

January Rhodes Report

Preparing for our 2010 Harvest

Putting together a summer program is a huge undertaking. We need a large, godly, capable staff. We need an enormous array of facility features and amenities, all in proper condition to enable (rather than impede) ministry, and we need local church support. No, strike the word “support” and replace it with “passion”! It saddens me when good churches opt out of camping ministry, but gladdens me to see those who endorse it with a fervent vision. Such churches recall how Jesus took his disciples unto a “mountain” or “desert place” for revival, how he fed 5000 in the wilderness, how he loved to retreat to the natural beauty and seclusion of the Gethsemane garden, and how God has mightily ministered to their *own* young people at Gila Christian Ranch. Dear reader, when I consider the immensity of our 2010 undertaking and the smallness of our resources and ability, a great awareness of our prayer need comes upon me. I fear it sounds cliché, but I must intone the standard missionary line: “Pray for us!”

GCR Battles for our Nation’s _____ Recovery

Fill in the blank. Do you think the missing word is “Economic”? Think again. Try the word “Spiritual”! Our land desperately needs a return to its spiritual roots. “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Jer 6:16. Ministries like ours working in support of local churches are our nation’s best hope. Here in the needy southwest we must impact as many lives as possible, as soon as possible. Pray for us. Encourage campers and volunteers to come to Gila Christian Ranch.

Ranch Readiness

It’s not that I am glad 2009 is over, I just joy that a staggering load of facility needs—fences, vehicle and equipment repair, a woodland improvement project with the state—came to closure by the end of the year. These innocuous-sounding projects kept me consumed for much of 2009. Meanwhile, a host of other things went wanting. I rejoice now to catch up on little things—beginning at the Rhodes’ house. But I cast a wary eye on the upcoming summer; for another set of facility needs are pressing increasingly hard:

- Our kitchen crew has suffered inadequate power, hot water, refrigeration, and ventilation too long. A \$5000 kitty and a few volunteer workers would do wonders.
- The deteriorating canvas teepees in the Boys area must be replaced with cabins. We need six cabins as soon as possible. A contractor quoted \$9000 each for stucco cabins, assuming we provide the concrete pads. We could do it all for far less (around \$4000) if we had volunteer work crews.

We rough-framed an addition on the pavilion for bathrooms and a staff laundry. The septic system is completed but the project lingers as it waits further workers and another \$5000 funding.

None of these projects are presently funded. The donations of time and money we receive are usually small but always, dearly, appreciated! For those unable to give in time, skills or finances, I know well “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jm 5:16).

Ten years later

Ten years ago we ran our first camp—a short Junior Week. Today, some people still think our facilities are primitive. They should have seen it then! In defense of our humble beginnings, we **did** have flush toilets those first couple years—one for the boys and one for the girls—plumbed with water hoses in newly built (with pride) outhouses! Boys showered in a rebar frame covered with black plastic as cold water spewed from a garden hose above. Girls were privileged to go to our little duplex and use the Rhodes’ shower. A big tent hosted meals and services. We’ve come a long way since, with some 14 permanent buildings, 6 teepees, miles of fences, water lines and roads, solar systems, animals, and a large inventory of ranch and camp equipment. No matter the amenities, I find the spirit has always been great, the conversions and life changes deeply moving. The spiritual battle has been fierce, relentless, and not without casualties. But the souls rescued have been well worth the price—amen?! May God increase our faith, our fruit, and our vision.

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