To Whom It May Concern, 4/11/2025

In March of 2015, my sons were accepted to Lake Delaware Boys’ Camp (LDBC). In June of 2015, just before they were due to report to camp, their Dad, Dominic died unexpectedly whilst still recovering from a stroke he had 2 years prior. It took everything in me to part with them for 5 weeks the following summer; 2016, but they wanted to give it a try. The first summer of grief, 3 where there used to be 4, it was now just me. I had to begin the process of allowing them to start on their journey to manhood without their Dad showing them the ropes. After our home and home church, LDBC became one of the three places on this Earth responsible for ensuring that my sons became strong, disciplined, Christian men who value humanity, faith, family and self during an excruciatingly painful time in their lives. Today they hold the humane, Christian, military values that were instilled in them at LBBC sacred and have all intentions of passing them down to the generations they create. Little did we know God had sent LDBC into our lives knowing my sons would need it even before their Dad died.

My older son, Devin, joined camp later than most boys. The 2 years prior had been very hectic filled with caregiving for Dominic starting 2013 when Devin was only 9. He had watched his father go overnight from a fit, engaged, jolly father to partial paralysis and very diminished speech. He was disoriented and unsure about how he would find a place that late in this structured summer camp where military responsibility was earned, and promotion occurred from one camp season to the next. He strategized and found his place quickly thanks to the mentorship of camp leadership Colonel Adams and General Adams and to the older boys and staff he looked up to.

A behind the scenes player, he chose to start volunteering in the chapel behind working to make sure the services held 8 times a week flowed smoothly from incense burners, to candles, to hymns to organization of boys on program in the service and everything in between. His operational mind clicked in and over the next 4 years he rose through the ranks to receive the St Francis medal twice and a Founders medal in his graduation year. When he got to camp at 12 some told him he could not earn a Founders medal because of his late start. His quiet, stable, consistent leadership proved otherwise.

I believe only 30 to 40 campers have received that medal in the past 10 years. LDBC enabled him to create his own path and one for his brothers behind him. He had no LDBC legacy, he had no Dad to show him the ropes. Yet still this place, Father D and Father VB, helped him find himself enough to become the first ever Captain Sacristy. Devin is immensely proud to have been recognized in a place where he finds the most peace, the chapel at LDBC. Healing for him happened in the backroom of that chapel as he listened to the service from a different vantage point than most, behind the scenes. The chapel will always be a special place for all of us, not because it is fancy but because it is deeply spiritual. With his camp career being shorter, Devin did not feel like his time at LDBC was finished so he applied to be a Camp Counselor. He returned as the youngest Counselor and spent three years in a row becoming Major Fosu in his final counseling year where he held responsibility for campers and staff. He was awarded a second Founder’s medal.

My younger son Reece attended LDBC when he was 8 years old. The only year they did not attend was in 2020 due to the pandemic. Reece prefers to now be called Emmanuel his middle name evidence of his affinity to his faith and Christian values. Emmanuel grew up at LDBC. His first year he learned how to swim and was super excited to show me how well he had progressed midway through camp at our first Family weekend. He quickly fell in love with enjoying the simplicity of being a young boy, having bug bites and competing as teams in all things LDBC.

I marveled at how he would come home each summer clearly more mature than 5 weeks earlier when he left. I marveled at how he spent the rest of year walking around the house doing military drill moves and talking nonstop with his tent mates and LDBC brothers about the summer and anxiously awaiting his next rank for the following summer. I marveled at how he planned out what things he would do more efficiently the following year and how he packed his trunk more efficiently each year, taking only the essentials from year to year.

Emmanuel is very competitive naturally. I watched him first struggle to figure out what his niche was and misbehave a little as young boys do in his early camping years. The beauty and magic of LDBC was its patience and gentle guidance from older campers, camp staff and management that helped him find his place at LDBC. When he did, he locked in and told himself he would create a record of Drill Down wins after his first win. Then I watched him execute that always praying strongly and practicing for 4 weeks before each competition. I watched him win the famed, high stakes Drill Down back-to-back and then three-peat which I do not believe has been done since 1909. To win he had to drown everyone out (except for the Major issuing commands), follow his instincts only on trick commands, flawlessly move in unison with his musket rifle in a pressured situation to beat out all other campers whilst being eagerly watched by visiting parents and scrutinized by all watching staff. His goal for his graduation year was either to be Major or lead his company. He got to lead his company and had already planned to win the Company plaque if he had that rank, they did. For him leading a company of boys and being what older boys had been for him 7 years earlier was priceless and where his healing happened. To watch him go full circle over those 8 years has been truly a blessing, a pure joy. I can definitively say that being an LDBC family, spending uninterrupted family time in this disconnected place helped us connect in ways we never imagined. I have been re-trained by and fallen in love with LDBC, and now value disconnected time to connect. This is a practice that we have now agreed to do as a family each year now that our time as a camping family at LDBC is finished.

What I value is that my sons now know for the entirety of their lives that they need not be dependent on cellphones for connection. They have been able to willingly embrace technology free 5-week summers and now demonstrate a healthy balance and usage of their phones. This will serve them positively in life as their peers struggle to exist without phones for 24 hours. At LDBC, less is more, and simplicity is valued, again a value that my sons now hold dear. They now embrace the fact that they can sleep on a wooden floor in a simple sleeping bag in a flapped tent for weeks or in a comfortable bed and be just fine either way. In fact, as graduates, they now fondly miss the intense brotherhood bonding time where human interaction is valued over all else.

Being a part of a legacy that has existed since 1909 is priceless to my sons and to me. We all feel the most spiritual when we are in those woods, cut off from cell phones and technological encroachments. The legacy that includes leading in various dimensions of our world quietly and impactfully serving others and our country is cherished at LDBC. I am proud to say my sons are now a part of that legacy.

Twenty-five 3-hour drives in both directions were more than worth it and great for soul searching. Nine years later, my sons have evolved from confused, angry, grieving boys aged 12 and 8 to young men taking their places in this world with their LDBC family and brothers on all sides. Devin is soon to be a senior at a prestigious business school studying Entrepreneurship and thriving. Emmanuel, thanks to recruiting during the summer at LDBC and our extended LDBC family is soon to be a junior at a prestigious boarding school excelling in academics, leadership and basketball on full scholarship.

I can only hope that this place remains in existence forever and that more boys get to experience the true gift to the world that LDBC is. Our family will never be able to repay LDBC for what it has done to heal us nor for what it will be for generations to come in our family, wild dogs, porcupines, no cell service, canons and all! I have had some of my proudest moments as a widowed Mom at LDBC. I can truly say LDBC helped bring me back to life in the summers on my young, widowed motherhood journey. I wish Dominic could have experienced it, I know it would have impacted who he would be today. I know he would have been proud of what his sons have become thanks in part to LDBC.

Respectfully submitted, ***Racheal Ankrah-Fosu***