

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH FEELING.

Summer 2006 will always stay in my memory as the most unforgettable summer I've ever had. I'd been working in a camp for three months. Camp Huntington is not the usual camp. It's for special children, for children with special needs. There were campers of different ages (from 6 to 50) with mental or physical disabilities. It was the camp for both children and adults. I was a kitchen staff with two girls from Izhevsk. We were preparing food, serving, cleaning the dining area and dishwashing.

Since it was the camp for special needs, I was afraid that it would be very difficult for me. I thought I would hardly understand foreigners and especially kids with some disorders. Despite I was not a counsellor, I mixed with campers a lot, since I served them. Besides, we became closer at different camp events (trips to the lake, talent shows, parties) . First it was sometimes difficult to understand campers with speech problems or especially those who couldn't speak (many campers were not able to speak at all). Later we learnt to understand and even to feel them. In communication with them words is not the main thing. Smile, gentle look, hug are understandable for everybody. There I understood that people can get each other without using any words.

I was on good terms with the administration and the counsellors as well. I came to the camp two weeks earlier than the counsellors, so first I had to find common ground with the director and other members of the administration. It was not a problem, because they were friendly, I could easily understand them. There were no any language barriers. Maybe that's why I always felt at ease and could behave just in the way I usually do. In spite of my being in another country with its culture and peculiarities I nearly felt at home. There was no any uneasiness. I fulfilled my duties properly, so I had good relations with the administration. We didn't have any difficulties or conflicts. Moreover, they said that we were the best kitchen staff for 25 years and it's exactly the time they run the camp. We felt that they really appreciated and respected us, three Russian girls. We also became attached to them and we didn't want to part. Our director and his mother nearly cried when we were saying good-bye to us. And we as well. They said it was a pleasure to work with us, because we got each other's point immediately. They gave us some things to keep as a memento of the camp. They are the toy, the pin, the flag and some other things.

In particular I'd like to mention the counsellors. We had young people from the USA, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Zambia, Egypt, Australia, Korea, China, Thailand, Czechia, Poland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Israel, Romania, the United Kingdom and of course Russia. As one can see there were lots of nationalities, but we didn't have any difficulties in understanding each other or any hostility. It was very interesting to deal with all of them. I found almost all the guys polite and friendly. We got on very well and there was no difference if you were a counsellor or a kitchen staff or a housekeeper. In our spare time we would chat and joke sitting at the creek. We spoke English all day long and I really enjoyed it. To tell

the truth, now I miss it a little bit. We made friends easily and soon became a big happy family and couldn't imagine ourselves outside the camp. Finally, the time to leave the camp came, it still was difficult to realise that there will be none of us there. The counsellors left first and I and other Russian girls saw them leaving. It was a very painful moment for all of us. We couldn't help crying. The only thought that came into my mind was a question: why on earth do we meet people, become attached to them and then part for ever? It just leaves sadness and sorrow in the soul. It seems to be unfair. There is no more that big family. It's a pity. It was really interesting and jolly for me there. Every day was not like the previous one, the time flew by. We didn't count the days, because we simply didn't have time to do that!

I hope, people who worked in camp Huntington will stay so interesting, cheerful, kind, patient and just nice guys. Despite there were international staff members belonging to different cultures, we all understood each other and sometimes even felt each other. It was a real life experience and cultural exchange. It's so nice to see, communicate and live with a great number of different people.

I was indeed happy to see joyful and cheerful children. It's an undescrivable feeling when you see them enjoying the time. Sometimes we were sitting in the hall and just crying watching their talent shows. But these were tears of happiness, because when you see them performing something on the stage, you feel the happiest man. This camp tries to make them feel usual people and they really liked it there. I was truly pleased to deal with those unusual campers. They have pure and kind hearts. These kids need special protection, care and warmth, since they are special needs. And these are the things that you want and are always ready to give them. Every counsellor was trying to give the campers all the necessary things. I want to thank them for their patience.

I'll never forget summer 2006 and Camp Huntington. I'm happy that it happened in my life. Maybe somebody can't understand it and I probably can't explain what I felt and retell everything that happened, as one should go through it. What I have is in my heart and sometimes it's difficult to express your feelings using words. They seem so simple to convey the feelings that overflow you. But for those people I can say that camp work is valuable for the contacts you will make and close friendships you will undoubtedly form with young people from countries around the globe. I had a great summer and yet it never felt like work, it was so much fun and the time just flew by.

Every person deserves what he deserves. I want to believe that I deserved it. I've still got your spirit deep in my heart, Camp Huntington! Thanks for memories and useful experience!

I'd like to thank the agency and our dean's office for arranging the trip and making it possible to travel abroad.

THANK YOU!