

Ocate Cliffs Newsletter - 2015 July 23

Dear Supporters of Ocate Cliffs,

This newsletter contains pictures and information about the retreats held this month.

First we had a retreat for students at the United World College in Las Vegas. Students from all over (including France, Tajikistan, Sierra Leone, China, Nepal, and Turkey) came to help with livestock fencing and forestry, and learn about autism. Many of them are from places that don't have wilderness and the whole experience of camping out was new. Here's some of their work in progress:



Then we had our big 2 week retreat. Here's the list of some **work accomplished**:

- built new trails and improved trails started last year
- painted toilet house
- built picnic table
- named all the trails
- made trail signs and painted trail markers
- built an acting ring (a place for extemporaneous being in character)
- finished the big treehouse
- built a new treehouse (without nailing into the trees!)
- put up a tetherball pole
- fenced in well area with reed fence
- hauled trash from the cliffs (from the prior owners)
- experimented with solar oven
- set up automatic filling system for a stock tank
- built a tent pad out of plastic lumber

- labeled and organized the toilet house
- built a campfire circle
- cleared roadway/firebreak
- pruned and cleared park

Some of the **trail names** and place names we came up with are: Resilience Trail, Picnic Trail, Wild Iris Trail, Sanctuary Trail, Laughter Trail, Crystal Star Point, Divergent Trail, 42, Western Trail, Chile Trail, Wagon Mound Trail, and Aspen Trail.

There was so much **rain** the first week that the builder had to cancel during our time there, so we did not get to help on the staff house. Locals told us it hadn't rained like that in 20 years! The meadow is greener than usual and there are lots of wildflowers. One time it hailed and haildrifts inches deep accumulated against the tents. We saw elk. There was a lightning show over the eastern plains every night.

It's hard to summarize the experience - The magic of that place and just being so remote brought out intensity in discussions and relationships, not all of which was easy. We laughed and had fun, but also some of us needed to escape the noise and demands of being in a group. In the words of Crystal: "A lot of breaking down of emotional walls happened at this year's work camp. Once that happens you can never go back to what it was before, and it brought about long term spiritual and emotional changes/impacts on some people and it was very helpful in truly seeing instead of living behind masks. It was intense for me as I spent some time crying (which I rarely ever do) ... and coming to some truths about myself and others."

Here are some more pictures - not everyone got included here but this is enough to give an idea of the experience:





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