

August 3rd, 2025

Dear

We're so excited to share the story of our incredible three-day adventure to Kite Lake where we summited Mount Democrat! It was a journey full of creativity, resilience, and wonder—one that your campers will likely remember for years to come.

We started our trip on Tuesday by settling into our campsite and diving into a fun and relaxing activity: kite decorating. Each camper got to color and personalize their own kite, and it wasn't long before the sky above our site was filled with vibrant shapes dancing in the breeze. As the evening settled in, we had an early bedtime in preparation for the big summit day ahead.

Early Wednesday morning, we woke up at 1:00 AM to begin our climb. With headlamps lighting the trail, we started hiking around 2:30 AM. The girls were incredibly focused and determined, moving steadily through the dark, early hours. During our breaks for water and snacks, the campers loved switching off their headlamps and looking up at the stars, taking in the peacefulness and feeling awed beneath the night sky.

Just before sunrise, we reached the false summit and were rewarded with a stunning view of the mountains painted in soft shades of pink and purple. By 7:00 AM, we had reached the summit of Mount Democrat. The girls celebrated by flying their kites on the peak and snapping photos to remember the moment. We played Top of the World by The Carpenters and enjoyed a well-earned candy bar as a sweet treat to mark their accomplishment. It was a truly special moment—standing at 14,152 feet, with the wind in their kites and smiles on their faces.

Our descent included a bit of rock scrambling, which the girls tackled with energy and enthusiasm. Back at camp, we enjoyed lunch and took some quiet time to rest and reflect after such an early and active morning. That evening, the girls spent more time flying their kites around the campsite and sharing their favorite parts of the day with each other.

Thursday morning began at a much more relaxed pace—we slept in until around 8:00 AM, then packed up our campsite and enjoyed a delicious pancake breakfast. From there, we traveled to the South Park City Museum, where the campers explored the history of a Colorado mining town. They especially enjoyed the interactive presentation on how South Park City came to be and loved wandering through the preserved buildings and exhibits.

To wrap up our adventure, we visited The Silver Spoon for a celebratory ice cream outing. It was a sweet way to end the trip, giving the girls time to socialize and share stories with other campers who had returned from their own long trips.

This experience was filled with moments of challenge, joy, and connection. We're incredibly proud of how each camper supported one another, pushed themselves, and embraced every part of this journey—from starry skies to summit celebrations.

Warmly,

Emily Kirchner, Lydia Baron and Jenny Rohrer

August 3, 2025

Dear

This week, your camper had a wonderful time on her Tarryalls Long Trip! The Tarryalls are located in the Lost Creek Wilderness area and have often been compared to Yosemite National Park. We experienced stunning views, dramatic rock formations, and plenty of pine and aspen along two gorgeous rivers.

We started with a quick hike of around one and a half miles to our first campsite that had a beautiful creek. We enjoyed the view of the Tarryall Mountains while we set up camp and relaxed. We spent the afternoon there eating bagel sandwiches, splashing in the creek, and resting in the sun (with plenty of sunscreen)! With the help of the girls, we feasted on chicken fajitas for dinner and had fun debriefing the day before bedtime.

On the second day of our trip we had a longer, 3.5 mile trek to our second and final campsite. We had English muffins, sausage, and oatmeal for breakfast before setting off, continuing to comment on the beauty surrounding us. Once we made it to our destination we put up our tents and explored the large rock formations nearby before making pita pizzas for lunch. The rest of the afternoon was spent drawing and reading in our tents while it rained. When the rain let up, we made veggie stir fry for dinner and had even more tent time while the weather moved back in. The cool evening rain on our tents created a relaxing lullaby which helped put us all to sleep.

We slept in until 8:30am the next day and had zucchini bread, oatmeal, and Bobo bars. The girls spent the entire day rock scrambling and exploring the streams and caves in the area around us. They found so many interesting nooks and crannies to explore and they loved the unique scrambling features of the massive piles of rocks. For lunch we made grilled quesadillas and tomato soup; it was very filling! We used the rest of the afternoon to swim and play in the creek and read on the bank. For our final dinner we made cheese tortellini before enjoying more tent time as rain came in.

On our fourth and final day, we woke up early in preparation for our 5-6 mile hike out of the valley in which we were camping. After a breakfast of fried bagels, we enjoyed a beautiful, shaded hike through the same terrain we had traversed earlier in the trip. The entire group was lively and cheerful as we viewed the trail from a different perspective. Everyone's attitude was extremely positive, and as counselors, we were thrilled to see the girls taking in the gorgeous views and practicing all of their knowledge about wildflowers and the lush foliage on the edges of the trail. We stopped for ice cream in Lake George and debriefed our relaxing trip before heading back to camp!

