

Volunteers changing lives one camper at a time

CHRIS BOWMAN

PRISONER'S KIDS COMMUNITY ADVOCATE



TEEN GIRLS CAMP



TEEN BOYS CAMP



PRIMARY CAMP

After a great Sunday afternoon, a bus load of primary-age children are making their way home after a weekend of kayaking, archery, abseiling, crafts, group games and great memories. Half the bus is still full of excitement whilst the other half are happily worn out.

From the outside, they look like a regular group of kids away on camp, however there is a special bond connecting them all—a parent in prison.

Prisoners' Kids (PK) Mentoring Camps are custom-designed specifically for the children of prisoners and each year, Second Chances SA run multiple camps for primary and high-school aged PKs.

These camps create opportunities for mentoring, character development and building community with peers facing similar life issues. For many of the group, life at home can be tough and the camps are a way for them to feel a sense of belonging.

Although fun and adventure are a key part of the camps, so is providing positive role models and experiences to help make good life choices in the future.

For Helen Glanville, Second Chances SA CEO, these camps play an important role in early intervention.

"It's not their fault they have a parent in prison. It's not their crime, but as a society, they

are often stigmatized and may have more detrimental life outcomes.

"These camps are great because they give these kids an opportunity to make new friends, who aren't going to tease or bully them for their situation.

"These kids mean a lot to me because they are just kids who often need a 'first chance.' They haven't grown up with all the support most of us had – things we take for granted in this country," Helen said.

PK Mentoring Camps are dependent on the volunteer camp leaders who make them possible. They invest their heart and soul into making a positive impact on these young people.

Each volunteer has their own reason for getting involved and for Les Dennis, he too had a parent in prison.

"We come alongside these kids to give them hope and encouragement to make positive choices in their own lives.

"Seeing them grow in confidence and become leaders and mentors to their peers is the greatest reward," he says with a warm smile.

Young camp leader, Montana, started attending camps as a teenager and now as a young adult, volunteers her time as a mentor to help her younger peers and she has never missed a camp.

"I volunteer to lead because I was once them. I want to prove that you can defy the odds of following in your parent's steps. I continue to do it because watching the kids have fun and try new things is a great feeling, knowing we had a part in that happiness.

"It's nice to know we are giving back to the people who not only need it but appreciate the help they receive," said Montana.

For more information

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