

Thank you for sponsoring Gravatt's 4th annual Christmas Retreat for Military Families!

On December 19th, 2014, fifteen families arrived at Gravatt Camp and Conference Center for the 4th annual Christmas Retreat for Military Families. 72 people, from 5 months to 55 years old, gathered at Gravatt for four days of rest, fun, and family time.

Please accept our warmest gratitude for the outstanding generosity and support of the Aiken-Augusta Wounded Warrior Charity Golf Classic. Your organization's leadership gift made the Christmas Retreat a reality this year.



The first evening is all about getting to know each other. At 5pm, everyone came together in the field to play games and break the ice. It was so much fun to watch everyone run around and be silly together. Just like when you are a kid, we played until it got dark and went inside for a delicious dinner prepared by Juniper, a local restaurant in Ridge Spring, SC. After dinner, it was time to make gingerbread houses and each family worked together to build a house. Without a doubt, these were the most creative and best constructed houses of any Christmas Retreat. Then, Santa came by for a visit! All of the children were so excited to see Santa and tell them exactly what they wanted for Christmas. Finally, full on sweets and cookies, everyone made their way to bed.



Aleida told Santa she wanted her mommy to have twins. Aleida's mommy did not agree.

Saturday and Sunday were full of exciting activities. In the morning, the adults and older children went to the low ropes course. Not only are the challenges fun, they open up communication and teach the participants how to work together as a team. Often, after a parent has been away on duty, it is hard to reenter the family unit. A morning on the ropes course helps break down barriers and spark conversations that begin to heal the cracks in the family structure and bring people closer together.

In the afternoon, there was yoga, canoeing and fishing on Lake Henry, long walks, and quiet naps. There was a scavenger hunt across Gravatt's 270 acres to see which family could find the largest pine cone, discover the due date of one of the mothers-to-be at the retreat, sing the songs of the armed forces, and lots of other fun and silly things. Saturday evening, we had a movie night!



On the Whale Watch, participants have to work together to keep the platform balanced as everyone gets on.

Sunday was packed full of even more activities. Our guests were invited to attend an optional, nondenominational service in the Chapel lead by Chaplain Cliff Vicars, an Army chaplain who has brought retreats from Fort Gordon to Gravatt for many years. Next, our guests walked down to High Ropes for a morning spent climbing trees

If you would like to see more pictures of the Christmas Retreat at Gravatt, please visit our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/GravattCCC.

and flying down the zip line. For those who were too young to do the ropes course or wanted to stay inside by the fire, there was a beading class held in Stewart Dining Hall. There was more free time in the afternoon for naps, archery, and canoeing, followed by the annual kickball game. We loved watching Dads carrying their sons while they kicked the ball and ran around the bases.



Sunday night, a magician came to entertain the children with tricks and illusions. They loved it! Parents had a Bunco date night in Stewart Hall and spent a few child free hours having fun together.



The purpose of the Christmas retreat is to bring families together, away from the stressors of everyday life and create a safe, relaxing, family centered environment.

As she left on Monday, Sunseree, an Army veteran, said last Christmas she was in the VA Hospital after having a mental breakdown caused by her PTSD. The holidays are always a difficult time that she approached with anxiety and sadness. This year, at Gravatt, her anxiety melted away. She was able to spend a weekend with her sons being happy and carefree – like she used to be – and feels stronger and more confident about going home.



Sunseree is why Gravatt hosts the Christmas Retreat for Military Families each year. She and all of the mothers and fathers like her are why your support is so vital and incredibly appreciated.

Your sponsorship has made a huge difference in the lives of these families.

Thank you.

Meredith Cook

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