

## **SoulCreate – HOLYground Youth Camp 2014**

From the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2014 we hosted a Breakaway funded camp for high school aged young people. We had 15 boys and 23 girls within the target age range attend, including 16 who identified as being of Maori descent. We had an additional 20 young adult leaders, and around 20 older adults who led activities and served around the camp. We had a number of campers attend who had never attended before, and it was great to see our regular group step up to welcome them and make them feel part of the camp family. Several campers were referred by other social agencies working around the town. We had planned to accept up to 70 registrations, however ended up with significantly fewer. This number actually worked very well, and was small enough that we could all fit into the chapel for meetings. It would have been nice to have more boys attending and perhaps a more masculine camp title would have enticed them to come!

Camp organisation was shared between a number of people. Ruth Bollen and Maria Croucher did a lot of pre-camp planning and administration. Gini Shephard assisted in distributing registration forms. Michael Bollen stepped up to act as 'whistle-blower', while Libby Wilson assisted Andrew Bollen and Jason Wordsworth in leading worship. Debbie Williams organised a team of prayer supporters. Luke Dyer and Andrew Bollen stepped in to assist with leading games. Adrian Whale was welcomed into a new role as 'Camp Chaplain' and led morning devotions as well as having many intentional conversations with both campers and leaders during the camp. Maria once again captained a small but able kitchen team with the help of Vanessa Patterson, Nora Johnson, Kevyn Hollis and Teresa. The young adult leader team demonstrated servant leadership, commitment, initiative and were fantastic role models for the younger campers. It was neat to see the growth in several of the younger leaders, and see them reach out and identify with campers going through similar experiences to their own teenage years.

We welcomed speakers to teach on the wonder of creation and the bigness of God who created us, and to explore what it means to be made in the image of God. Warwick Pascoe took an hour long presentation titled 'The Making of a Masterpiece' exploring how humans develop in the womb. He was an engaging and interactive speaker, and easily held the groups attention. There were a number of positive comments on how much people enjoyed his presentation and that they found it very informative. The first evening of camp we watched Louie Giglios DVD 'How great is our God'. Again, even the most restless campers were amazed as we watched the earth dwarfed by gobsmackingly huge stars, and began to develop a sense of the hugeness of the God we serve. Howie Wilson led a session exploring healthy relationships, and explored the meaning of love as described in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13. We invited a panel of adults to answer questions from the campers in a 'fish bowl' session. Questions ranged from 'why doesn't everyone believe in God?', 'how do I trust people?' to 'how do I hear God?' and 'how do I become a Christian?'. The bulk of the meetings were ably led by Jethro George – an ex-camper who has a theology degree and is currently a youth worker with Te Ora Hou. He shared some of his own story and spoke more on what it means to be made in the image of God. We had a two hour worship and testimony evening on the Friday night. We were all blessed to hear what God is doing in others' lives. I had tears in my eyes to hear one new camper describe how he always feels like an outcast, but since coming to camp felt normal and accepted.

The weather forecast for camp was terrible, but God blessed us with three hot, fine days and only one day of rain (and even then the clouds parted temporarily in time for a bonfire!). We wanted to focus on healthy 're-creation' activities, and had two boats offering biscuiting and waterskiing. As usual these were hugely popular! Wharf jumping and playing on the water trampoline were also highlights for many. Free time saw groups clustered around jigsaw puzzles, card games, Articulate,

singing with a guitar, hunched over a chess board, engaged in fierce competition around the table tennis table, or maybe running around after a soccer ball. We held some organised field and indoor games including the ever popular capture the flag and building marshmallow towers.

As part of our focus on 'creation' we incorporated 6 hours of skill building, creative projects. Campers chose from a number of options, and were guided by adult helpers to complete various projects. These included sewing 10 bean bags for the chapel, building 4 picnic tables for around the grounds, working on a wood carving of a sign for the front entrance, cutting bush trails and building a bonfire, and working with an artist to create a large canvas wall hanging to decorate the hall. These activities were a huge hit with the vast majority of the campers. They created some quality products that will be a huge blessing to all who use the camp, and as one 16 year old girl said to me with a beaming smile as she demonstrated her prowess with an electric drill, 'the best bit is they're made by us!!'.

