**Letters of Impact**

**0ne Night in a box/Poverty Simulation**

Testimony from a former participant:

**Laura Broyles**

In January of 2008, my sister died while living on the streets. After her son passed away she turned to drugs and alcohol. I know she loved Jesus but struggled with grief and addiction. Shortly after her death, I had the opportunity to participate in 1 Night in a Box. 1 Night in a Box gave me a glimpse of what it is like to be homeless. It was a very cold night and in those shivering moments my heart was changed from judgment to love and understanding. I highly recommend this life changing opportunity as it brought me to a deeper understanding of God's heart for those who are homeless and without hope.

**Abi Mazzo**

“I went for the first time many years ago because I wanted to see what it was like to be homeless. I have participated many times now and am always glad I have a bed to go home to, but realized many people don’t. This is not just a one night in a box experience; it was a life-changing event for some. My hope every year is that participants will realize that they have kids sitting next to them in classes that are homeless, someone that has not bathed in three or four days, or are hungry; that they will realize they do not know that kid well enough to judge that kid and that they will have compassion for them. I hope that after hearing the guest speaker they will know ways to get help for those that need it.”

**Tabitha Schaffer**

“We were raising money and awareness for, I think, a pretty good cause. It changed the way I think about people I see who might be homeless. I would totally do it again.”

 **Alysa Knox**

This will be my 13th year to participate…Obviously, I’m aware of homelessness by now. I also know what it is like to sleep in a cardboard box in a Walmart…or church parking lot, when it is snowing, and when it is 17 degrees out… I love being a part of giving others the same life changing experience I had the first time. It is so cool to see passion and compassion rise up in people. In the words of Maya Angelou, ‘Now that I know better, I do better.’ One night in a box educates and equips people to serve the homeless in our community. It is hard to change a problem that you do not know exists. Even if I’ve done it before, it still reminds me of everything I lose sight of during the year.”

**Ezra Eastin**

 I thought that it was a great experience. It seemed very realistic. I was only 9 in the simulation so I was mostly at school the whole time, but from what I could tell it was all very stressful for the adults, and also hard to keep going when we had so many different things going wrong. I'm sure when people are in those situations it would be very difficult to actually get to know their own family, because everyone is just so focused on trying to live that they can't focus on simple but important things like just spending time with each other.

**KatyJo**

It was absolutely eye opening and gave me more empathy and understanding of the challenge’s folks facing poverty go through. I got 100% into it – as a single mother of 3, I was flustered from all the things that drew away my attention from my kids and maintaining our household. It was a great exercise for any young adult to do as well! It shows the responsibilities you need and how easily you can find yourself in a tough situation. I would love to do it again and see if I might reach a better outcome...

Jay Armstrong - adult

ONIAB is the most taxing and accurate display of simulating poverty that I know of locally. It is designed to try your patience but to do it in a fun and enjoyable way.  I took that to heart as the shady “Quick Cash” vendor.  My job was to help the poverty-stricken folks but to help myself as well.  Shortchanging those in a hurry hopefully helped our attendees learn a little lesson in regards to a life of poverty.

**Moriah Armstrong**

The poverty simulation experience was enlightening to me. My "family's" role was based on a true story, so what I experienced was probably very realistic. In reality, someone in my situation would probably be too focused on getting drugs to really care what happened. I believe the poverty simulation was a very educational experience for most people who participated in it. I have always had sympathy for people in a state of poverty, but I was not really capable of understanding what it is like to go through it. I still don't have a full grasp of it, but I think that now I can understand a little more.

**CAM Overall Experience**

**Emilee Denison 2019**

 Over the past three years, I have matured both personally and spiritually thanks to the leadership of Community Action Ministries (CAM). Since joining CAM, I have been gently but consistently pushed out of my comfort zone, helping me to become a more useful tool for Christ. When I first joined CAM in 2016, I was shy and lacking confidence. However, the welcoming environment the group offered eased my fears as I engaged in Bible study and devotions. They made me feel my comments and insights were meaningful and worth listening to. Volunteering events also provided an opportunity to grow while giving to others. As we worked together, we helped agencies meet their goals, if not surpass them. It is always satisfying to see what we are able to accomplish at the end of the day!

Being considered for the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) during the second year was another valuable opportunity. Having no leadership experience, I was uncertain if I could accomplish what was expected. However, with guidance and encouragement, I have become more comfortable in taking on a leadership role. I have learned how to better encourage other participants, write, and present devotions, and be a representative of authority when needed.

I have gained so much from being a member of CAM and YAC, most importantly the need to put others first. Learning to interact with a variety of people in a way that is meaningful to them, has taught me to be more accepting and loving towards others. Members of CAM will walk away with an outlet to share their faith with the world by caring for those in need. They will understand what it means to have a strong work ethic and loving family of fellow believers. I know, as my CAM family has seen me through the most difficult trials of my life with prayer and encouragement.

**Serenity Houck 2019**

I have been involved with Community Action Ministries (CAM) for several years and have been on the YAC team for 2 years. I joined CAM in August of 2012. This organization has touched my life in ways that are difficult to describe. CAM is an organization like no other; it is more than a group of people it is a family. I joined this family when I was 10 years old. Throughout the last 7 years I have grown spiritually. There have been events that they ran out of work for us to do because we work to the fullest. We really “put skin on the gospel”. We always 2:14 it so that it is possible for us too 2:15 it. CAM is a place that the smiles never stops and the learn the meaning of hard work. We do not only work hard, but we also play hard. It is a place that you are able to go to serve the Lord and meet some of the greatest people you will come in contact with. It is some of the best eye openers you can imagine. I am having a very difficult time trying to tell what type of impact CAM will have on your life because there are so many different types of impacts. We all want to show God's love and became encouraging and faithful subjects. We want to be able to help the ones in need. CAM is an amazing organization to volunteer with. It will teach you to come out of your comfort zone. If you are shy and quiet coming in you will be outgoing and more comfortable with yourself and others. This is the ki

**Craig Conaway 2019**

Community Action Ministries (CAM) has been a tremendous blessing in my life and my family’s life. For over the last ten years, our family has been involved with CAM in a variety of ways. We have three children who have participated in CAM events. Our first event occurred when my son, Caleb, and I took part in One Night in a Box. This event helps simulate the experience of being homeless and having to sleep outside in the cold in a box while at the same time educating youth on the challenges that homeless people face daily. As our daughters become older, they also joined in a variety of activities sponsored by CAM. For example, our children have attended many CAMps where they have had the privilege of serving others from yard work for widows to sending gift boxes to U.S. military soldiers overseas to food and shelter programs to vacation Bible schools in apartment complexes.