We had the best time with all of the campers on this trip, and were so thrilled to spend more time with them in the great outdoors. It was amazing to see each of them connect with each other and with their natural surroundings. We were sorry to see the four days come to an end, but are so, so proud of all that the girls accomplished during our time together!

Sincerely,

Alisen Chapman, Ellie Hughes and

August 3, 2025

Dear

Howdy y'all! Last week, your camper rode off into the Colorado mountains on our four day Buffalo Peaks long trip. Even though we weren't on horses, we saw more wildlife on this trip than most people see in their lifetimes!

Our first day of our "Bull Riders on Buff Peaks" themed trip was long and hard but rewarding—just like a day in the saddle. These girls were motivated and excited which helped create a positive atmosphere for the hike. We started the hike with seven miles of consistent, moderate ascent with full heavy packs. The girls were telling stories to pass time and we eventually reached our campsite after about 6 hours of hiking. We enjoyed backcountry fajitas with fluffy rice followed by graham crackers and frosting for dessert before heading to bed early for our summit attempt the next morning!

The next morning we woke up at 1am for our attempted climb of West Buffalo Peak. We enjoyed some homemade banana bread and filled our water bottles up at a stream along the trail as we hiked 2.5 miles through dense willows to reach the base of the mountain. Here we left the trail and began bushwhacking up to the treeline. This was a challenge due to the steep incline and the many dead trees we had to navigate but the girls handled it well by staying positive and watching the sunrise behind us. Once we crested the first ridge, we had a beautiful view of the Collegiate Peaks to the west and the girls spotted two moose in the marsh below us. From here we ascended the large false summit which was the hardest part of the day, but at the top we got to see a herd of elk running along the ridge. Before our summit push we listened to some hype music, had a dance party, and ate motivational Jolly Ranchers. Finally, around 9am, we summited!

We brought inflatable ponies to match our bull riding theme and rode them to the top. We were so proud of everyone for braving the long day and for staying so positive. At the top, we snacked and took tons of photos. We began our descent back into the treeline where we got a little off trail and had to bushwhack through a thick aspen grove. Here we saw a family of cinnamon black bears enjoying lunch in the forest. After avoiding the bears and finding the trail we devoured our "fancy lunch" which included summer sausage, Ritz crackers and havarti cheese. During our last stretch back to the campsite we saw another moose on the trail ahead of us which we scared off by singing songs. Finally after 14 hours of hiking we all took much needed naps before our dinner of delicious tomato soup and grilled cheese. We had an early bedtime around 8:30pm to prepare for our 3 mile hike the next day.

We woke up at 8:30 and made oatmeal, caramelized apples, and bagels for breakfast before we hit the trail. Right as we started walking a thunderstorm rolled in and we dodged the hail and lightning by setting up a tarp in the trees. To make it more fun and pass time we had a singalong to music. The girls were so strong and kept a positive attitude even though it was cold and wet. We got back on the trail and found a peaceful spot by the creek to eat lunch. From there we pushed on to the campsite but not without multiple crazy river crossing and a race to beat the rain. Luckily we made it to the campsite just in time and rested in our tents while rain passed. We spent our last night eating ramen, vegetables and Oreos for dessert then went to bed around 9pm.

On our last and final day we woke, ate breakfast and drank hot cocoa. We walked the two miles back to the trailhead in record time and found our van waiting for us with lunch and fresh water from camp. The kids dipped their feet into the creek and enjoyed the cold water before our drive home. We loaded into the van and drove into Fairplay to where we indulged in ice cream and ate lunch at a park. The kids worked so hard the past few days facing the challenges of their first significant, multi-day backpacking trip. We are so proud of everything the accomplished and how well they handled many of the unexpected adventures (and animals...but no bulls) the trip brought. We expect great things from these campers on their future endeavors. This trip has taught them so much!

Yeehaw,

Baylyn Burgett, Ellie De Groote, Peyton Ellinghaus, and Keirsten Dray

August 3, 2025

Dear

Greetings from High Trails! As per tradition, we had our long trips this past week. Your daughter chose our “Antero Artists’ Trip”, a camping experience on one of the Sanborn satellite properties at the base of Antero Mountain. It was an adventure filled with creative projects in full nature immersion. Your daughter was part of a large group of twenty five children and six counselors during this trip. The girls were very excited for our trip’s theme, “Music, Musical Festivals & Fun.”

