

Key Leader - Eastern Canada 2009

Key Leader 2009 in Eastern Canada has experienced another successful year of growth. Events were held as follows:

- Tim Hortons Childrens Camp - Tatamagouche Nova Scotia - 77 Students/25 Adults
- Circle Square Ranch Camp - Arden Ontario - 41 Students/14 Adults
- Circle Square Ranch Camp - Brantford Ontario - 80 Students/15 Adults

The Tatamagouche Weekend under the leadership of newly appointed Atlantic Key Leader Chair Glen Bagnell and Site Coordinator Ted Bulley was a successful second year for the event and this year it was held over Halloween. Costumes, masks and goody bags were added to the Saturday evening festivities. Discussion is underway to expand the program in Atlantic Canada to Newfoundland. Currently students from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI are being served. Plans are underway for a repeat event October 29-31, 2010.

A new event was launched successfully in Eastern Ontario at the Circle Square Ranch Camp at Arden Ontario with 41 students and 14 adults in attendance. The flu played havoc with cancellations, but the team is already gearing up for great expectations for support from 5 divisions instead of three in 2010. There was a taste of Halloween with pumpkin carvings. Plans are underway for a return event October 29-31, 2010 at the same excellent location. This event expects to serve students from Ottawa, Peterborough, Oshawa, Kingston and Western Quebec. Thanks to PLG Chris Andrew for serving as Site Coordinator.

Southern Ontario experienced its fifth year at a new location at the Circle Square Ranch Camp at Brantford selling out for the third consecutive year. Considering the growing number of students that missed out a second event at this location will be offered in May and all Ontario events will be limited to 60 students, a more manageable number for the Lead Facilitators. Thanks to PLG Peter Tudisco for serving as Site Coordinator for the past three events.

The partnership that has been formed with the District Key Club Board has proven to be mutually beneficial to training students as well as growing both programs. Thanks to Key Club Administrator Ken Hanson for his excellent support of Key Leader objectives.

The Key Leader website has been remodeled and Kiwanians are encouraged to become familiar with its content. It is an excellent resource - www.key-leader.org.

Chaperones are needed for each event as the minimum ratio required is one adult for every 10 students. I wish to conclude with a student's letter and a mother's comments in appreciation for the experience. It is this kind of positive feedback that makes the many volunteer hours worth the investment of time and energy into our youth, the leaders of today and tomorrow.

"This camp made a profound impact on my daughter. At the time of going to the camp she was feeling so alone and different as her level of maturity and forward thinking mind was not something she was finding in her peers at school. I hoped that she would find kids more

similar to herself and be rejuvenated. And she was and still is. As a Mom I can't thank you enough for asking and encouraging her to go and making it happen by transporting her."

I want to thank you very much for sponsoring me for the Key Leadership Camp, that took place during the last weekend in October, 2009.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I went to this camp, but what happened was bigger than my imagination.

The camp was very well organized, and we were busy every minute of the day. The camp directors knew that many of us would be nervous, because few of us knew anyone who was going to be at camp. So, right away they had us working in groups, and getting to know each other. Over the weekend, we worked in different groups called neighbourhoods, and made posters, wrote and acted out a play, and did a bunch of trust exercises. We did many activities to help us become a good leader, a good listener, and a good member of any group.

The friends I made at the Key Leadership Camp were amazing. Sometimes teens feel alone, especially good teens. Here, kids were together for a weekend, over Halloween weekend, choosing to be there. The kids at this camp want to have strong futures and want to be with mature and positive teens, just like them.

There wasn't any discrimination. Everyone cheered for everyone. Everyone was friends to everyone else. Everyone was happy. It was amazing.

I met wonderful friends that will probably be with me for a while. I learned a lot while having fun with everyone. I was given a chance to just be me.

By the end of the weekend, we were so close to so many new friends. It felt like we had known each other for a long time. By the end of the weekend, I didn't feel alone in being a good teen, but was refreshed that there were so many other good kids like me. When I went back to school on Monday, I felt like I was a different person than who had been in that school the week before. I had matured, a lot.

It was worth missing Halloween – and I told my parents when I got home “There is no where else I would have rather been – and I absolutely want to go next year, and the year after that too!” I can't wait – and I wish there were more camps like this during the year.

I think it's really wonderful everything the Kiwanis Club does - helping out the community and kids. But mostly - giving a chance for kids to become what they are capable of. This camp helped us do that.

There really are great kids out there that can make a difference, and this was just one step to getting there.

We are capable of so much, if we are giving a chance to be heard.

I had the time of my life and the memories and lessons that come from that will always be with me.

So thanks you very much for helping me have that experience.

p.s. I have my Key Leader pin on right now, and I bring my Key Leader water bottle to school with me every day.

In closing I want to thank the Kiwanis Foundation of Canada for providing \$25 scholarships to sponsors on behalf of every student that attended Key Leader events in Canada in 2009.

Yours in service to youth,
Jim McIntosh, Key Leader Chair

