

CAMP iROCK '23

Thanks to you, struggling readers can say
"Today iDREAM and iREAD; Tomorrow, iLEAD!"



United Way
of Pickens County

www.uwpickens.org



YOU ROCK!

Thanks to amazing donors like you, Camp iRock Year 9 was EPIC with swimming, field trips, Call Me MiSTER interns galore, Reading Buddies, YMCA fun, and of course, intensive literacy instruction- all wrapped up in a Camp iRock bow of enrichment and learning! Over 500 struggling readers registered for Camp iRock, and there were days when all of them attended. It was wild, crazy and oh, so much fun!

Attendance is so important to the success of Camp iRock. While the School District identifies children who NEED Camp iRock, they cannot MAKE children attend. Did you know that when a child is absent, the Camp site coordinators hunt for them and reinforce the importance of attending?

You are the reason we are so excited about the growth of Camp iRock and the impact it will have on young learners. Camp iRock is a big part of United Way of Pickens County's BOLD GOAL that 70% of all Pickens County's third graders will read at grade level by 2025. Why is this important?

Because third grade is the final year children are learning to read. After third grade, children are reading to LEARN. If they are not proficient readers when they begin the fourth grade, as much as half of the curriculum they will be taught will be incomprehensible. United Way donors, volunteers and partners like YOU have a "Go Big or Go Home" attitude. THAT is why Camp iRock is the premier summer learning program in the state!

Because of YOU, the Camp iRock team built the largest summer program imaginable... but not without challenges. Hiring enough YMCA counselors, was a real issue but we got creative and increased the involvement of Call Me MiSTER by making them a partner and increasing the number of Call Me MiSTER interns at each site.

The price tag for Camp iRock gets bigger each year, but we are not worried. We know you have our backs and that you believe in the importance of reading and education. You made sure that 500 SUPER READERS had the summer of their lives...we think YOU rock!



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

There are so many donors, volunteers, sponsors and community members that make Camp iRock happen. We are so grateful, but more importantly, the children love you SO much. Even before Camp iRock started, the Clemson Sunrise Rotary Club donated \$5,000 worth of books and journals, and our newest partner, Vulcan Materials, donated tons of educational materials and backpacks. Volunteers from across Pickens County met us at each site and stuffed those bags which were used as Welcome to Camp iRock gifts at the "Meet the Teacher" events.

The very first week, Vulcan sent a geologist with rocks, sand, and more for the kids to touch and experience. They kicked off "Career Week" with First Responders, heavy earth moving equipment, beauty stylists, and so many more community volunteers. Sirens were involved!

During the second week of Camp iRock, the volunteer Reading Buddies started working with their very special new friends. The number of Reading Buddies tripled this year and with nearly 500 kiddos, we really needed them.

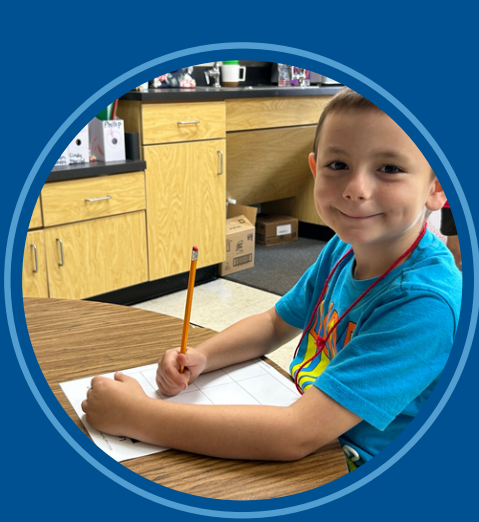
Local Rotary Clubs stepped up with Rotary Readers, and the Easley Club even sponsored an honest to goodness book author and illustrator, Lizzy Rockwell, who illustrated her late mother's book "Career Day". The Club provided a copy of the book for each child at the Easley camp site. Amazing!

WYFF, a real education friend, produced a fantastic story about Camp iRock that aired on the evening news. You can watch the clip on our website homepage under "The Latest." We all felt BIG TIME.

On the last day of Camp, United Way donated a bag of school supplies to each student. Spero Financial Credit Union volunteers stuffed the bags at their regional meeting. Thank you!

To the teachers, YMCA counselors, Call Me MiSTER interns, the School District and YMCA, a huge thank you for making so many dreams come true. We are a great team!

And to our donors, YOU are truly our heroes, because **without you, there would be no Camp iRock**. YOU are Camp iRock. Don't ever forget it.



AN INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

For the first time, United Way had a full time high school student intern at Camp iRock. Keyla Zhao, a junior at Daniel High School, spent every day of her summer break working at Camp iRock. To say that the Easley site director, Paige Holliday was over the moon is an understatement. "I really came to depend on Keyla," said Holliday. "She just knew what to do and did it without being asked."