We filled our days with various art projects and nature explorations, alongside lots of play time and delicious backcountry meals. To get to our location, we drove about seventy miles west of Sanborn towards Mount Antero near Salida, CO. Upon arrival, we quickly set up large tents and made camp. The Junior Counselors, having recently finished their leadership training trip, were eager to help us cook grilled cheese sandwiches with a side of black beans and tomato soup. It was an absolutely fantastic meal to get us nourished and acquainted.

We continued our day by making playful art drawings in groups. They were so funny we decided to hang up our new art at the High Trails lodge once we got back. Some of the girls also participated in a nature conservation activity and helped uproot an invasive plant. For dinner, the campers had pita pizzas while sharing stories and enjoying their time outdoors. By 7:30pm the rain started to come down so we retreated to our tents for an early bedtime.

The following day, we had breakfast in the morning sun: pancakes with M&Ms, cinnamon apples, and sausages. We took a short hike to the nearby creek and enjoyed a watercolor painting session while dipping our feet in the icy cold mountain water. For lunch we had crackers, cheese, goldfish and sausage charcuterie in our tent vestibules because it was raining once again. The girls made the best of it and sang Sanborn chants while eating. Luckily the rain subsided and we proceeded to make instruments out of various art materials. They made rain sticks, maracas, and little drums with beads. We are planning to use the instruments for our trip song on Sunday!

Some of the girls were interested in identifying medicinal plants with Ieva, our counselor who studies medicinal herbs. They gathered wild raspberries to share with the group and learned the other names of plants in the area. Others played games outside or spent time with friends in their tents. We ended the day with Whitney’s famous backcountry ramen and s’mores for dessert. It was beautiful to hear the girls share the highlights of their trip so far.

On the third and final day, we packed our tents up first thing in the morning. Some of the campers successfully “cowgirl camped” under the stars the night before. The creek was, by far, the most favorite activity on our trip so we planned to spend the morning there again after breakfast. We hiked back to the creek in the cool aspen grove one last time and enjoyed some more watercoloring and simply playing about.

By the time lunch rolled around, it was nearly time to finish packing. Another large cloud was rolling in and we hurried to get everything into the vans. We managed well and made it just in time before the hard rain hit. Even though the rain stopped us from doing all the art activities we had planned, the girls had an amazing time and adapted well to the circumstances. They always made the best of the situation, stayed inquisitive and curious, and got a big dose of nature living. We are so proud of all of our “Antero Artists” this trip and hope they will remember this time together for the seasons to come.

With creative expression,

Syd Parizek, Emmie Zarb, Gio Rodriguez, Whitney Pruitt, Ieva Karpaviciute and Grace Budge

August 3, 2025

Dear

Hello from the mountains! Last week, all of the High Trails campers embarked on a 3, 4 or 5 day Long Trip. We're so thrilled to let you know that your daughter completed the High Trails 3-day Alpine Valley and Mount Sherman mountain long trip! This is a popular first 14,000 foot mountain for younger campers, and the Sanborn property in Leavick Valley provides a beautiful backdrop for supported backcountry camping and nearby outdoor explorations.

On the first day we all drove out in a van and listened to our "star" themed playlist the whole way. Our campsite was on the Sanborn satellite property nestled in the valley below Mount Sherman, giving us a breathtaking, almost 360 view of the mountains. We had an early burrito dinner that first night and went straight to bed because—not long after—we would be waking up for our summit attempt!

Getting girls out of their sleeping bag and into their boots at 1am was not as hard as we thought as there was much enthusiasm from all the girls to hit the trail! We drove up a mile- long bumpy backroad to the trailhead, turned on our headlamps, and began our trek.

Our theme was Shooting Stars on Sherman, which actually came true since we were able to take small breaks and scan the sky—and a few of us saw some shooting stars! At the halfway mark we stopped and enjoyed the sun rising over the mountains. The girls all showed so much strength and perseverance and everyone made it to the summit!

At the top we ate pumpkin bread and gummy bears and enjoyed the beautiful view. On the way down we took a pit stop to slicker slide (sledding without the sled) since there was still snow on the mountain. The rest of the hike down was a race to beat the rain which we won!

Once we were back at the campsite we made a quick lunch of pita pizzas and then we all took a long nap and enjoyed some much needed tent time. Dinner that night was chicken vegetable stir fry with a cold s'mores dinner followed by another early bedtime since we were all exhausted.

