

# History Highlights



## *Camp*

There is something transformative about camp, especially being in God's creation. This also applies in Mexico, and as early as 1974 our founder Pastor Von was taking a few kids from Mexico along with his youth to summer camps in the U.S. such as Forest Home and Hume Lake. It was easier for children to cross the border then, particularly as part of an orphanage. However, for various reasons Von became interested in having a camp in Mexico, and Forest Home supported that vision with donations and staff in the early years. Von began taking his youth to San Quintín for retreats at the hospital where he had missionary friends. The hangar of the small airport nearby served as a dorm. Each time more Mexican boys were invited. Eventually an opportunity arose to use a new camp called Rancho Agua Viva. Initially the camp was rustic – the cooking was open-air and the tepees on the property were already inhabited by mice. Over the years the facilities have been improved, and Spectrum continues to have its camp there.

From the beginning Von allowed older boys (ages 15-18) to come to camp. He knew that most of them were already on the wrong path, but he could not resist the challenge of trying to persuade them to follow Jesus, and he got a kick out of watching tough gang members scour the grounds for sequins to win points for their teams. However, what was a chal-

lenge to Von was a potential nightmare for the rest of the staff. These older boys used drugs, fought, stole, and once even held a fishing boat captain at knifepoint. They were a negative influence on the younger boys, if not an outright danger to them. Under Aaron's tenure, the upper age for camp dropped to 13 as we tried to reach the boys while the ground was still fertile.

Over the years various camps had been held for girls, but nothing as constant as the annual boys' camp. In 2019 we tried incorporating girls into the camp we were already holding for boys. By this point the age range for campers was 8 to 12, which avoided some of the challenges of a co-ed camp. Our first children's camp was extremely successful. Matt also offered the opportunity to churches in our neighborhoods to bring their youth to camp, an opportunity which they seldom have.

Many Christians point to an experience at camp which changed their spiritual direction. With that in mind, we have continued to make camp a priority each year because it is an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate that we care as well as to share the gospel with the children from our neighborhoods.

