

A Generational Tradition



Rachel Wilke has a long history with Asbury, first coming to camp 40 years ago as a camper, then volunteering as a high schooler, and serving on staff from the mid-90's through 2010. "I remember my grandmother and grandfather would pay for our camp, and they would split it with the church because it wasn't something my parents could afford."

Rachel is grateful for the gift of camp. "The sense of home you feel when you come to Camp Asbury is something I always wanted for my children. It has always been where I feel the most comfortable and have my most fond memories as a young adult. I always felt more myself and still am friends with people I worked with in the '90s. At camp, I reconnect with the Bible and Jesus and the values instilled all those years - do unto others, and all the great things that Christians are."

Rachel's son David started attending camp in first grade. Now in high school, he spent this summer learning the ropes as a Counselor in Training. Rachel recognizes that David has grown this summer. "He has a little bit more empathy and sympathy because he is close enough in age to the campers to understand what they are going through."

Having such a long and rich history with Asbury, Rachel has a unique perspective on the types of bonds that form at camp. She's formed relationships as a camper, a volunteer, a summer staff member, and a parent. By doing so, she's impacted the lives of countless campers and staff. "You're always going to have that person, that friendship, and that bond, that nobody can take away from you, even when you aren't at camp, because it's an experience that not everybody will get," she shared. "We have the kinds of friendship or bond that will never be broken. I want that for David."

David agrees. "It's way different from having a relationship at school. At camp, you live with people, forming a solid bond. When I was in the Night Owls Program, we all sat underneath the stars and we were watching the fire, and we would tell each other random stories, and it was one of the most fun things you could ever do. You are yourself with your peers, having freedom. Everyone remembers my name. I really like that. It's like they've known you forever and remember specific things about you. They make you feel special."

This summer, David helped foster those same special bonds between campers and plans to return to serve on staff. He also plans to someday send his own children to Camp Asbury. Rachel promises to make that happen for her grandchildren the way her grandparents made camp possible for her. "If it's not something my children can afford," said Rachel, "it will be something grandma and grandpa will definitely pay for. It is just a wonderful place. There's nothing like the love you receive and calming feeling you get as soon as you walk in."