The next morning we woke up at 8am and broke down camp and we got a friendly visit from a big moose just outside our campsite. The girls were psyched because they had been talking about seeing a Moose since the beginning of the trip—we were so happy she/he stopped by to make that dream come true for them! Once we picked everything up we drove to the town FairPlay where we went to the South Park City Museum, which is a preserved western pioneer town. We were able to walk from building to building and get a peek into the pioneers' day-to-day lives. After lunch in the van, we got ice cream at an old fashioned ice cream parlor—the second high point of the trip!

Most of the girls got big waffle cones and, after that, we were all satisfied with the adventure. This trip was many of the girls first 14ers (14,000 foot mountains) and was an eye opening experience for them. Even though the girls had to push through the cold morning, being tired, and the uphill trek—they all did it and summited with smiles on their faces. We were so happy to get to know these amazing campers and to have the pleasure of hanging out with last week—thank you for sharing them with us!

Sincerely,

Krista White, Tara Sullivan and Lexi Woodring

August 3, 2025

Dear

Hello from High Trails! We are thrilled to say that we have returned from our wildly successful Oxford/Belford long trip! Your daughter persevered through many steep uphill climbs, early mornings, and long days on the trail, all with a smile on her face. We had such a blast hiking together for four days and creating so many amazing memories!

On the first day we were dropped off at the Missouri Gulch Trailhead and hiked a steep 1.5 miles into our first campsite. It was such a beautiful spot with an impressive view of 14,199 foot Mount Belford to the south and 14,067 foot Missouri Mountain to the northwest. We set up camp and then had a fancy Italian dinner to fuel up for the next day! We got to bed nice and early for an ambitious 1:30am wake up call.

We started day two with a quick breakfast and hit the trail to the summit! The starry night sky lit our way—some of us saw shooting stars!--then turned into a beautiful sunrise. The girls crushed the intimidating switchbacks up Mount Belford and persevered through the hard, steep climbing. We had a celebration on the summit of Belford with lots of candy bars, sparkling cider, photo shoots, and backcountry charcuterie boards of cheese, crackers and summer sausage.

Unfortunately, due to a rather rainy week, we could not continue onto Mount Oxford because of approaching thunderstorms, but the girls kept their spirits high. They set an impressive pace down the mountain, making it safely to the campsite before the storm hit! We all had a restful afternoon and evening in our tents listening to the sounds of the rain before making another delicious dinner and crawling into our sleeping bags for a well-deserved rest.

The third day, though challenging, was the most beautiful as we packed up camp and headed over 13,220 foot Elkhead Pass—one of the highest hiking passes in Colorado! After gaining the saddle of this ridge that connects Mount Belford with Missouri Mountain, we were stunned by the view that we saw. It was as though we were being hugged by the entire Collegiate Range, wrapped up in their rocky peaks while white clouds passed above us in the impossibly blue sky. It is truly one of the most breathtaking views you can imagine. We also saw lots of wildlife including marmots, pika, moose, and deer. It was a long 9 mile day but the girls enthusiastically motivated each other and played trail games! Our campsite that night was nestled below Mount Harvard in a cozy little aspen grove near an old miner's cabin that is becoming, once again, part of the forest.

On the final day, we had a slower, more relaxed morning with breakfast sandwiches and a late wake-up! The girls' energy never faltered as we hiked the last 7 miles full of more giggles and trail games. The girls entertained themselves with a dance-off and lip sync battles as we waited for our van pick up and our much deserved pizza lunch. We are so proud of this group and what they accomplished—thank you for sharing them with us this summer!

Best,

Abby Durkin, Summer Donovan and Izzi Dalsing

August 3, 2025

Dear

Hello from High Trails! This long trip week, your camper adventured off-property on the Silverheels Four Day expedition. This long trip was a celebration of little and big victories, and a testament to the resilience and grit of these campers, all amidst beautiful views of soaring peaks and (mostly) endless bluebird skies.

Our trip began at about 10am when we left High Trails and drove to our dropoff location on the Beaver Creek Trail. After getting there at 11:30am, we walked about 1.8 miles to our first campsite at the base of 13,829 foot Mt. Silverheels—the 96th highest peak in Colorado! Along the way we stopped for a classic camp lunch of bagel sandwiches and later crossed a beautiful stream running down the valley. After setting up camp, we made a delicious dinner of pesto tortellini and french bread. The next morning would be our summit attempt so we went to bed early in order to prepare for our wakeup.