As a parent, I very much appreciate the value of hard work and meaningful projects my children have had the opportunity to serve others through. Another value that CAM has helped instill in my children is that we as we serve others, we do it through a great attitude. Even though much of the work during the CAMps demand a lot of physical effort, the students learn to trust God for strength and to be filled with a joyful attitude.

Also, CAM seeks to empower youth by encouraging the students to lead worship and devotions during the meetings. Some of our favorite memories with CAM involve student-led Bible studies and witnessing young people explore God’s Word and discuss how to apply the truth of God to their lives.

CAM brings Christian youth together from a variety of churches and is not limited by a particular demonization or movement to serve alongside one another and to impact our world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only have hundreds of youth been impacted through CAM, but the people whom CAM has served have also profoundly experienced the love of God.

CAM educates and equips youth to follow Jesus through serving others and obeying the Word of God. I strongly recommend participating in a CAM event and also financially supporting the ministry. Your investment will bring wonderful returns.

**Promise Houck 2019**

CAM? **C**ommunity **A**ction **M**inistries!

At this moment I am 15-years-old. I started CAM 7-years-ago, which means I was 8-years old. That may seem a little young for a little girl to go help the homeless or make bricks for a house, or even doing yard work in 100-degree weather. However, I loved it! It was perfect; not only to get started on giving back to my community, but also it has helped me learn how to serve the Lord and grow actually my faith. There’s an incredible difference between a Vacation Bible school (VBS) and CAM! When I started participating with CAM I had already been baptized; I know the Lord (as much as an 8-year-old could) but things changed! A great example is like my faith was a little seed freshly planted, and CAM was the water and sun nourishing the seed so it could grow and branch out to it’s surroundings. CAM really opened my eyes to the real life struggles going on right in front of me! Now, I know that I don’t feel bad for the homeless or unable elderly; I know to have compassion for them. Because we as a ministry go out and do something on our Saturdays off, for our community. Instead of driving by and reading that cardboard sign someone is holding, and thing ‘man that’s sad I wish I could do something’ and going on about your life. Because, you can do something… and at CAM we do! Volunteering is a great thing and not only does good go to the community because you did it, you get rewarded as well. For one you are serving people to serve the Lord. Two, colleges LOVE volunteer hours! Three, seeing the grateful faces of those amazing people you help is such a great feeling you won’t forget. CAM was an amazing change in my life, and I really blossom my faith to so much more than before.

CAM? **C**ommunity **A**ction **M**inistries!

**Anita Johnson 2019**

A decade ago, my family was introduced to CAM when my daughter became a middle school friend of Alysa Hooper. In chatting with Donna, I was intrigued to learn about the service projects she coordinated on a monthly basis. My daughter and her friends began serving, and through the years, my other three kids, and my husband and I have joined in on many CAM projects. As busy people, the particular appeal of CAM projects was that they were well-organized and a response to a specific need. This approach to volunteering meant we got a lot of meaningful work done. Many places we served at, were surprised at all we accomplished. Donna runs a tight ship – it is a “work” project, but the camaraderie while working makes it a good time. CAM offers a wide variety of service opportunities, so you can find your niche – if you prefer working outdoors, with children, with seniors, etc. Our family always enjoyed volunteering at the Regional Food Bank- and we’ve done everything there from weeding the garden, to bagging corn on the cob, filling boxes and cleaning freezers. And it was usually turned into some type of contest to keep us all motivated and working. My kids also especially enjoyed their time volunteering at Cornerstone Kids’ Ranch in Ada. A hard day’s work was followed by camp fun- hayrides, and s’mores. CAM is a perfect opportunity for doing mission work in the metro. There are many unsaved, hurting people nearby that can be impacted by our tangible expressions of Christ’s love. Demonstrating our faith through service has the two-fold benefit of blessing both us and the recipients of our service.

**Barbara Wyatt 2019**

We were first impressed by CAM’s welcoming of all youth and entire families, regardless of church affiliation. Uniting with other Christians and church youth groups, our purpose in CAM was to “put skin on the Gospel”. (It has always amazed me that more churches don’t tap into CAM as an amazing full service resource for ministry to be done by their youth.) Our family’s first event was One Night in a Box and what an impact it had! We have been blessed by the opportunities CAM has given us to help others and share the gospel close to home. We would never have known of the needs of the varied individuals and organizations for which CAM does service projects. With Donna and Jerry’s wise oversight, every CAM event was appropriately supervised, and all participants were held to Biblical moral standards. Our children grew from participants of CAM events, including Bible studies, into leaders on CAM's Youth Advisory Council. With the death of my husband, we became recipients of God’s love expressed through CAM. What a blessing! Words could never do justice… We are very proud to be affiliated with CAM for almost a decade now!

**Beth Knox 2016**

My son, Jonathan, has been involved with CAM for about 4 years and I have seen a tremendous change in his life as a result. So, two years ago, I came as an adult sponsor to one of the CAMps. To be honest, I didn’t know what to expect, except a lot of hard work and not a lot of sleep. What I experienced was something extraordinary. Hard work, yes; little sleep, yes; but where you would usually expect whining, complaining, bad moods and bad attitudes, instead I saw love, compassion, encouragement, excitement and most of all a fire for spreading God’s love through serving others. These middle school and high school students seemed to be almost looking for ways to out-do each other in love and good deeds! And then they would worship! With all their hearts! And study the Bible every day, some of them for the first time ever. And they would share what they learned! And one of them would teach a lesson and others would participate and discuss spiritual things. And they would gather together to pray. And again, for some of them it was the first time ever. And they weren’t ashamed or embarrassed or shy because they were loved and accepted by other people their age who were also reaching out for a greater faith. And I was encouraged and inspired by God and by these young brothers and sisters in Christ. Now I serve as the volunteer youth leader at our church in Texas. We participate in CAMp in the summer time and have modeled our Spring Break outreach after CAM and our youth leadership team after YAC. Our students are starting to lead devotionals, and participate and pray (Yes, some for the first time ever). I am very grateful for Donna and Jerry Hooper and their family for the amazing work they do. It takes a tremendous amount of prayer, work and dedication to make it happen, but they are changing so many lives in so many ways!