The overall feeling of the camp was overwhelmingly positive, with a relaxed, family feel. The few disciplinary issues that were encountered were all resolved with relationships restored. There were no significant injuries, although one camper went home sick.

In line with Breakaway objectives, this camp saw young people grow physical abilities, skills, positive relationships and confidence.

### **SoulCreate Feedback:**

Feedback forms were distributed on the last morning of camp.

27 responses were received from campers aged 13-17

Averaged responses from campers below

**Overall this camp was:** 4.31/5

**The types of activities provided:** 4.26/5

**How the activities worked:** 4.48/5

### **My favourite activity:**

*Water sports, building tables, water sports, watching capture the flag, Pictionary, biscuiting, swimming, swimming, watersports, the wharf, watersports, painting, swimming and watersports, soccer, capture the flag, seabiscuiting, seabiscuiting and soccer, seabiscuiting, seabiscuiting, building tables, swimming, swimming, chiselling, working in the bus, swimming, jumping off the wharf, Pictionary and table tennis, sewing and swimming, swimming*

### **My least favourite activity:**

*Badminton, the games, in the boat, stop time, waiting, rotations, bush walking, cleaning toilets, waiting for the sea biscuit, sleeping, Cubb, Cubb, sea biscuiting*

### **What we could do differently next time:**

*Night games, more people, more organised sports, new games where everyone is included, more active games, more music options, have more fun outdoor games, have more music opportunities, more activities, more activities and games, more boys, play more sports and games*

**How well organised was camp:** 4.33/5

**How fair and appropriate were the rules:** 4.67/5

**How well were the rules enforced:** 4.29/5

**How safe did you feel at camp:** 4.85/5

**Any comments or suggestions:**

*Longer camp, go to bed earlier or get up later, live speakers were the best*

**Food variety:** 4.52/5

**Food quality:** 4.56/5

**Food quantity:** 4.52/5

**Anything we could do differently:**

*More food, vegetarian eggless lasagne, seafood, bit more food, more chocolate cakes*

**I enjoyed this camp:** 4.58/5

**I made new friends:** 4.56/5

**I deepened friendships I already had:** 4.11/5

**Camp was what I expected:** 3.81/5

**I learnt more about God:** 4.26/5

**I had a think about some stuff:** 4.31/5

**I felt loved and accepted:** 4.26/5

**I want to come to camp again:** 4.70/5

**I developed new skills:** 4.26/5

**Skills I developed were:**

*Table tennis, painting, make new friends and socialise, just heaps, driving the boat, courage, staying on the biscuit longer, painting with different stuff, table tennis, sewing, guitar and building and praying and wakeboarding, making new friends, water trampolining, chiselling, art, loving and caring, pingpong and listening better, sewing, sewing in a straight line instead of crooked, table tennis*

**One of the things I learnt was:**

*Everyones the same, more about God, about Jesus, how babies are made, making someone feel loved feels super good, how to sew and that Jesus has done it all, how to accept God, how great is our God, God is amazing, chiselling, biscuiting is fun, sewing*

**Overall, how satisfied are you with this camp?** 4.48/5

**Facts and figures:**

Boys age 11-17: 15 (including 4 who were registered and attended <25 hours)

Girls age 11-17: 23

Age 11-13: 7

Age 14-17: 31 (including 4 who were registered and attended <25 hours)

Number of feedback questionnaires completed by campers: 27/38

23/27 (85%) of campers were satisfied or very satisfied with the camp, 3/27 (11%) were neutral, 1/27 (3%) were unsatisfied with camp, and 0/27 were very unsatisfied.

21/28 (75%) of campers reported that they learnt new skills as true or very true, 5/28 (18%) of campers were neutral, and 1/28 (3%) reported they did not learn new skills.



