

Swing Moments

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*Reach Beyond Mission 2016 Summer Staff:
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In Bill Strickland's book, *Make the Impossible Possible*, he describes: "Swing is a term used by jazz musicians to describe those transcendent moments of musical alignment when rhythm, harmony, and melody all fall into a sweet convergence." These moments don't just happen in jazz music; when have you experienced these perfect moments in your life? "...When clarity, trust, and passion, and the vision, strengths, and values they give you, fall into a harmonic alignment with an inner sense of what you want your life to be, they add up to a remarkable state of mind I call swing."

This summer, I experienced many swing moments—times that made me feel alive, reignited my flame and passion for service and justice, and led me to see exactly what I want my

life to be. I saw the books I was reading, the curriculum I was teaching, the youth I was leading, and the passion I was feeling all intersect, and in those moments I felt a transcendent swing. As a member of the Reach Beyond Mission Summer Staff, I spent six weeks learning and growing with six strangers who soon became my biggest supporters and sources of encouragement, who taught me the importance of perseverance and the power of laughter.

For four weeks, we traveled around the country, meeting groups of middle and high school youth, and teaching them about the injustices today's world faces; we watched them hear what was being said, see what was being done, and each week I witnessed youth become passionate about creating a lasting change. For four different weeks, I got to see the hearts and minds of youth change. During each of those weeks, I was assured that Reach Beyond Mission isn't your typical mission trip experience.

I've gone on trips in the past, fixed houses, and left the week behind me with a full heart, a greater appreciation for the life I live, and lots of memories to cherish. Reach Beyond Mission provides so much more than that. The structure of the week helps youth to grow and learn with every experience they have, and at the end of the week, they're asked, "How can you take the things you've learned this week and apply them to your community? What can you do to reach beyond this week of mission and live a life of service and justice?"

I ask myself the same thing after the experiences of the summer. I can go to shelters and food banks, volunteer my time and talents. I can share a meal and a smile with someone who is struggling. I can advocate to my legislatures and be a voice for people who can't use their own voices to tell their stories. I can educate myself and others. However, after a summer of contemplation and discovery, there was one overarching answer that I found to this ultimate inquiry throughout my journey—we must show the world radical love. With that, we can create a more just world.

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