

Logan Carlson

Every week the routine is the same. Swim from one dock to the other, tread water for 1 min, then dive down, grab some dirt, and hold it up. This is the process of the swim test that I ran so many times this past summer at a camp called Camp Wonder at the Howell Nature Center.

I worked as a lifeguard. I spent all summer having fun while impacting kids' lives at the same time. There was a camper named Riker who would come back every week, and unfortunately could not swim. On the first day, while Riker was doing his swim test, I could tell he was struggling.

I kept my eye on him until I could tell that he was really close to going under and starting to drown. I ran into the lake, threw him my rescue tube, and took him to shore. When we got there, he then proceeded to tell me that he never learned how to swim and grew up in a very bad area.

He bounced around in foster care for a long time until he was finally adopted. Mind you, this camper is 10 years old. He had a very hard time making friends and I made sure to tell his counselors to try extra hard to make sure he was having fun.

They tried and tried. I could tell that he was having a really good time, but he was still missing out on the friends part. Eventually, there was a good group of kids that included him and made him a part of the "every week group." I was so excited to see that he could finally feel accepted and have some friends.

Swim time is one of the best parts of the day. All of the counselors and campers are in the water. Buckets of water are being dumped, campers are being picked up and thrown by counselors, and a lot of splashing is always taking place.

The only thing bad was that Riker was one of the only campers that were unable to swim. I would see him so upset that the rest of his friends were in the deep zone while he was on the sand. It made me want to help him out and teach him.

When I wasn't on duty I took every opportunity I had to teach Riker how to swim. I was inspired to teach him because I wanted him to finally feel like he belonged. I want every single kid that comes to have the time of their life and have the same opportunities that everyone else has, just like I had when I was younger.



After a couple weeks of practice, I successfully taught Riker how to swim. At first, he really struggled. He just couldn't figure it out. I would hold him up while he kicked and flailed his arms around. He would move his arms and legs so fast to get to the part where he could touch because he was so scared he was going to drown.

I had a really hard time getting to him and finally, I decided to tell him "my secret to swimming." I told him that all he needed to do was to relax, take deep breaths, and to trust himself. This made all of the difference. After a couple of sessions, he was swimming laps.

Seeing Riker doing this made me have so much pride in what I have done. There are so many kids that are privileged enough to learn how to swim at a young age, having their teacher either being a parent, grandparent, brother, sister. I felt so happy that I was able to have the opportunity to do this for him and make a difference in his life. When I was watching him in the deep zone with his friends laughing and having such a great time, it made all of that time spent with him so worth it. I hope that Riker viewed me as a role model and that I have impacted his life for the better.