Keyla had the amazing gift of getting the children to talk to her about their lives. Never in the history of Camp iRock, did we have this kind of insight from the hearts of the children. I asked Keyla to write an article for this report to our amazing donors. It touched our hearts and I know it will touch yours too!

CAMP IROCK IS A BEACON OF HOPE

By Keyla Zhao

Camp iRock is a beacon of hope for young students. Through my experience at Camp iRock I witnessed firsthand the astounding transformation that this program had on the literacy skills of campers. I had the opportunity to speak with students every day and was moved by their touching stories, revealing their family situation and the profound impact Camp iRock had on each individual.

During my time there, I worked in different classes, all of which had their unique flare. I could feel each instructor's passion for nurturing young minds and fostering a love for reading. I could



As a Camp iRock intern, Daniel High School junior Keyla Zhao witnessed first hand the transformative power your gift has on struggling readers.



see students' eyes light up with excitement when they walked into the classroom each day and the tremendous progress that they were making with their assigned curriculum. As an outsider whose first Camp iRock experience was this year, **I can truly say that Camp iRock is a one-of-a-kind program where students explore the boundless wonders of literacy.**

The most heartwarming moments at Camp iRock occurred when students would open up about their family situation and the impact Camp iRock had on their lives. One such student was a little boy, "Zack," who shared that he struggled with reading due to trouble concentrating. He expressed his feelings of embarrassment as he felt dumber than his peers since he missed the mark to reach the reading level required to pass 3rd grade. However, he felt like he was in a safe space at Camp iRock with struggling readers like himself. These feelings of belonging, along with the phenomenal support system of teachers, made him more motivated to improve. Soon, he became the most curious student in the classroom, asking questions with genuine interest. His willingness to learn paid off: he made an almost 20 point jump in his MAP test score, the highest in his class. Now, "Zack" feels empowered, and his newfound confidence has made him excited about reading once again.

Another touching story came from 3rd grader "Lucas," a quiet, introverted boy whose mom had been recently incarcerated. Through writing exercises, "Lucas" found an outlet to express his emotions and cope with his grief. His writing became a tool for healing and communicating with his mother whom he seldom saw. With the new vocabulary he was learning from Camp iRock, "Lucas" was able to convey his emotions better and saw remarkable growth in his writing ability.

The ABCs were not as easy as 123 for 4 year old "Melina" before she came to Camp iRock. "Melina" grew up in a primarily Spanish speaking family where English was a second language. Unlike her peers who



grew up speaking English at home, she struggled with her ABCs. Pronouncing and writing them seemed like an impossible puzzle to solve. Her parents, who recognized the difficulties one could face with limited English, sent her to Camp iRock to cultivate her English ability. The instructors at Camp iRock welcomed "Melina" with open arms. It was apparent that her teachers knew that each child had their unique journey and learning style. Through writing journals and interactive alphabet games, "Melina" started to grasp the ABC's. Beyond the classroom, her conversations with peers helped her become familiar with daily jargon. From her experience at Camp iRock, "Melina" flourished: her pronunciation became more fluent and her ability to recognize the alphabet steadily improved.

CAMP IROCK WORKS

Because of you, 486 children attended Camp iRock this summer and received intensive, personalized reading intervention in an enriching summer camp environment. **Thanks to you,** of the K5-3rd graders who attended at least 50% of camp and were post-tested, 96% maintained or grew in their reading level! Thanks to you, Camp iRock WORKS!



Keyla built relationships with the campers through her daily involvement, and learned how this "one of a kind" program is truly making a difference because of you.

486

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THANK YOU FOR AN AMAZING SUMMER!

Reading, writing, field trips, enrichment activities, and LOTS of love,
all thanks to YOU!



YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE



Your support is needed...urgently and right now...to write the next chapter in the story of a child in Pickens County who is struggling in school and in life.

Right now, a child is broken and her story will not have a happy ending. Yes, she is behind academically, but she also has to endure the stigma that surrounds her because she is having such a hard time in school. She feels stupid. She feels worthless.

Did you know that if a child isn't reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade, she may NEVER catch up? Third grade has been identified as the FINAL year children are learning to read. After 3rd grade they are reading to LEARN.

If they are not proficient readers when they begin the 4th grade, as much as half of the curriculum they will be taught will be incomprehensible.

But there is hope. There is YOU. Through your generous support to United Way of Pickens County's personalized educational programs like Camp iRock, children can thrive.

Every child's story deserves a happy ending, don't you agree?

My next gift to help a struggling child!

YES! I will help a struggling child and support the work of United Way of Pickens County. Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ \$ 50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$ _____ to help as much as possible.



Scan with your phone's camera
to donate securely online.

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