

To Troy's Family,

As Troy's teacher of the gifted, my encounters with him were usually in a classroom setting. However, I would like to share two special encounters I had with Troy. Last spring when Troy received the Outward Bound scholarship, he came to my room for guidance on how to begin the process for this wonderful opportunity. I told him that there was a NHS recipient of the Gene Doyle scholarship who had signed up for the same trip that had captured Troy's interest. We discussed the additional cost above the \$3,000 scholarship and I related the experiences that other students expressed upon their return from their Outward Bound or NOLS adventure. He was ready to proceed when he walked out of my room.

Our daughter lives in Colorado and every summer my husband and I visit her but also take in the national parks, hiking and camping opportunities. While on our summer outings, I cannot help but think of our NHS students who are on their own expeditions with Outward Bound or NOLS. Of course while I traveled this summer, Troy was definitely on my mind.

Upon our return to NHS this fall, I "bugged" Troy to share his pictures. Finally, on Thursday, October 25th at the end of lunch, Troy appeared in my room with his flash drive and 3 disks. He was to be in art with Mrs. Perez but this was more important. We both knew she would understand. He sat at my laptop and I stood over his right shoulder for 45 minutes while he shared his pictures. The pictures were beautiful but the comments Troy made about the residual empowering effect of such an experience were the most compelling and the most powerful aspects of our conversation. In reality, this was the reason I asked to see the pictures, to have Troy verbalize the effect this adventure had on him. He expressed his feeling of doubt and concern at the beginning of the trip with the grey clouds and cold water. He expressed the child-like delight he felt when they had a day off the water, camped near the green forest area and the thrill he felt when he slid down the glacier plus was given permission to do it again! He proudly showed the picture of where he and his tent mates pitched their tent on top of the granite rock. Then he explained that he had to scramble down to get their supplies after the tent had blown over the cliff edge.

He admitted that he missed Florida while on his Alaska trip. I asked if he thought about Alaska upon his return to Florida. "Yes, every day," and he added that he missed Alaska. I knew then that the trip was worth all the effort he had made. He admitted that he did not know this experience would have such a grip on his memory.

It meant so much to me that he gave up his favorite class, art, to share his Alaska experience with me. Now, his sharing means even more to me. I wanted to share these encounters with you so that you may a glimpse of his time here at NHS.

Sincerely,

Susan Toppin