We woke up bright and early at 3:30am and ate a quick breakfast of oatmeal, granola bars, and zucchini bread. Our ascent began at 5am and we began by following the trail we had scouted the day before. We walked along the ridge and rock scrambled to the summit, which the kids loved. We were able to summit at 10am and enjoyed candy bars and sparkling apple grape juice at the top! Shortly after we descended and arrived back at the campsite, we made grilled cheese and tomato soup for the kids. To relax afterwards, we spent well-deserved time napping in the tents. Once we finished, we made a dinner of stir fry with ramen noodles and vegetables, and for dessert we had s'mores. We then finished washing dishes and got to bed early for our next early day ahead.

For our third day backpacking, we woke up at 5:30am and broke down our campsite including taking down tents and bear bags. We ate a quick breakfast of toasted bagels with brown sugar cinnamon apples, cream cheese, peanut butter and other toppings. Leaving at about 7:30am, we continued along the valley we had camped in, below Mt. Silverheels, and hiked 1.8 miles again to our next campsite. Located in a gorgeous crossing of multiple other valleys, our second and final campsite was above treeline, offering us a breathtaking view. We met some weather on the way in and had to layer up with rain jackets and trash bags for our packs, but we set up camp and had lunch of crackers, summer sausage, and havarti dill cheese. After another afternoon rain storm hit, we made a quick dinner of mac and cheese and chicken and then went to bed early again for our last early morning wakeup.

Waking up at 5am, we broke down our campsite and made breakfast of breakfast crepes as the sun rose above the mountains around us. At 7:30am, we once again put on our packs to journey to the Continental Divide. Though this was a long, tough hike, spirits were high — undoubtedly buoyed by the excitement of both seeing the landmark on top of Hoosier Pass and the ice cream awaiting us at the end of our trip. This hike was our longest at 2.33 miles, but the kids did a terrific job for our last push and they were determined and motivated the entire time.

We were actually bummed to see the parking lot as we had had such an incredible time with the campers, the views, and the whole Silverheels experience! Thank you for sharing your camper with us!

Happy Trails,

Olivia Medrano, Megan Katz, Anna Morrissey, Ken North

August 3, 2025

Dear

The Harvard-Yale long trip this past week was such a phenomenal trip packed with good memories of lots of laughter and perseverance. This is one of the most challenging trips offered by Sanborn, and we were incredibly impressed by the campers' commitment to earning their Ivy-league degrees on legendary Mount Harvard (14,423 ft) and Mt. Yale (14,199 ft).

On our first day on the trail, we hiked 3.6 miles to our campsite in Horn Creek Basin. It was a perfect day for the hike: the weather was balmy and we made quick work of the day. The girls quickly settled into a light hearted atmosphere with smiles and encouragement all around. Surrounded by high alpine peaks and rushing waterfalls, we bundled ourselves into our sleeping bags before the sun had fully set in order to steel ourselves for our ascent of Mt. Harvard the next day.

2:30 am: the alarms sounded and we groggily pulled ourselves out of our tents for a breakfast of Bobo Bars and oatmeal. Within an hour, we were on the trail in the early morning darkness and speeding up the side of Mt. Harvard. We hiked this way for three hours, listening only to our own conversation and laughter in the night. The camaraderie shared amongst this strong group of hikers made the mountain into light work. Suddenly, in the midst of a Jolly Rancher break, the sun began to light up the low hanging clouds and fill the sky with an orange glow. Better yet, there was only about half a mile left before the summit. Slowly, we scrambled up the remaining rocks and reached the summit at around 7am. Elated, we broke open the sparkling cider and took photos in our caps and gowns for our graduation themed trip. After the celebrations subsided and the snacks were packed away, we took our time traipsing downhill through fields of yellow and purple flowers, looking forward to the day's greatest graduation gift of all: an afternoon nap.

Once we slept in enough to properly recover from our epic mountain ascent the day prior, we woke up on our third day to a breakfast of delicious fried bagels. With our tummies full, we packed up camp and set off on our 4.6 mile journey to Kroenke Lake at the base of Mt. Yale. The journey was short and joyful, punctuated by the occasional river crossing and hopping from rock to rock across basins of mud. Our campsite for the night, Kroenke Lake, was stunning: it was clear as glass and tucked into the embrace of pale granite cliffs speckled with late-season wildflowers. Unfortunately, we couldn't enjoy this view for long before a surprise hailstorm ushered us into our tents, where we snuggled up and dreamed sweet dreams of our planned ascent of Mount Yale the next morning.