**Franki Anglin 2016**

 I am so happy to be telling you how much CAM means to our family! We are a third generation CAM family. My husband and I, our children, and now our oldest two grandsons, have been involved in CAM since its beginning. This summer I was able to volunteer at all three CAM camps. This was an amazing summer, and I will never forget my time with the people with whom I ministered.

At CAM we often focus on the “work”, which is understandable since service is such a big deal to God! Yet, the hearts of people are just as big a deal to our Father. CAMps foster an environment to allow kids and adult volunteers to grow in relationship to each other, which gives us an opportunity to minister to each other. I had a false belief that this was a one way ministering moment, but it is an all ways ministering moment.

As an adult leader I have the honor to meet the kids where they want to meet. I have the privilege of bringing my real self and my hurts and victories to these kids and to be ministered to as well. I also have the opportunity to stop a moment and have a conversation with the people we are serving. To share in this way with the body of Jesus makes me so grateful. Thank You so very much for giving to the Lord through CAM!

**Lavonne Blanco 2015**

I wanted to write this letter to encourage whoever is reading it to consider supporting CAM ministry. I have known Jerry and Donna Hooper for over 25 years and know them to be people of integrity with a heart of service and love for our youth. The program that they have developed in CAM is beautiful in that it takes young people outside of their culture of me,me,me and takes them into a culture of service and giving. It transforms their lives! We have supported CAM from its humble beginnings and are so thankful for all that the Hooper’s do to reach out to the community and to also love our children by encouraging them to look outside of themselves and into the lives and needs of others.

**Mylisa Pearce 2015**

You may remember me as Mylisa Miller, one of the first kids to participate in CAM, back in 1999-2002. God has put it on my heart to reach out to you.

Frist, I just wanted to tell you how much your family and CAM has impacted my life. Working with you all in the CAM camps really gave me a strong connection to Christ, and the community, and what it really means to walk with God. My childhood would not have been the same without you guys. It really meant allot to know that I had a safe place to go for friends and worship, and to learn about God. I remember us all starting out in a small church in Norman. Now you guys are still going strong and delivering God's grace to so many people. It brings joy to my heart to see how you have grown. That your vision from all those years ago, has continued to grow and bring grace, joy, and hope to so many kids, and the people of our communities.

So I'm sure you are wondering why I am reaching out to you now and how I am doing. So here is a little bit of what has been going on in my life..............…… The Lord has blessed us in so many ways, and you were a big part of my youth. It feels absolutely amazing to know that I can help the same group that helped me as a child.

I just want to say thanks again! We pray your impact on the community is strong, and the Lord continues to bless you all. God Bless!

A Former CAMper

**Robin Harris 2015**

Community Action Ministries (CAM) is a group I have not been involved in for long but has already changed my life in great ways.

 Most importantly, I have grown spiritually because of CAM. Every CAM event I have attended has brought glory to God and pointed others towards him whether it is a camp, volunteer project, or a Bible study.

 CAM has taught me to come out of my comfort zone and to be overall extrovert about my faith. Before CAM I was often shy and anxious to talk in front of large groups of people. But with CAM everyone is always included, there is nothing like the community that is at every single event CAM has.

 CAM is helping so many people of all ages, spiritually and physically. CAM makes a huge impact on our community through Christ. I can’t wait to witness more of the incredible things CAM does for others’ lives, as well as my life.

**Alysa Hooper 2015**

It has proven very difficult for me to condense a lifetime of involvement with Community Action Ministries down to this letter. Anyone who has been a part of CAM knows it is hard to describe the experience in words. CAM is more than a hobby; it is a calling. CAM is more than a group of friends; it is a family. CAM has done more than change my life; it has completely molded me. I can’t remember much of a life without it. I was four years old when God used my parents, Jerry and Donna, to start this ministry. Little did they know, one summer camp would turn into 16 years of fostering spiritual growth, a life of service, and leadership in hundreds of teens and adults.

I am brought to tears (a trait I have inherited from my mom) when I think of all of those who have been impacted by CAM. It has been fun to work with so many people who come through the ministry. One of the things that makes CAM unique and successful is the diversity of people. Participants are from all different backgrounds and churches. It truly is an example of the body of Christ coming together to further His kingdom. Through the years, I have seen hundreds of people come and go. Some have stayed longer than others. I believe God has used this ministry to plant seeds in every one of them and to help grow the fruit in many. I have learned to never underestimate the power of God to use the smallest acts of love to penetrate someone’s heart. That is one of the core beliefs that has shaped the framework of CAM. Whether it is a camp, a bible study, or a one-day volunteer project, all CAM events are structured to bring glory to God and to point others to Him through our words and actions. I have had the privilege of seeing hearts transformed and lives saved, from Jasmine, the little girl at the Mission Norman VBS, to Mike, the elderly man dying of cancer.

Many of those people, places, and experiences have stayed with me. One recent encounter reminded me why I love CAM so much. I went with a small group of girls to Salvation Army in OKC where we helped a man named James restock the food pantry (which is really more like a mini grocery store). The previous day, they had served 104 families, leaving the shelves very empty. Our group filled shelves, sorted and packaged produce, and cleaned the area all before we ate. During our lunch break, James announced we had already accomplished more than he had anticipated us completing for the whole day. We had finished so much that James and one of our girls had the opportunity to brighten everyone’s day by delivering donated flowers to every person in the building. About an hour before we were scheduled to leave, James gathered our group to inform us that he did not have anything else for us to do. He was almost in tears thanking our group for making it possible for him to leave before 6pm for the first time since he had begun working there. He said not only did we get more done than any group before us, but we did it with pure joy, laughing and building each other up. As James blessed us with flowers, he wanted us to know if he had daughters, he would want them to be just like each of the girls in our group. The experience reminded me how powerful God’s love is when shown through our actions and words. Something as simple as stocking a shelf well with a smile can impact others in ways we can’t even imagine. The important part is to remember to “serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people” (Ephesians 6:7). In my experience, CAM provides the environment to foster a desire to serve exuberantly out of a place of love for our Lord.

