we watched our favorite movie together, the Lion King.

The time before that the Flight weekend I was involved in was Search and Rescue training. We learned a bunch of different knots and how to use them with the different rigging and apparatus to evacuate injured people. We put Chris C. in the stretcher and practiced rescuing him – he lived! The best part of the whole training was when we all made a “mouse trap” out of a bunch of different knots and rope and surrounded Rob with it so that one move from him would topple over all of our water bottles, but of course he got out. I just love being with everyone and how we help each other out and continue to learn new skills to help others out too.

Sincerely,

Chris Skates



Chris making breakfast over a campfire

Transformations...

This year some of the Flight guys and I went to the Creation Christian Music Festival. This was an outstanding fun time for me. Those of us that went shared some personal stories about our lives, which helped to build up our already strong friendship. We were surrounded by thousands upon thousands of people and yet it wasn't cramped or awkward, it just felt like the right place to be at that time. I will never forget the time I spent there. I will never forget this because while I was there in the crowd I finally found God and knew I was going down the right path. Since then I have made some mistakes but I also now know that God is always on my side and will help me through my daily struggles. It was and always will be one of my favorite memories! I definitely plan on going back for years to come. When I was there it was like nothing could bring me down because I was surrounded by a super positive environment and I knew I was to be happy there. I look forward to sharing this experience with my Flight brothers and the many lives that Flight will touch in such an outstanding way!



Sincerely,

Ed Oslowski, Jr.

Family...

In September we had the privilege of taking the Flight program to Chincoteague Island for the weekend. My family was invited to join the boys and we had an amazing weekend. We enjoyed swimming and playing volleyball on the beach. We also had a great time at the house that we stayed at. There was a bay out back and we enjoyed fishing and catching crabs.

It was so cool to see all of the boys interacting with my children. They were great big brothers. They played with them, entertained them and treated them as part of Flight. We often talk about Flight as a family, and having my Flight family and my regular family together made for a very special and memorable weekend.



Sincerely,

Matt Reichard

Flight Program Counselor

Experiential Learning...

When Rob requested a summary of one of our Flight trips I became overwhelmed... How could I pick just one? Every trip we made, every weekend at the Lodge, every task we completed felt like a victory. I could tell you about watching our boys learn how to crew and sail a 70-foot sail boat... and to be so energetic to be asked back by the Captain! Sailing is my love, and what a thrill it was to watch Chris Chilton become comfortable in an uncomfortable environment. Eddy learning how to supervise raising a 3000-pound sail and tie it off with a knot he learned. Dewayne climbing aloft to the crow's nest on the mast. Tom being a mentor to all 40 young men as requested by...



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the Skipper herself... Weekend after weekend was new and exciting! Did our boys stumble this year? Absolutely. So did I, and I venture so did most of us. But our boys never failed to learn, and to pick themselves up and demonstrate what great men they are becoming. They have taught me more than I could ever teach them...

Sincerely,

Pete Houghton

Flight Program Volunteer



Answering His call...



On August 1st, 2010, I was baptized. On that day, I made a public statement of my faith. It was the happiest day of my life, and I will never forget it as long as I live. But let me also tell you now that the days that followed were far from rainbows and butterflies, but I've strived to remain consistent with my conviction to serve others. Even before my baptism, I had felt called to service. My trip to Haiti in December opened my eyes to what is breaking God's heart. Therefore, I have spent the last four months helping others as much as I can. I say "I," but in reality, it's Flight that has been reaching out a helping hand to so many people over the last four months.

We have spent time volunteering for Pine Grove Furnace State Park, the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater (sailing the Hudson River and teaching third and fourth graders about the environment), and for the American Red Cross. Rob and I have recently joined the local Red Cross Disaster Relief Team so that we can be there to help when disaster strikes. We all spent a Flight weekend going through the proper trainings and certifications, and just last week we received a call around midnight about a house fire in Cumberland County. The house was destroyed – the family of five that was living there had lost everything. The family members' health was not affected by the fire, but their home was gone. We showed up to help with getting the family into a hotel for a couple nights and giving them funds for clothes and food. It's nice to go on sailing trips to teach children about a river, and help with landscaping at a local park, but the real service takes place when a hand is reached out to those who have nothing.

In October, Rob, Mat, and I returned to Haiti for a week to scout out what future missions trips could help with there. The children at all the orphanages were all okay, but several of them had lost their buildings due to the earthquake. Traveling down the streets of Port-Au-Prince, we saw many collapsed buildings. Many of them still have skeletons from people that were trapped in the rubble and were never rescued. Although we can't just go down there with bricks and mortar and rebuild the orphanages in a week or bring the needed tools to break up all the rubble, we could visit the orphanages and play games with the kids. We traveled to several orphanages and spent time playing with the kids and coming up with plans of how we can help the people who were affected by the quake. I have traveled extensively, but when I get off the plane in Haiti, I feel God's presence more so than anywhere else in the world.



Needless to say, Rob and I will be returning to Haiti for years to come. At this moment, we are preparing for our trip the day after Christmas. We have talked with Girl Scouts and various other organizations about helping with our preparation by donating clothes, toys, toothbrushes, soap, etc. to the children in need. In the near future, we will be moving bunk beds from the Diakon Wilderness Center into containers to be shipped to Haiti so that the children at some of the orphanages will no longer have to sleep on the floor. It's cool to see how sacrificing our time to help others has rendered such a fruitful outcome. But rest assured, we won't stop helping others any time soon because...*That's how we roll!*

Bondye Bondi ou (God Bless you)

Thomas Kemper

Who we are:

We are the Flight Program. We are a group of young men who made poor choices when we were younger and ended up getting sent to placement at the Diakon Wilderness Center. Most of us have been in and out of the system, placements, and detention centers. That was the past.

Today is our future. Today we are voluntarily participating in the Flight Program, and we're taking new and challenging steps in our lives to change and become successful. We rely on one another for support. We attempt to do what is right, not what is easy. We now look towards the future and our goals instead of living "in the moment." We want the best that this world has to offer and we're now ready to go after it, the honorable way. We are separating from our old friends. They don't know what to think of us anymore. Our families don't know us anymore. They're impressed. Our old teachers, probation officers, and everyone else in our communities (who we struggled to understand) are beginning to see that we're going to make it.

We now have positive dreams and goals. We believe in helping others along the path to success: "*As Iron Sharpens Iron, So One Person Sharpens Another.*" We are discovering and using the tools and resources in our communities to achieve our goals. We are breaking free from our comfort zones and *Soaring to New Heights*.

We sacrifice our weekends to be with our brothers. We let go of the old Friday night parties, now we spend that time helping each other and the community. We're not afraid to cry in front of each other. We're not afraid to ask for help. We dropped that front. Fridays and Saturdays are now about positive people, places, and things. We're on the move, in and out of state, going to new events, helping wherever there is a need, meeting new people, hiking new trails, and always... telling our stories.

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