

LLAMA DRAMA



Llama evacuation required during trip

Middle school trips were back in full swing following the hiatus due to covid, starting with the eighth grade trip to Buena Vista, Colorado. Unlike previous years where the students stayed exclusively in Noah's Ark, students spent three days backpacking through the Rocky Mountains and camping in the woods. To help students with all of their luggage and paraphernalia, each hiking group was assigned two llamas to carry the tents. However, some llamas may have been more than the students bargained for.

One particularly stubborn llama refused to continue the hike, forcing the group to tie it to a tree, only to wait for an evacuation team to come and retrieve the llama.

"It was getting dark and we needed to go," eighth grader Kate Lewis said. "It was a little weird because, you know, you don't really hang out with llamas every day".

Despite the hail and increased load the Middle School Chaplain Matt Stroud's hiking group had to carry, students grew closer and realized they could do more than they thought possible.

"When everyone kept going and didn't complain, that was really surprising to me," Stroud said. "Our group found out how much the llamas were carrying the hard way."

Completely back to normal from the Covid years, middle school trips picked back up as sixth, seventh and eighth graders traveled to Washington D.C., Camp Champions and Colorado, respectively. The D.C. trip included new visitations to historical Yorktown and dance parties at Rhodeside Grille, while, for the first time, the Colorado trip had llamas accompany them.

“I got closer to my classmates and I had a lot of fun.

Blakely Laws
seventh grader

“I felt bad for the llamas because we were under the tarp while they were in the hail.

Madison Stiles
eighth grader

“A lot of the teachers danced [at the Rhodeside Grill] and I think the kids enjoyed getting to see their teachers outside of school.

Jana Barger
ms history teacher

“We can do things outside of the norm. We can do things that are hard, and if it doesn't work, we can do it together.

Matt Stroud
ms chaplain



“I got close with people that I didn't know that well. I've never been to D.C. and I got to see how beautiful it is.

Annabella Spears
sixth grader



Above: Seventh graders Searcy Mae Ferguson and Hayden Houston learn survival skills and how to treat wounds in the wilderness on the annual seventh grade trip to Camp Champions in Marble Falls, Texas. Not only were students able to learn life skills and how to take care of one another, but they also developed stronger friendships with one another along the way. "This was a great way to have fun while also learning important skills," Houston said. "I learned so much from this trip and learned how to strengthen friendships and grow as a person." *Photo provided by Cassie Nutter*

Above: Eighth graders Madison Stiles, Colby Chipman, Kate Lewis and Caroline Caldwell admire the scenic Rocky Mountains as they brief their day of upcoming hikes and adventures. "The climbing and hiking were very difficult but everything was definitely worth it," Lewis said. "It just kind of shows you that after the hard climb to the top of the mountain, there's something waiting over there." **Below:** During the annual sixth grade trip to D.C., students pay their respects to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as William Chein, Sequoyah Davis, Annabella Spears and Lexi Mercado participate in the changing of the floral wreath. While ESD sixth-graders watched the changing of the guard, there was an honor flight from Missouri to Arlington Cemetery for Vietnam veterans, some of whom were in attendance. "The ceremony was something I'll never forget," Spears said. "I'm really proud to be a part of the experience and it's something I'll take with me." **Left:** Eighth grader Carson Cuzalina poses for a photo with the group llama during their hike through the Rocky Mountains on the annual trip to Colorado. Shortly after this photo was taken the llama refused to move and had to be evacuated from the river valley. *Photos provided by Jane DeGrenier, Cassie Nutter and Scott Goetsch*



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miles traveled by middle school students between their trips to Washington D.C., Camp Champions and Noah's Ark Adventure Co. in Colorado.