CAM has experienced many changes over the years. These adaptations range from camps lasting six days to now three days to creating the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to forming bi-weekly bible studies. Even as things have changed, some things have stayed the same: first, the mission to “put skin on the gospel” has remained constant; second, my family’s love for and commitment to God and our community is still strong; and finally, God’s faithfulness to bless CAM has been unwavering. I continuously thank God for all He has done and is doing in CAM, in my life, and in the lives of others. As I transition from being the president of the YAC team to a board member, I proceed with great excitement for what else He has in store.

**Isabella Starchman 2015**

I’ve been a part of Community Action Missions for several years now and have been on its Youth Advisory Council for four years. For me it’s hard to put what CAM has done into words. To take years of wonderful experiences and memories and to try to compress them into a letter is near impossible! I’ll try my best, though.

Community Action Missions has been a part of my life for a while now. My very first event was building boxes at Feed the Children. I wasn’t quite old enough to be near the assembly line (at least from what I remember). It wasn’t until I’d gone to a “One Night In a Box” with my church that I really started getting involved and going to as many events as I could! It was great to watch and be a part of a group of people working to “put skin on the Gospel”! Through my experiences, Community Action Missions has helped kindle a passion for missions in my heart and compassion for the world around me. I love coming together with other members of the body of Christ and executing practical expressions of God’s love through everything from pulling weeds at the veteran’s center to playing with the children in City Rescue Mission! Through CAM I’ve been given opportunities to impact the community and spread God’s love. Not only taking care of people’s physical needs but sharing the gospel with them. I’ve had the opportunity to be in fellowship with some amazing people! Through CAM I’ve met amazing mentors who have helped me grow and made some absolutely wonderfully fantastic friends! Through the Bible studies I’ve gotten to dig into His word with like-minded believers and learn to love him with all my mind. CAM has been absolutely amazing, and I can’t wait to see what we do next!

**Hunter Smith 2015**

For me, CAM has been a way to actually live out the faith that I profess. One of the main missions of CAM is stated as “Putting Skin on the Gospel”, throughout the four years that I have been involved, this has been the tantamount goal for the projects that we do. At every activity that I can recall, the reason for our being there has been made very clear at the start of the day, in the middle, and at the end. This example is to say that it permeates the entire day.

In another way, CAM has given me the opportunity to work with incredible people who I would consider some of the closest friends that I have. It seems like much of society today is filled with superficial friendships that rarely go behind the very surface of someone’s life, not so with CAM. Conversations that go beyond the surface are the norm and, as such, deep friendships are created. Even as new individuals participate from activity to activity, month-to-month, they are immediately included in the group and brought in. With one of the main rules being the probation of “cliques”, people that would never interact in the course of their normal social groups are brought to equal ground and are able to build friendships that would otherwise never happen.

So much of our society is apathetic, or at the very least, ignorant, of the needs of those that surround us. Because of CAM’s relentless pursuit of those that are in need, I am given the opportunity to experience and interact with those that are in need, and because of this interaction, I am better prepared as I go through my life to help them in real ways that will impact them beyond just the day.

**Rhema Maxwell 2015**

I have been involved with Community Action Ministries for about four years as of now, and my life would not be the same without it. CAM is so much more than a way to check off the volunteer box, it has been a way to help me grow spiritually and mentally. My first two years with CAM I learned that my age doesn't define me as much as I thought it did. CAM taught me many practical things then like how to have a better work ethic, and enjoying experiences even when they were hard. These things were no doubt influential, but it has been these last two years that were truly life changing. The summer before my eighth-grade year was really when it all started. I started really falling in love with who God is. When that happened, CAM became so much more precious. It became a way to learn more about God, more about people and actually put into action what I had learned. In 2015 I became a member of CAM's Youth Advisory Council or YAC. As a YAC member I've learned even more! I've gotten the amazing opportunity to lead devotions at CAMps. This not only helped my public speaking skills; it's also taught me to be more confidant and how to talk about God on an everyday basis. This has even helped me start a bible study at my school! CAM has taught me discipline and work ethic, but it has also taught me so much deeper things like learning to love people more, listen better, and enhanced my walk with God in ways I never thought possible. I know these are lessons I'll carry around with me for the rest of my life and it's all thanks to CAM. I can't wait to see what else I'll learn in years to come!

**Nathan Wyatt 2015**

 First and most importantly, I have grown spiritually because of CAM. The program is designed to put skin on the Gospel, which required me to step out of my comfort zone to lead devotions, talk with men and women who have no homes, and overall to be outgoing with my faith.

 I know I have attained a notable work ethic with CAM. Everyone is expected to do his or her part in the work projects. The result is something I dubbed “CAM Intensity.” Organizations that we help always have a certain expectation for what a service group can get done, and they are always astounded that we blow their expectation out of proportion. It’s simply the product of natural industrious attitude when everyone is on fire for doing The Lord’s work.

 Here’s an example of how CAM has grown me personally. Once a week, I go to a metalworking shop. I am employed by my mother to build a pool fence for my pool, and the owner of the shop is kind enough to let me use his equipment free of charge. Before long, the owner noticed my diligent approach to my work asked me if I wanted a job. I now have an extremely profitable job—monetarily and experientially—because of the work ethic that CAM has helped me attain.

 CAM is helping men and women of all ages grow spiritually and physically capable. If you are looking for an organization wholly focused on making an impact on our community for Christ, you’ve found it.

My AHA moment is not really a single event. Every single time that I’m with the group, I experience the warmth and community in CAM that includes EVERYONE. I have never experienced anything like it. People sit aside all differences to serve Christ and each other in a real way.

**Jael Downing 2015**

Since CAM I’ve had a chance to build my relationship with God. My first CAM CAMp was in Ada where we set up for the summer ranch camps and at the time, I was very shy and had no idea what I was doing there. I was just invited by one of my vey close Christian friends and I promised I would come. I had the mindset to work hard and get this over with because I wasn’t comfortable with new people. After the first day of work I was ready to shower and pass out; however, it was of my surprise that we had to stay up a little longer for devotion. In my experience I’ve never witnessed a devotion done by a young person. Such a fire on young people was foreign to me, but it was something I desired. Searching for that fire is what got me where I am today. I’m thankful for the fire I’ve experienced through CAM.

 Finding the fire wasn’t easy; this past year has had obstacle after obstacle. Having a group like CAM has helped me through these obstacles. Death after death having the support and prayers has helped my family and I get through.

