

One week of my summer changed my entire life for the better. The week was going to be hot, and I was on my way to the Horizon summer camp, a week-long summer camp that works with adults with physical disabilities. I was nervous heading to the camp, because I had never done anything like this before. I spent a lot of time questioning what the camp will be like and how I will fit in. I pondered communication with my camper, my own physical abilities, and my ability to create a comfortable physical and social environment to my camper.

As I drove to camp, I realized just how beautiful it was. When I arrived at the camp, I was greeted by the kind volunteers. They taught me important lessons about how I can help my camper, both physically and socially. We practiced with tasks like lifting people out of wheelchairs and into beds. It seemed overwhelming at first, but soon I caught on and was even having fun with some of the activities. Then I finally got the opportunity to meet my camper. I felt more confident in my abilities with adults with disabilities when I formed a relationship with my camper. Together, we did lots of fun activities like zip-lining, adaptive biking, and riding on boats across lake Bloomington.

The week, however, was not all fun and games. Many of the nights were sleepless. There were often difficulties with communication. However, with everybody working together, we were very efficient and helpful. An important theme of camp is closing the barriers between the campers and the volunteers. Many of the campers were overjoyed to be able to get the opportunity to have fun and do activities like karaoke or lip sync battles for an excited and caring crowd. I loved getting the opportunity to hear interesting stories from the lives and camp experiences from volunteers and campers. Camp means so much for the campers and volunteers, it's a place where people can take a break from everyday life, make new friends, and be in an area without prejudice.

In the months following Horizon, I feel like I have grown into a more accepting person. I feel more inclined to help people with large and small things. Becoming friends with the people at Horizon camp reminded me the importance of knowing that just because everyone is different, it does not mean they aren't equal. Horizon changed my outlook on life for the better: I am more thankful of what I have and am more accepting of others.

I have contributed to Horizon in many ways since camp, including selling raffle tickets and attending fundraisers. In the future, me and my mom plan on organizing a hot dog fundraiser to raise money for camp. For the 2020 camp I plan on participating in "We Ride" to fundraise and kick off camp with a memorable and hopefully impactful experience.

I believe that I should receive the Horizon Hope Grant to help continue my education through the college level. I want to be able to continue to spread Horizon's message outside of camp in college and in my future. Although there are many at camp who I feel deserve this award, I'd like to thank the award committee for taking time to read my essay and consider myself.