Starting Something New

“It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your front door. You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.” -JRR Tolkien.

This past couple of weeks have been full of new experiences. We have spent time in Habersham, White, Stephens, Rabun, and Union counties. We have used our mandalas to focus on the minute as well as traveled to overlooks to see the grand. We have gone back in time, enjoyed the present, and caught glimpses of the future.

A couple of years ago we visited a facility to learn more about their outdoor programs. The group in front of one of the falls along the Raven Cliffs Trail.
program. David Hoover, the coordinator of the program, came in and said, “I want y’all to experience this first before all the words.” He immediately had my attention. He proceeded to lead us in an activity that involved a stationary bike while he shared with us what it meant to be human.

“There are four steps to being human,” he said, “First, you must KNOW yourself (and be honest with yourself). Second, you CHOOSE yourself, and third you CREATE yourself...” He stopped here and carried on with another part of his presentation. As you may suspect, we were all peddling our bikes trying to figure out if he had just forgotten to tell us the fourth step, or if we had just heard him wrong. Finally, once he noticed that we were all looking around at each other and asking if someone had heard him say the final step, he stopped.

What he said next made a huge impression on me, and has been something that I have come back to several times since.

“GIVE.” He continued, “You only possess what you give away.”

He went on to reveal that many times in school we put our students in this cycle of knowing, then choosing, and then creating. Then we check that off and move on to the next topic without ever giving them a chance to give back. I have seen this in my life as a teacher, missionary, and father. As long as I am the one giving while only requiring the others around me to receive, I am only allowing them to see half the picture. It has become apparent to me that we must let our students give. If they do not have anything to give, then our job is to give them something to give. We must always move towards community because community requires each participant to give.

“You only possess what you give away.”

-DAVID HOOVER

This is the mindset that we want to weave into every interaction, lesson, and experience. Yes, we want to know more about ourselves, our community,
and our surroundings. Yes, we want to be able to choose the best version of ourselves. Yes, we want to create a better self, neighborhood, and planet. But, all of that knowledge, all of those choices, and all of that creating is futile if we do not take the time to give.

This is why we have spent a lot of time so far this year getting to know each other and learning to trust each other. This why we have spent time walking around Clarkesville, working in the garden, going to waterfalls, and doing obstacle courses. First we must know ourselves and each other. Then, we get to choose and create. Then, we will take the time to give.

Maybe a better question to ask our young people is, “How do you want to be able to give one day?”, instead of, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” Maybe we should ask them, “What did you receive and did you have a chance to give today?”, instead of, “What did you do and what did you learn today?”

As we begin this adventure together Katherine and I want you know that we are so thankful that you have decided to join us. We want you to know that you are part of something that seems small right now, but that if the vision I have been given for it is at all accurate, it is going to be huge. Maybe not huge numbers and space wise, but huge in the impact it could have on each individual, our families, and our local and global communities.

To know, to choose, to create, and to give. This is the power that each student has inside them. We want to be part of the process of unlocking this awareness.
Coming Up:

Monday, Aug. 26 we will be helping out at the Clarkesville Police Station.

Wednesday, Aug. 28 we will be traveling to Fernbank Museum of Natural History. Cost is $10/person. Either bring a lunch or an extra $8.

Friday, Aug. 30 we will be paddling the Tugaloo from Yonah Dam to Hwy 123.

Monday, Sept. 2 we will not meet. Happy Labor Day!

Monday, Sept. 9 we will be helping out at Clarkesville Soup Kitchen.

A little further ahead:

Tuesday, Sept. 17 – Friday Sept. 20 we will be on our first extended trip. The focus of this trip is the Revolutionary War. We have started planning the trip by researching the sites, doing the calculations, and making a supply list. More details and cost coming soon.

Thursday, Sept. 26 we will be going to see Lillie in *The Sound of Music* at the Habersham Theater.

Monday, Sept. 30 we will have an Open House where the students will show off their space and present their first textbook.