We woke up bright and early at 1am in order to attempt our summit of Mt Yale. We put down a simple breakfast and started our hike on a trail leading up above the waters of Kroenke Lake. Soon though, we turned off the beaten path to forge our own adventure, wading through a sea of frosted willows and up a ridge strewn with backpack sized boulders leading up to the summit of Yale. We climbed the ridge in the dark, with the sparkling tails of shooting stars above our heads. The campers tackled the uphill challenge with the brightest dispositions cheering each other with singing and lots of dancing. Once we reached the top of the ridge, we were greeted by the neon pink glow of the sun slowly condensing above the horizon. In the newfound light, we scrambled over the granite spires shooting up from the ridge line until the summit unfolded in front of us, revealing a panoramic view of the Collegiate Range and the clouds pooling in the crumpled folds of the Arkansas River Valley and the Taylor Park. We

began our descent after another brief diploma ceremony, pulling ourselves down the boulders and running down grassy slopes until we once again reached the base of the mountain. We stopped for a fun respite of slicker sliding and lunch on the lapping shores of Kroenke Lake before retiring to our tents to nap out the afternoon rainstorms.

Our last day on the Harvard-Yale long trip started cold and drizzly. Mist hung over the valley like hair coming loose from a braid. Some morning marshmallows helped the mood as we put on brave faces to push over Brown's Pass into the Cottonwood Creek Valley. The girls pushed uphill through the scraggly willows, until mercifully, the sun came out just as we reached the snow studded top of the pass. We then descended through alpine meadows dotted with the bright yellow suns of Old Man of the Mountain flowers, driven towards the creek by a singular goal: a pizza lunch. After a couple of miles enjoying the cool touch of the shaded forest, we reached the road at Cottonwood Pass and promptly had a dance party in the parking lot to celebrate our achievements.

We had such a wonderful time with this group and we are so proud of everything they've accomplished on this trip. This is notoriously one of the hardest, if not the hardest, trip offered at camp, but the grit and grace displayed by these girls made the trip feel easy. Thank you for sharing them with us this week.

Sincerely,

Cat Oordt, Elke Wathen, Ember McMullen, Indy Woll Steward, and Josie Reott

August 3, 2025

Dear

We are so grateful to have shared the past four days with your daughters! These days included beautiful views, mountain wildlife, and summits of Colorado's two highest peaks. We couldn't have asked for a better group with whom to reach these heights.

Our trip began with lunch at Native Lakes trailhead before we embarked on our 5 mile hike to reach our first campsite. This trek included significant elevation gain, rocky terrain, and several dynamic river crossings. The girls handled all of this like champs, and we arrived at our lakeside campsite, cradled beneath Mt. Massive, in time to set up tents, enjoy a fajita dinner, and experience an incomparable sunset. This sunset marked the perfect end to our day, heading to bed early before our summit attempt of 14,421 foot Mount Massive the next day!

Up early to see the stars and gobble down some banana bread, we bushwhacked our way up to the ridgeline to ascend Colorado's second highest peak! A family of mountain goats (including a baby one) welcomed us to the summit, where we celebrated with the requisite sparkling apple juice and gummy bears. After making our way back to our campsite, we relaxed lakeside, even getting well-acquainted with the lake's native Tiger Salamanders — Colorado's state amphibian! Stir fry, "raw s'mores," and lively conversation rounded out our evening.

Day three put us back on the trail, backpacking 6 miles along the Colorado Trail to reach our campsite along Elbert Creek near the Halfmoon Campground just before a large rainstorm rolled in. That night, we perfected our under-a-tarp cooking techniques for a pasta dinner amidst the rain; the girls exhibited remarkable patience and positivity throughout an admittedly challenging (and chilly!) experience. We then hurried to bed before our next mountain climb.

The final day of our trip began at 2am in the morning to attempt to reach the top of 14, 438' Mt. Elbert. As we hiked, we watched the sky transform from starry to sunrise-kissed, to foggy, to bluebird, to cloudy again — a continual metamorphosis that sparked our senses of wonder. Persevering through brisk mountain winds, the whole group reached the 14,433 foot summit — Colorado's tallest! With spirits as lofty as the mountain itself, conversation flowed as we headed downward for our pickup, where warm pizza and enthusiastic hugs met us before we returned to camp.

Elbert-Massive is an incredibly challenging — but rewarding — long trip. It takes serious grit, determination, and camaraderie to complete this trip successfully, and this group of campers had an abundance of all of these qualities. They continually impressed us with their flexibility, initiative, and support of one another, which made the trip both smoother and more fun. You should be so proud of everything they accomplished on this trip, reaching great heights — both literally and metaphorically.