 Doing CAM every other week this year is a great atmosphere and I love doing the volunteer work. Giving back is just one way to help the community. CAM has taught me to not just help physically, but to put skin on the gospel, speaking truth into people’s lives.

**Evan Johnson 2015**

Through the years that I have volunteered with CAM, I have worked on all types of projects, but leave them with the same sentiment: gratefulness. Serving people who are experiencing hardship always reminds me of how fortunate I am. CAM has made me more aware of the needs in my community, and given me the opportunity to interact with people of all ages and situations far removed from my high school life. I can get too caught up in myself and am learning that following Jesus opens my heart to others and compels me to respond with prayer and action.

A WOW moment for me:

We were volunteering in OKC at a shelter and thrift shop called My Father’s Business. It was overwhelming to see so many needy people, and it did not feel like cleaning and sorting clothes was making that much of a difference. Donna, the lady in charge had serious health issues that hindered her ability to walk, so the CAM volunteers asked if we could pray for her. With her permission, we gathered around her, laid hands on her and asked God to perform His healing work in her. She started crying and expressed her relief. I realized that my ability to help as a teenager may not be extremely significant, but with God working through me, I can do so much more.

**Natalie Wimer 2015**

 CAM has had such an impact on my life in so many different ways. I first started attending CAM when I was in 6th grade. I had no idea what CAM even was, I just went because my friends were going and I had nothing to do on a Saturday. I was in for quite a surprise when they put me to work and expected me to do things I had never done before. It definitely stretched me beyond my comfort zone, but I found that I enjoyed it. I enjoyed working and serving my community in different ways, and it was fun to do it with other people who were of the same mind. Many times, we would make the tasks into competitions, seeing how fast we could get something done, and then trying to beat that time. Or seeing how much we could get done compared to other groups who volunteered at the same places. We always won.

 Also, every day when we volunteered, we would have a devotion during our lunch break. These times of devotion have always been very meaningful to me, and I always walk away with something that I can apply to my life in order to benefit my walk with the Lord. When I started CAM, I thought I knew what work was. I soon found out that this was not the case. Real work means that you do every thing you do to the best of your ability and not just doing what you can to get the job done. CAM takes pride in their excellence, and its volunteers demonstrate that everywhere they go.

 When I was in 8th grade, I decided to join the YAC team. After two years of volunteering at different places, I wanted to get more involved. I wanted to be able to lead in a capacity that was apart of something I loved. Being on the YAC team has stretched me to take on roles of a leader. Many times, I help plan the CAM events, lead devotions, and most importantly, set an example to the other CAM members while we are working. I think it is very important to have leaders who are willing to do the work alongside those whom they are leading. Being able to lead in these capacities has been beneficial to me, not only in my personal life and my walk with the Lord, but it also helped me to gain the most prestigious scholarship at Cameron University. When I first started CAM, I was just doing it for fun; I still do it for fun. But something that was fun for me has turned into a way to pay for college. I don’t have as much time to do CAM anymore as I had to move away for college, but I still try to be apart in any way I can.

 A wow moment that I had at CAM was when I was at the annual One Night in a Box fundraiser for the homeless event. A couple of years ago a pastor came and spoke to our group about his experience of voluntarily becoming homeless for a period of time. I used to think that homeless people where just lazy and didn’t want to work, thus causing them to be homeless. What this pastor said about this shocked me. He started his story with how they ate. There was one place that served breakfast. Then, on the other side of town was the place where they served dinner, and then they had to go somewhere else to find shelter for the night and maybe a shower. Apparently, it is pretty easy to find a job as a homeless person. However, if you want to eat, you don’t have time to work and get across town in time for the evening meal. Therefore, if you get a job as a homeless person, you are basically giving up eating for two weeks until you get paid. When you have to choose between working and eating, eating will almost always win out. That really hit me hard. I also realized many homeless people have mental illness and have trouble holding down a job. Other have come into financial hardship due to illness or losing a good job. There are just a few homeless people that live that way by choice. Many of the places CAM volunteers at, helps homeless people in some capacity. Hearing this pastor talk really gave me a new perspective on the people I help and gave me a bigger heart for them.

**Caleb Roberts 2014**

Community Action Ministries (CAM) is a group I have been a part of for about six years. I am 17 years old, and have thoroughly enjoyed the attitude and work ethics that CAM has helped instill into me. Before CAM I was very shy and nervous about being in front of groups, I preferred to work in the background without anyone noticing me. A year ago, Donna Hooper called me while I was working on a ranch in Ada, Oklahoma. She was requesting that I join the Youth Advisory Council. This invitation had been offered to me a few months previously, and I had neglected to accept due to being nervous and shy around groups and being apart of YAC would make me lead a devotion in front of X amount of people at least once a year. This started me on the path to where I am now.

CAM was the tipping point in my life, forcing me to be in front of other people and lead some kind of devotion or work project. To this day I am glad I took the invitation to be a part of the YAC group. Through being in the YAC group, I have better learned how to socialize and lead while with a very large group of people. This attribute will serve me greatly when I enter the military as a Marine Corps officer. In YAC, our group is required to lead certain aspects in the group of attendees. Some nights, we will get a few hours of sleep less than we are used to but we still need to lead our groups and be an encouragement to the people working with us, whether they be adults or children. This has also taught me a sense of patience, as while anyone is tired they tend to be grouchy or annoyed easily. For this I thank CAM and even more so I thank YAC.

One of my most memorable moments in CAM was just last summer; I was working with a group of young men and women at a kind of home meant to help people get back on their feet. Throughout the day, there were two kids who kept coming around and trying to help us work on their house. However, these two kids didn’t have much of a chance to help as their mother kept yelling at the kids to leave us alone, even with us telling her over and over we liked the kids helping. At the end of the day right before we left, Jerry Hooper, our adult chaperone, took the kids aside. He told them that they would need to remember this, “…that a man loved them very much and his name is Jesus. When the time comes you have to remember that. “

After that I was just close enough to see that Jerry was very serious, but not close enough to hear what he was saying, so I asked him what he had told them. When he shared what he said, it took me a second to think it through. While I know very well what he said is true, it changed my outlook on what we were doing there. Till this point, I had seen CAM as a chance to grow in my faith and in my knowledge. This moment showed me beyond a doubt in my mind that I had it wrong. CAM is not primarily an organization to get us to grow in our own faith, but a group to share our faith! We are to let God use us to let other human beings know of Jesus’s unconditional love for each and everyone of His children, whether they believe in Him or not.

