



Tall Turf Today

Fall 2016

Equipping Youth for Lives of Reconciliation in God's World

The CEO's Corner

By Marcus Hargrave, President & CEO

November 2, 2016, marked my one year anniversary with Tall Turf Ministries. While the work we are called to do at Tall Turf is not easy, God is always faithful. When I was hired, the Board of Directors tasked me to address several significant challenges, declining financial support and implementing strategic planning, among other things. After a year of investing significant time addressing these challenges, I am grateful to report the following:

- ◆ Board Giving is up 125%
- ◆ Corporate giving is up 63%
- ◆ Summer camp fees are up 34%
- ◆ Foundations budgeted \$150,000 for this year has been surpassed
- ◆ Tall Turf took 1st place at the presentation competition for the Knights of the Round Table International Convention
- ◆ 1st quarter revenue up 18%, expenses down 16%
- ◆ 2nd quarter revenue up 26%, expenses down 9%
- ◆ 3rd quarter revenue up 18%, expenses down 65%

What is most important, however, is that we served over 600 youth and families this summer. Through God's grace and mercy we continue to be blessed. We look forward to another year of camp, new collaborations, and changes to further our call. This would not be possible without you. Thank you all for the opportunity to serve Tall Turf Ministries!

2016 Building Bridges Banquet: Be the Hero



On October 27, 2016, Tall Turf held their annual Building Bridges banquet. It was an incredible evening celebrating all that God is doing through Tall Turf. The evening began with Leader In Training (LIT), Justin Aurich, sharing a personal testimony. Justin shared the following, "While Tall Turf has taught me to be a good leader, even more importantly they have taught me to be a Christian leader....One of the biggest ways I have seen God work through Tall Turf is in the ministry of reconciliation. Throughout the past 9 years I have been involved in Tall Turf I have built strong friendships with people from many different cultures and backgrounds. By doing this Tall Turf has broadened my very small perspective of the world and has also taught me more about who God is." Summer staff member, Tina Roede, also reflected on the impact Tall Turf has had in her life. As a former camper and

staff member, Tina shared that Tall Turf has been a refuge in her life throughout challenging circumstances. She challenged supporters to "Be the Hero" for children who Tall Turf impacts by investing their talents, prayers, and finances. Tall Turf was also honored to present two special awards. Mr. Ed Berends was posthumously honored with the Building Bridges Award for his longtime commitment to Tall Turf and the community. LITs, Noemy Parra-Cano and Arion Parks, were presented with the inaugural Emerging Leader Award, which seeks to recognize young leaders who have exemplified a desire to grow in their faith, positive leadership among peers and youth, a willingness to serve others and a commitment to the ministry of reconciliation. The evening concluded with past staff sharing a camp chant through the words of theme verse Joshua 1:9, "Be strong and courageous...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."



Through the Eyes of a Camper

By Miriam De Jong, Director of Programs

It's hard to believe that another year is almost done and we are already thinking about next summer! This past summer was an amazing time of making new friends, catching frogs, canoeing, camp outs, swimming, and playing games like capture the flag and a Tall Turf favorite, Og Nog Log. Most importantly, it was a summer of learning new things through building cross-cultural friendships and growing in our faith in God. While my words can't fully capture every aspect of what we learned and how we were transformed this summer, below are some of what our campers had to say when we asked them questions about their Tall Turf experience.



Did you know . . .

- Tall Turf hosted 3 Youth Camp sessions, 1 High School Adventure Camp, and 4 Family Camp weekends.
- Tall Turf served over 600 youth and families this summer!
- 57% of our campers were African-American, 16% Caucasian, 14% Hispanic, 2% Asian and 11% identified as multi-racial or other.
- Campers this summer came from the Grand Rapids area, Holland, Newaygo, White Cloud, Virginia, Detroit, MI and Chicago, IL.
- As of 2011, only 4% of the 12,000 camps in the United States had at least 50% minority counselors. Tall Turf has had at least 60% qualified staff of color for the last 10 years. In fact, this past summer 63% of our summer staff members were people of color.
- 60% of our summer staff members were returning staff members.
- 56% of our summer Leaders In Training were previously summer campers and/or junior Leaders in Training.
- 79% of our campers befriended someone from a background that is different from their own.
- 83% of our campers reported that they felt better about themselves as a result of their time at camp.
- More than 60 campers made the decision to trust Jesus as their Savior for the first time while at camp!!!