Happy trails,

Inez Johnson, Fallon Warshauer, Maddy Redmond, Siena McBride, and Charlie Schlinger

August 3, 2025

Dear

Howdy from High Trails! This past week, your camper successfully completed the Pikes Peak 4-day backpacking trip. Your daughter showed resilience and grit as we climbed steep inclines with full packs, reached the summit of 14,110 foot Pikes Peak, or "Tava" as originally named by the Ute People. While weathering a series of storms (including snow!) above tree line. We had a wonderful group of girls who faced every obstacle and challenge with a sunny disposition and positive outlook. Overall, the week brought a sense of accomplishment, lots of laughs, and a deeper appreciation for the natural world. It was an excellent experience for your camper!

On the first day, with fully-loaded backpacks, we climbed 2 miles up the trail and made it to our campsite nestled in the woods next to a babbling creek across from some amazing granite boulder formations. After some tent time we enjoyed our classic first day lunch of bagel sandwiches and then relaxed the rest of the day to the sound of rain on the tents. We ended the day with a dinner of stir fry and an early bedtime to prepare for our next day.

Day two brought many opportunities to overcome the challenges we faced. We had a steep 4.5 mile hike up the "Mother Ridge" of the mountain which tested your camper's mental and physical fortitude. The combination of full packs and high altitude offered an obstacle that they readily overcame. Once we made it up to "Devil's Playground" we turned off of the main trail and dropped into the Pike National Forest backcountry. We had a beautiful descent into a deep valley to the west of the summit and bushwhacked alongside a creek. We made our campsite between two streams below Pinnacle Peak. Camping above the tree line, but deep in the valley, was an exciting experience and strengthened campers' bravery muscles while sitting through an afternoon thunderstorm. We enjoyed our dinner of tortellini while overlooking the ridge we would be hiking the next day and had another early bedtime.

Day three was our most exciting yet. We woke up at 2:00am to frost on our tents and bundled up in anticipation. After a quick breakfast of banana bread and granola bars we started our climb to the summit. We began with bushwhacking in the dark over multiple ridges. When we were resting in the dark, we saw two shooting stars. Once we made it up the second to last hill, we were greeted with a beautiful sunrise illuminating the distance we had covered already. We then enjoyed some flat walking through alpine valleys and chatted about our favorite mountains. We then rejoined the Crags trail where we had an icy rock scramble to the top of the mountain! The campers were amazing and persevered through the chilly, sometimes icy, conditions. At the top we celebrated with Pike's Peak donuts and pizza. The way down was a breeze with easy conversation between the campers. We stopped and explored an awesome quartz crystal pegmatite and examined all the different kinds of natural crystals. We arrived back at camp and finished our summit celebration with a camp tradition: a fancy lunch of yummy cheeses and summer sausage. We rested a bit in the afternoon before enjoying a dinner of quesadillas and headed off to bed.

Day four started with an early wakeup to break camp. We bushwhacked our way out of the valley and were treated to an exceptional sunrise. We then had a speedy descent down the mountain on the trail we had hiked two days before, then celebrated our success with pizza in Woodland Park.

Your campers should be proud of their accomplishments and the challenges they've overcome this week. They faced cold conditions, storms, steep climbs and tackled them all with confidence and few complaints. Your child has learned to be more resilient and a compassionate teammate. We loved spending the week with all of them!

Best,

Maya Horner, Ollie Vuckovic, Liza Livingston and Hannah Winn

August 3, 2025

Dear

We just got back from an incredible (and eventful!) trip out to Puma Hills, and we're excited to share a bit about it. We hit the trail Monday morning around 9:30am, loaded up with our gear and horses, and rode for about three hours to our first stop: the Split Tank campsite. The next morning started very early at 4am so we could feed the horses. Things got exciting fast when one horse got spooked, and suddenly, they were all running off into the dark. With headlamps and a lot of teamwork, we searched through the trees and found them about 30 minutes later. All of our campers were alert and brave while looking for our remaining horses, who were a little scraped up, but ultimately okay. After regrouping, we packed up and continued on our way toward Puma Hills.