For this and much more, I thank God and CAM for shaping my life into who I am today. All thanks to CAM. I can't wait to see what else I'll learn in years to come!

**Jonathan Knox 2013**

My name is Jonathan Knox and as I write this I am 16 years old. This summer was my first time working with CAM, and God used it to change my life. I live in Dallas, Texas and so my group and I drove the three and a half hours to Norman, Oklahoma. At this time I had been living a horrible, worldly life from Monday to Saturday then putting on my “Holy Face” for church on Sundays. Nobody at my church knew that I swore or told dirty jokes or that I was addicted to pornography. So I here I was in Norman, Oklahoma with my “Holy Face” on and I was ready to serve!

My first impression of CAM was, “Man, these people are incredibly friendly and welcoming!” It seemed that everyone was smiling and happy to be there and immediately felt like I belonged there. The next day we all made bricks for Habitat for Humanity in the 100+ degree heat and the smiles didn’t stop when the sweating started or even when the machinery started to break down. I was so impressed with this group and how they were working as hard as they could to serve God. That night when we were back in the church building where we were staying, the time came for the evening lesson. So I sat in the circle with my bible in hand and I waited for an adult to start speaking. Someone began to speak from the other end of the circle and I looked over at them, but it wasn’t one of the adults, but a girl about my age! I was so surprised that she was going to be leading this group, and I was even more surprised that she was doing it so well! The next night was the same type of thing, only this time it was a girl a couple years older than me leading.

So the four days of CAM were over and I was safely home and well rested. I was sitting on my bed the day after I had gotten back when I suddenly began to cry, which I don’t do very often so I was shocked. While I was crying I couldn’t think of anything other than those two girls teaching this group of teenagers. I felt like I was being told to open my bible and so I started reading from the beginning of Joshua. I read about how God told Joshua to take up leadership now that Moses had passed. Immediately God began to send me visions, visions of ME leading and teaching a group of kids at my church. God was asking me to start and lead a youth group at my church.

I was a little freaked out but I decided not to tell anyone until I was sure this was from God and not from me. So for the next few days I read my bible and prayed to God and listened for answers and He spoke to me every day through scriptures. So I told my dad, who is the pastor of my church, and my youth minister, Mark. They both encouraged me to continue to pray about it and so I did. Then a few weeks later my dad approached me saying that we were changing the Sunday school layout and that a consequence of that would be the formation of a youth group that I could help lead.

It was really going to happen, God had done it! He was going to lead a youth group through me despite my age, and through this process He had also made a 180 degree turn in my life. I was no longer swearing, telling dirty jokes, or watching pornography, He had delivered me! A few days before the next CAMp, Donna, the head of CAM, contacted me asking if I would be willing to lead a devotion at CAMp. I jumped at the chance; I was so excited to be doing the very thing that God used to change my life. God had brought me full circle.

CAM is easily the best organization I’ve ever worked with. Not only does it help so many people, both physically and spiritually, but it provides great teaching about the bible and a friendly environment for spiritual growth. I would HIGHLY recommend it to any person, from any walk of life, no matter where you are with God. And as for me and my youth group, we are about two weeks out from our first meeting and it’s all thanks to the glory of God!

**Forrest Hair 2012**

Community Action Ministries is a very unique organization, one whose effects on people’s lives cannot be overstated. CAM is just as much a serve project as a church service; it focuses on the helper and the helped CAM is a balanced ministry, a rarity in of itself, which doesn’t burn out leaders or neglect those that are unable to help themselves.

For me CAM has been an easy way to learn how to love God practically and deeply concurrently. It has also pushed me far beyond myself, and has made me realize how living for me is a waste of time and is a vain pursuit; while neglecting my own needs is unwise and only leads to apathy and anger. Truly, CAM creates an environment where leaders build each other up, where the internal person is valued, while at the same time the ones being ministered to are highly valued, the homeless are fed, kid ranches where hundreds of kids attend are built up, and the community is uplifted.

A day of CAM consists of breakfast, time with God, serving at various homeless shelters, veteran hospice centers and such, lunch, more serving, dinner, team building time and a devotion. Kids who volunteer are given a taste of working in ministry and serving others, while becoming extremely close with fellow workers. CAM does not limit those who can join by their “spirituality” or “giftedness,” only those desiring to better themselves and their community.

For a leader in CAM, that same day also includes leading various activities, sometimes a devotional or game, even an aspect of serving, and helping kids mature in their thinking and mindset when the work is arduous or they simply have reached their limit. The expectation of leaders isn’t perfection; however the bar isn’t lowered to mediocrity either, and kids or adults who join will find themselves lead by a group of leaders carefully evaluated by the CAM Board of Advisors, and who are wholly submitted to God and leaders.

Community Action Ministries is an organization impervious to meeting the needs of our community. It builds up those who work and those who receive work. It brings people from all ethnicities, backgrounds and religions together to serve Oklahomans and God in a real, tangible, spiritual way.

**Oree Wyatt 2012**

CAM has provided me with opportunities: I have served people I otherwise would not have been able to serve. By participating in CAM’s service projects, my comfort zones have expanded. In addition, as a Youth Advisory Council member, I am privileged to host devotionals at CAM events. Hosting devotionals has helped me solidify my beliefs and has given me practice in explaining God’s Word. CAM is an amazing organization that has opened doors for me to serve and shine God’s light while growing personally.

**Abi Hooper 2012**

 Up until the time I was around ten years old, I didn’t know that “before I was a Christian” existed. I believed that everyone was and had always been a Christian, like me. This was largely because I grew up in CAM; I was there from day one. Some people may think that my early perspective on life was harmful, but I disagree. At least, in my case, it made me who I am, which I think is an all right person. Growing up in a godly environment, full of people ready and willing to serve others, and believing that that is what the whole world is made of (at least while I was younger) helped me to become that sort of person myself. It helped to shape me into a strong believer and server of God. When I finally realized that everyone wasn’t like me, I still believed that everyone had the potential to be because God made all of us. CAM has only reinforced this in me as the years go on. I have seen hundreds of people come and go in the ministry, and not one of them has left unchanged. Some changes are more drastic than others, but the change is still there. I have seen God turn the quietest of kids into the greatest of leaders, the most rebellious into the most obedient, the most guarded into the most trusting, and the laziest into the hardest of workers, I have seen kids radically change their lives to follow God, and I have seen kids slowly rededicate their lives to Him, all through CAM. I myself have seen and experienced these things. CAM isn’t just a volunteer program or a method, at least not to me. To me, it is a part of my life, a part of my heart, and a part of me. CAM has shaped me into the person I am, and continues to shape me into who God is calling me to be. God moves through CAM in an indescribable way, wouldn’t you like to be a part of it?

