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August 15, 2011

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Dear Camp Tyler Friend,

So many of us have wonderful memories of Camp Tyler. Are you one? Can you remember hiking through the woods; walking through shade and sun; coming upon an animal by surprise; hearing the wind through the trees; seeing the grass wave like a gentle sea; pausing to witness the early morning sunrise reflected on the lake; hand feeding the chickens and goats? Remember the quiet; the clarity with which you could see?

Do you know how this place came to be? D.K. Caldwell and a few good men had a vision in 1945 of providing an outdoor camping experience primarily for the children of Smith County, but also for others. Through hard work and determination, this group of leaders brought a huge dream to life for all of us.

Camp Tyler has flourished through gifts of time, donations and the love of community members, continuing the mission of providing premier outdoor education for children. While Camp Tyler began as a place, it has become much more than that. Here, over a half of a million children have learned by discovery as they immersed themselves in an outdoor learning opportunity, instead of listening passively to a didactic lesson. Here, teachers have witnessed young students, who spent most of their school year in the principal's office, demonstrate leadership and a keen ability to learn. Here, individuals with special challenges find a haven where they are not picked on or have to suffer hurtful remarks. Here a young camper with asthma learns to use her inhaler properly giving her greater independence and removing some of the fear that comes with tightening lungs.

The memories and lessons are priceless and lasting. In July 2011 a mother emailed a remembrance of her time at Camp in the 70s: "Being a part of the Camp Tyler growth and development was one of the most cherished childhood memories of my education. I was always a kinesthetic learner. Camp Tyler was a multi-sensory environment for children like me before the term multi-sensory came to be a buzz word."

Today, more people live in urban than rural areas. By 2050 it is predicted that more than 70 percent of the world's human population will live in mega cities. Young people need a place where they can learn how to learn by discovering and experiencing and relating to the world around them. It is important to protect this place for children today, tomorrow and in the future. Camp Tyler is more important than ever!

Sixty plus years of memories have brought many changes. Until recently, TISD paid for exclusive use of the facility. Now, as all must be financially efficient, TISD has chosen to pay as one of many clients. This is good for all children of Smith County and beyond as more are able to be served. The result is that CTF is transitioning to financial independence. To do this, we must turn for help to those who love this place and understand its value so that we can keep our costs low for school-aged and special needs children. Please discuss how you and your family might serve through your financial gift. Then act!

Thank you for thoughtfully considering how you and your family can be part of ensuring Camp Tyler is here in the future with your gift.

Sincerely,

Debbie M. Shafer
Executive Director,
Camp Tyler Foundation