

Maintaining Organizational Health Through a Culture of Learning

The mindset of a learner is a concept that has been around in the educational system, coaching environment, and non-profit leadership for decades. Leading others with curiosity, inquisitiveness, and imagination is a formidable challenge, yet much more appreciated than a top down, authoritarian model. We believe that each person has a God-given purpose that when activated, will bring hope and healing to our neighbors, both across the street and around the world. At the Youth Farm Bible Camp, we strive to learn what gifts God has given us in the individual and corporate domain. Our desire is not to bury the talents but instead through the adventure of learning uplift each other's talents so that the seeds sown can reap a harvest of tenfold or more.

Since 1941, the mission of the Youth Farm Bible Camp has been to "Share Jesus with People and Provide a Place to Serve." Over the past 80 years we have been learning how to share Jesus, what that means to the campers we serve and the staff that engage in the mission. We have also learnt how to provide a place to serve and have been proactive at finding ways to live out this vision. A deeper understanding of our history has allowed new innovations in our present that will impact our future. Our core values are as follows:

1. Sacrifice – not our will, but the will of God
2. Share – our resources, our time, our lives
3. Seek – a deeper relationship to Father, Son and Holy Spirit
4. Serve – caring for the needs of the least of these

We ask our staff, volunteers, and board to sacrifice, share, seek and serve so that the ministry of God's Kingdom is pursued.

The culture of learning starts with our Adult Special Need Camps. As an organization we come to these camps desiring to sacrifice, share, seek and serve. We learn so much from our campers that walk through the door. They present to us an open and carefree lifestyle that allows diversity and inclusivity. Everyone feels like they are a part of the camp week. As staff, we learn more from the campers than they learn from us. We learn to not sweat the small stuff, to embrace humanity, to deeply care for physical and emotional needs of one another. We walk in ways that Jesus walked, caring for one another and being attentive to one another's needs. There is so much more we can learn from our campers; they have changed the heart of our organization.

The learning continues through our work with children and families. We see the brokenness of our world in children that have been affected by dysfunction and abuse. Yet, we also see the resilience of these same children, and how love can bring so much healing in only a short time. We serve thousands of families at our corn maze and have learnt so much about being open to others and serving people with joy in our hearts. We have learnt that when difficult situations arrive, giving time to hear and walk with others brings goodwill to all. Through all of this, we have recognized that our identity needs to be formed as a child of God, wonderfully made and precious in His sight. It is through this identity that we can serve, sacrifice, seek and share.

We are Christ-centered and sent, in agreement with Anabaptist theology with Christ as our source, the Bible as our foundation and Holy Spirit as our fuel. By meeting with each other daily for sharing and prayer, we are continually learning how to apply our faith to our work. We study together and learn from thought leaders in all streams of Christianity. We eat together, pray together, play together and work together. We learn what it means to have relationships and to grow them over time. We empower our team, our volunteers, and our campers to build relationships, build skills, and to dream big in a vulnerable and prayerful community. This brings together another nuance of a culture of learning.

Our farm atmosphere is a place of learning for everyone. We strive to create a community farm to show God's glory, care for God's creatures, and create opportunities for animal therapy. Our horse program brings students into a relationship with a horse in a powerful and educational platform. We are also developing equine assisted learning and a therapeutic riding program that will benefit children struggling with behavior challenges and people with physical and mental disabilities. Our fall festival known as the Youth Farm Corn Maze brings people and families together to play, to be outdoors, to connect with animals, to walk in a field of corn, to gaze at a sunflower, and to make memories together. Thousands of guests spend time learning ancient wisdom firsthand through our Tabernacle of Moses experience. The redemptive story of Christ coming into our world to transform our minds and hearts is told by an ancient way of an unholy people meeting a holy God.

We strive to be globally focused, learning from other cultures and sharing Jesus with them to meet our physical and spiritual needs. We learn so much through our impact trips to Mexico, our 15-year relationship to Francisco and Isela Ortiz, our translators in Tijuana and recently, team members for the corn maze. We send out Daniel Wiebe and family to Nicaragua to serve and learn in one of the poorest countries of the western hemisphere. Interns participate in a six-week learning and mission tour each year in Nicaragua with Daniel. We as an organization learn so much by having it baked into who we are, as he comes and serves onsite for three months each year. We walk together, learn together, appreciate the relationships with other cultures, learning what it takes to stand by the globally poor. We recognize that we are all broken, our relationship to God is broken, relationship to others is broken, relationship to self is broken and our relationship to the earth is broken. We look to God, Son, and Spirit to be the only way to restore and transform these relationships. We do not have the easy answers for other cultures but know that we can walk together seeking transformation and restoration through our redeemer and Messiah.

We nurture a spirit of abundance mentality amongst our team. We feel that there is enough opportunity for everyone and bake into our core values the importance of sharing resources, sacrificing our independent will, serving others, and seeking guidance from God. An abundant learning mindset means that there is enough for everyone, and we have hope there will be more, so we can share. We seek to nurture abundance mentality in our teams to strengthen our culture. We foster other people's dreams making the team stronger. We have confidence that God has a unique purpose and chosen plan for every individual that is not impacted by the

accomplishments of others. We share our time and talents to support the success and dreams of others. We seek to see the best of others and promote it.

We have spent resources on learning. Tens of thousands of dollars are spent each year to provide resources to our staff team. Training of summer staff does not happen only during staff orientation, but through a leadership team committed to learning and continually investing in the summer staff. Two annual canoe trips bring staff together and allow for growth and learning in the outdoors. Our Israel, Mexico and Nicaragua trips provide an abundance of learning opportunities in different settings. The internship program brings many of our staff through twelve books a year and three impact/learning trips. By having a culture of learning, we can grow our organizational health and Christ's impact in this world.

Quote from Gustavo Araujo, Spiritual Director, Youth Farm Bible Camp

The long tenure of the Executive Director has been instrumental in the success of the Youth Farm Bible Camp program, and it is hoped that this leadership will continue for many years to come. Given that every aspect of the program has received close supervision and strong leadership, the YFBC has been actively planning for the succession of the ED by integrating, training, and preparing the current staff in all aspects of the program. It is important to note that many members of the YFBC staff follow the example set by the ED, demonstrating strong leadership and a long-term commitment to the program. The Youth Farm Bible Camp program has experienced significant success in recent years, with the introduction of new avenues that have helped the program thrive. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the YFBC has continued to grow and expand its outreach to the community. It is worth noting that each new program introduced by the YFBC is closely linked to the core vision and purpose of the organization, which is centred around sharing Jesus and providing a place to serve. As YFBC continues to grow and introduce new programs, the staff is intentionally trained to ensure that the fundamental essence of the organization is upheld.