**George Leonard 2011**

Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Bible Church

I have had the great privilege of serving with CAM with my students over the past two years. I am always amazed at how students from different churches all over the area come together to accomplish something meaningful in the lives of those we are serving. There is no better way for teens to experience what it really means to follow Christ than to put “hands and feet” on their faith by serving in our community. CAM not only makes an amazing difference in the lives of those in need in our area, but also makes a major difference in the lives of those students who participate in their activities. Time after time, when my students hear we are going to participate in a CAM event, they can’t wait to go. I am also always impressed with the organization and planning that is a part of every event that happens with CAM. The details of transportation, liability, and logistics are clearly communicated ahead of time, allowing me to simply focus on the work at hand and the lives of my students. As someone who believes strongly in the importance of service in the community, it is great to have an organization like CAM that makes it so easy for me to get my students involved. CAM is an important part of my ministry year, and I am so grateful for all they do.

**Taci Wimer 2011**

CAM has been such a great place for my teenage daughters to serve and see the needs of others.  It has been good for them to know they can make a difference by acts of service such as simply taking care of someone’s lawn, helping fill packages for the solder's overseas, organizing clothing for the needy,  to working at the Food Bank.  Every time they get to work side by side with teenagers they haven't met before from different backgrounds, experience devotions and worship, and leave with a since of accomplishment in a day of work outside themselves.  A heart of servant hood is what God has called us to and CAM ministries is a perfect example of demonstrating this.

**Mallorie Ramsey 2010**

This is something that is truly hard for me to do. However i feel that it is the responsible thing to do. I have so very much LOVED CAM and being on the YAC!!! I can still remember my very first day-it was the first CAMp at your house, (2008). I didn’t know anybody at all. Within 5 minutes it took everything i had not to cry, because i was so scared! And then you forced me to play taboo with you guys….which i hated then, but now I am thankful for that very moment because you welcomed me in! Little did i know that day would have an impact on my life from that day forward! I am definitely not the same girl I was a few years ago. I KNOW for a fact that God has called me to do missions….and I have you and your AMAZING family to thank for helping me and preparing me. I know I still have so much to learn, but thank you for everything! Therefore, because I have been absent so very much for the YAC meetings and CAM days due to a crazy life, i am now stepping down from the YAC. I will try my best to be at CAM days as much as I can! I love people and i love serving them! With work and school, the ACT, Family, and scholarships and colleges to worry about, my schedule will still continue to be busy! Again thank you so much for everything you have done!

With love (and tears)

**Eli Young 2008**

CAM is important to me because it reminds me that God loves me and He loves others no matter what our situation may be ... i know that God has used and will use me  to bless other people though what we do at CAM My dad says that sometimes “we are the only Bible people ever read.” That puts a little bit of pressure on me when I hear that because I know the way I act and behave could possibly affect someone’s choice of salvation.  I know that being a part of the Youth Advisory Council of CAM is helping me to grow not only as a Christian and a leader, but also allows me to develop life skills such as time management, planning and revising, and public speaking.

**Tim and Stephanie Young 2008**

Serving our Father as a family is a part of our family identity. We *enjoy* serving together! As Christian parents, we know it is our responsibility to teach our children many things – to give back to our community, to be sensitive to and help those in need but above all to be in constant and consistent service to our Lord Jesus Christ. CAM has allowed us to do that and more. Through CAM we have developed deeper relationships with other believers and increased our faith exponentially through times of devotion and reflection, and the experiences we have encountered over the years with CAM. We have had priceless opportunities to witness various situations, which have become invaluable teaching and learning moments.

Through CAM we know that God uses us to His glory and as a blessing to others as we use the special gifts He bestows on each of us. We can see that Eli and Zoë are discovering and developing their gifts at an early age and are given ample opportunities through CAM to employ and refine those skills that He will surely use as they continue to serve Him and as they select careers and pathways as young adults.

Our son is on the Youth Advisory Committee and our daughter, who has participated in CAM along side us since she was in the third grade, is looking forward to possibly becoming a member of the YAC next year. My husband and I are adult leaders and working members of the Board of Trustees of CAM.

As we share memories from past CAM events and look forward to the next summer CAMps, I can hear the excitement in Zoë and Eli’s voices, and see it in their faces! This morning, a CAM workday – a Saturday, my children are up at the crack of dawn anticipating what we are going to do today, who they will help, who they will see and how will all this work in the rain – *not* laying in bed or on the couch watching TV. What more could any parent ask for? Thank you CAM!

**Christian LeFlore 2007**

I've been with CAM for almost six months now. The work and accomplishment we get done in the short time frame we have is always surprising. It surprises me that preteens to teens can often times do more work than college students or full adults. Everyone always tells you that it's good to help your community or help change the world by working hard. It's hard on your own to do that very thing. CAM was there to push me along into serving others and giving up my time just to help people.

I give up my time for CAM because no matter what we're doing, it's fun. The attitudes and colorful people make it enjoyable, even if we're cleaning a room full of clothes, or smelly monkey cages. That's not the only reason why I love CAM. It's not just volunteer work, it's something much bigger than that. It's acting on love. It's coming together as the body of Christ to love one another and comfort broken people in need. When you see that you made a difference in someone's heart, possibly forever, you forget the hard work and just feel good.

**Megan Johnson 2007**

I give up my weekend for CAM because it is fun to do the work, and I love to see others' smiling faces when they see all the work that we have done.  CAM has impacted me by making me more willing to help people that are in need, and I have gotten much closer to God with the devotions and the fact that everything we do in CAM is to serve God. As one of the younger people in the group, it is great to have older people who share their knowledge of the Bible. If I were to try to get someone to join CAM I would tell them that they'll be surprised to find that the work is really fun because everyone is super friendly and welcoming. I experienced this first hand when I came into CAM knowing only one person, but immediately made new friends.