The ride was full of challenges. We navigated steep and rocky paths, worked around fallen trees, and crossed a nerve-wracking bridge over a rushing river. The horses stepped carefully, and the sound of their hooves echoed over the water as we crossed. We even had to wait out a lightning storm under the trees before finishing the ride. We made it to Puma Hills late, but just in time to watch a beautiful sunset while feeding the horses. Throughout the trip, campers were a huge help managing the pack horses. They learned quickly how to keep an eye on them while eating, helping us pack them, and holding them as we rode while steering their own horse at the same time.

We had a well-deserved rest day at Puma Hills. The group slept in, read books, and enjoyed grilled cheese and tomato soup for lunch. In the afternoon, we kicked off our trip theme: Survivor. Campers searched for hidden immunity idols and teamed up for fun and competitive challenges. That evening brought another intense lightning storm. While everyone was soaked and shivering, the campers still found ways to laugh and joke through it all. We took shelter in the aspens until it passed. Then we let the campers dash up to their tents to warm up with bowls of pasta tortellini. Spirits stayed high, even in the rain.

On the way back, we had more curveballs. Pack saddles kept shifting, a few horses got loose, there were road crossings to manage, and yes, another lightning storm rolled in. But the group kept pushing through with humor and determination. We reached our last campsite around 6pm and were rewarded with the most stunning sunset of the whole trip. That night we made steak, corn, and buttered bread, then sat around laughing and sharing favorite memories. One of the running jokes of the trip was deciding who was going "in the hole." It was a made-up punishment spot the campers threatened to send counselors and misbehaving horses to. Beware of the hole.

As staff, we talked a lot about how exceptionally resilient this group was. From early mornings and stressful moments to being cold, wet, and sleep-deprived, these campers never gave up. They showed up for each other, found reasons to laugh, and kept going no matter what the trail threw at them. The ride home was calm and reflective. We used it to debrief the trip and appreciate how far everyone had come, both physically and mentally. We're so proud of your camper and all they accomplished out there. We hope they return home with great stories, muddy boots, and memories they'll never forget.

Sincerely,

Izzy Lemaster, Chloe Schaal and Danielle Williams

August 3, 2025

Dear

On Tuesday, July 29th, your daughter set sail on a four day canoeing adventure at 11-Mile Reservoir! Upon our arrival, we set up camp at our beautiful campsite at Witcher Cove for night one. We enjoyed the views with some downtime, spent by reading, drawing, and napping, followed by an intense game of word murder as we prepared our dinner of chicken fajitas for the evening. After our meal we sat around the picnic table and shared many laughs. We heard the stories of how lone is Italian and how Sister Carol taught kids to gamble, and just about everything in between. We cut our conversations short to head to bed early for our sunrise expedition the next morning.

The next day, we woke up with the sun and took down our tents and packed them into trash bags which we put inside our canoes. We had a speedy breakfast of crepes and began our journey. We paddled across the reservoir headed east towards our next campsite. The water was so relaxing it was meditative. While on the water we sang songs, shared stories (and many laughs), and shared dreams of one day having a canoe of our own. This day was our shortest day in the canoes, we paddled for about an hour until we reached our destination. We set up camp at our second campsite and enjoyed some paddle boarding in the private cove next to our campsite. We made dinner and, as we cooked, the rain rolled in which definitely led to some fun moments. We had a pasta picnic in the tent to shield from the rain and headed to bed shortly after to prepare for our longest paddle day.

On Thursday we woke up, packed up camp, ate breakfast and began our long haul journey. We paddled for about 4 hours across the distance of the reservoir. On our trip we saw beautiful views, many birds, and plenty of aquatic plants. Upon arrival at our final campsite we set up camp and began our lunch of fancy ramen. The afternoon rainstorm visited us once again and to shield ourselves we all piled into the van and enjoyed some carpool karaoke while we ate our lunch. After learning what the youth is listening to nowadays for a few hours it was already time to start dinner. After dinner we enjoyed a beautiful sunset and a pink sky.

On our final day we put all of our gear in the van and left for our final paddle. We paddled for about 30 mins before we had to stop due to choppy waters. After bringing the truck around we loaded up the trailer and headed towards fairplay to get some ice cream at Silver Scoops. We each got a double scoop of deliciousness and sang plenty of Hannah Montana. We drove back to 11-Mile to enjoy our lunch by the reservoir and spend our last bit of time by the water. All and all, the trip was fun packed and every camper crushed it! Smiles were infectious and positive vibes were the norm. We are so proud of every camper for their resilience and appreciation for the world around them. Their positive energy and support for one another is what made this trip so amazing for us all!

Sincerely,  
Sadie Tye, Alanna Haimes, Lilly Ligon, and lone Cafaro