Q: Did camp make you feel good or better about yourself?

"It taught me how to know and to love God."
- Javonte, 12yrs old

"Yes. I learned I am courageous!" - Kaylanna, 12yrs
"I learned how to be a leader." - Ceazia, 10yrs old

"Yes. It felt good to be away from home, T.V., and the internet." - Mikeyla, 11

"It taught me to have faith in myself and have a good attitude."
- Aiyonna, 10yrs old

"Yes, it made me feel brave." - Micah, 12yrs old

Q: Did you make friends with someone from a different background?

"Yes, I can get along with people if I get to know them."
- Anaya, 12yrs old

"Yes. I learned that stereotypes aren't true."
- Mari, 12yrs old

"I learned how to love people better." - Kiayla, 11yrs old

"Yes, it's okay to open up to people that you don't really have the same background with." - Alenalea, 12yrs old

"I got to hear a lot of new stories helping me to have more compassion."
- Ella, 14yrs old

Q: What is something important you will remember from Camp Tall Turf?

"I have the BEST counselor ever!" - Jaizear, 8yrs old

"God will always be with you."
- Felicity, 10yrs old

"Everybody can be friends no matter what color they are."
- Joel, 10yrs old

"I learned to never give up."
- Laila, 13yrs old

"Love, reconciliation, second chances." - Ella, 14yrs old

"Wear bug spray!"
- Dayla, 10yrs old

"We can make a difference."
- Tateyana, 10yrs old



Summer LITs: Leading through Service

While many teens spend their summer focused on hanging out with friends, going to the beach, or making money, this summer 9 students courageously dedicated their summer to seeking something greater than themselves—learning to lead through service. This summer's Leaders In Training (LITs) spent eight weeks being challenged to think differently about leadership, to learn that at it's core, leadership is about placing the needs of others above your own needs. LITs spent



time stretching themselves as leaders through serving in a variety of ways at camp. Whether it was catching frogs with campers, washing dishes, cleaning the barn, or leading cabin devotions, LITs faced each challenge with joy and determination. As leaders, LITs discovered that serving others isn't naturally easy or always fun, but God has called us to demonstrate His love through serving others. Throughout the summer, LITs were challenged to realize that this calling is not something reserved just for a summer



at Tall Turf, but rather one that we are called to live daily as the body of Christ. Furthermore, LITs discovered that their service made a difference in the lives of some incredible kids and staff. And in the end, they learned that service could be a source of deep joy...especially with the help of good music, spontaneous rap sessions, and killer dance moves.



Strengthening Families Together

In its 45 years of existence, Tall Turf has had a strong legacy of focusing on families. For more than 30 years we have partnered with Oakdale Park CRC and Seymour CRC to host a single-parent family camp weekend. More recently, we added a Latino Family Camp weekend. However, in pursuit of our mission of reconciliation, we decided to make an important shift by bringing families together from all backgrounds to what is now known as Tall Turf Family Camp Weekends. Families of all backgrounds attended this summer including: African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic, single parent, two-parent, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Each weekend was an amazing time of seeing families strengthened



through spending time together in activities, meals, and worship. In total, we were blessed to be able to host four separate Family Camp Weekends, including a special 4th of July session. One family shared, that their favorite part about the weekend was "meeting more 'family' members." This work would not have been possible without our amazing partners. This summer we were thankful to welcome new partners, Iglesia Vida Plena and Madison Church Ford Campus. We are grateful for their commitment to work together in strengthening families. This coming summer we look forward to seeing how God continues to strengthen families at Tall Turf. We hope that many of you will join us!

TALL TURF TEENS SPEAK

LEADERSHIP IS. . .

Leadership is when you move towards success or change despite obstacles, physical appearance, or background.

- Michael

A leader is someone who isn't afraid to be bold or make a change.

- Meghan

Leadership is like a captain to a ship: creating a map to productivity and navigating their crew towards the paradise of transformation.

- Isaac

Leadership is taking effective action to inspire followers to develop beyond their expectations.

- Daniel



816 Madison Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Phone: 616-452-7906

Fax: 616-452-7907

E-mail: info@tallturf.org

Web: tallturf.org

facebook.com/tallturf

twitter.com/tallturf



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