**Katie Hill 2007**

 This is my second year to be involved in CAM and I love it. Before I became associated with CAM, I didn't understand much about community service, but now I know how easy it is. CAM has completely changed my perspective on helping people. It doesn't have to be big things; little things can mean just as much. It is also very rewarding to know that you have made an impact in someone's life by helping them with whatever they need. Also at CAM, I've made new friends. The worship and teaching times have been great, and I've learned a lot through my involvement with this group of godly people. I enjoy being a part of CAM and I always look forward to the next time together.

**Reynolds Whalen 2005**

I have been involved with Community Action Ministries (CAM) for four years now.  From the moment I began participating, I knew I had entered something special.  CAM provides a wonderful atmosphere for young people to interact and learn more about themselves and each other through God.

At my first CAM summer camp, I discovered a whole new way to worship God.  Coming from a traditional Episcopalian background, I had never been exposed to praise and worship or evangelism.  Needless to say, this style of worship surprised and excited me.  This part of CAM has always inspired me and remains one of my favorite aspects of the organization.  CAM provides a place for people of all denominations to join and work together for one common goal: to glorify God through service in our community.  Service is a fundamental part of all Christian churches.

Since my involvement with CAM, I have obtained over one hundred hours of community service, working for over twenty agencies across our region.  I have also grown as a leader.  The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) has challenged me with numerous obligations, such as preparing four-day service camps, leading music for worship, and presenting organized devotions that inspire thoughtful discussion.  CAM and YAC have enhanced my talents and organizational strategies, giving me an ideal opportunity to channel these into my community.

The lessons I have learned from CAM will stay with me for the rest of my life.  The worth of my appreciation for human suffering and basic aspects of the human condition cannot be described in words.  Only God truly understands.  The only word we have is "love."

**Danielle Tipton 2005**

 Community Action Ministries is a great organization that God is using to help people in this area. I first learned of CAM when Donna came to an on-campus Bible study my sophomore year in High School. I attended my first CAMp the next August, and it was an awesome experience. It was great getting out of the four walls of a church and actually ministering to and helping others.

 This past August 2003 I wanted to be even more involved in what God is doing through CAM, so I joined the Youth Advisory Council. We help to plan the CAMps as well as the year-round services, lead the monthly meetings, and give input to the board about where CAM is heading.

CAM has helped me grow greatly. The CAM slogan, "Putting skin on the gospel," has made me see the impact that service has on people. Before my involvement in YAC, I had a tendency to be the responsible person thrown into leadership roles with no real power to make decisions. My involvement in YAC has helped me become someone who likes to help with making decisions that actually affect people.

The organization has also made me much more aware of how many people are under hardships in my hometown. If I had never had the chance to help serve them, I wouldn't even know that there were people who needed help. I would have never been exposed to them at all. I always envisioned the only people in need as living overseas and dying physically. Although those people need help as well, we cannot ignore the people who are spiritually and emotionally dying around us because of their hardships concerning food, pregnancy, homes, health, and many others every day issues most of us take for granted. Helping revive these people is the mission of Community Action Ministries, and I now see it as one of the most needed missions today.

**Micah Methany 2005**

I learned about CAM when Jerry and Donna Hooper were interim youth pastors at my church.  Since then, I have participated in CAM for about two years and have been a part of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) team for almost a year and a half.

Being able to interact with youth from all different backgrounds has given me such an appreciation for diversity among Christians.  Before getting involved with CAM, I had mostly only dealt with people from the Free Will Baptist denomination.  Through my CAM experiences, a whole new world of cooperation between separate churches has become available to me.

All my leadership positions have been affected by my involvement in CAM and YAC.  I have learned so much about leading other people and working together smoothly with fellow leaders.  By serving with the other CAM participants, I have learned to work with all kinds of people without sacrificing the speed or efficiency necessary to complete a project in such a way that God will be glorified.

The closeness of all the youth involved in CAM is such an encouragement.  Knowing that I have the support of my fellow YAC- and CAM-members helps me handle the daily stresses of my life.

The things that I have learned in CAM have done much more for me than I could have ever imagined.  I am sure that I would not be the same person that I am today without the work I have done in this great organization.  My only wish for CAM is that it will be able to keep bringing up great young leaders in our area.

**Sarah Torneten 2004**

Almost three years ago, my mother told me about an upcoming CAM summer camp she’d read about in the Norman Transcript.  She thought it sounded perfect for me- Christian environment, community service, here in Norman, and free!  Even though I did not know anybody involved with CAM, I decided to go to a three-day camp in June 2001.  It was a blast!

 Since then, I have gotten much more from CAM than I ever expected. My faith has definitely been strengthened; I have grown spiritually and mentally.  Most of the people involved come from different churches and denominations than mine, and I learn a lot from them.  CAM’s monthly meetings and devotions are great because the atmosphere is very relaxed and we are comfortable getting into deeper discussions.  These help me ask questions and understand the Bible much more easily.  For example, a friend of mine once posed a rather perplexing question to me regarding God’s anger and discipline, which I presented to the CAM group.  After our discussion, I was able to give my friend a thorough reply.

Through my involvement the past three years, CAM has given me a desire to serve others.  I’m amazed at the incredible drive CAM has to help people out of love.  Unlike other organizations I’ve volunteered with, CAM has no ulterior motive.  The desire to show God’s love is the whole idea behind every act of service.  Now I am more able to see the needs of others, and I genuinely love meeting those needs.

This year I became the president of my school’s community service club, KEY Club.  I never would have been led to that position without CAM. My participation in CAM and especially in the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) has helped me grow as a leader.  Singing in the CAM band has taught me how to stand up and lead worship.  Leading devotions has helped me take an idea, expand on it, research it, and be able to share it with others. I have gained a great deal of confidence from my experiences on YAC.  Because of the range of ages involved in the group, I have learned to be a leader and an example to younger kids.

I am so grateful to Jerry and Donna for their commitment to the group.  I never expected to learn and grow so much; who would have thought all this started with a random newspaper article? ☺

**Lauren Shaw 2004**

CAM is such an awesome community service ministry!  Being involved in CAM has encouraged me to want more then just the normal teenage life; I desire to really stand out and make an impact on the people around me through my words and actions.

I love the environment of CAM. All the kids are there to serve God and help everyone they can. Donna and Jerry are wonderful people; I am so blessed to have met them and everyone else involved in CAM. I truly can’t explain how much it has done for me! Thank you!