

# Your Support Changes Lives.

Learn about the recent transformative experience you helped make possible for a 3H Youth Ranch resident.



*3H residents and team members hiking through the Chisos Mountains.*

## Annual Big Bend Camping Trip Provides More Than Just Great Memories

### *Arriving at 3H Youth Ranch*

Like many of the boys at Pathways' 3H Youth Ranch, Thomas arrived with little confidence or self-esteem, having grown up in a household where both neglect and abuse occurred regularly. In his first weeks at 3H, Thomas was defiant and his behavior reflected a constant need to feel disappointed in himself. He struggled to feel worthy of the positive surroundings and new opportunities presented at 3H. Our highly trained staff started working with him immediately.

As is tradition at 3H, our leaders were planning a spring camping trip to Big Bend National Park. Initially, Thomas had no interest in going on the trip, but over the weeks, with patient, gentle encouragement, he came around. As the trip neared, Thomas began talking about helping other boys on the trip accomplish their personal goals, putting others' needs before his

own. He was accustomed to not having his own needs met. He had always put himself last.

### *Trip Preparations Require Teamwork*

In the weeks before the trip, the boys practiced setting up their tents, planning the week-long menu of cooking on a camp stove, and learning about the nature and wildlife they would soon encounter.

3H's Program Administrator, Shawn Flores, notes: **"I remember being a kid and sharing stories of adventures with my friends. I want these boys to have that... Despite the challenges and traumas they may have experienced in the past, I want these boys to have their own stories and good memories to share."**

## ***Gaining Confidence & Developing Life Skills***

On an early March morning, the 3H team and boys packed up the van and headed south on a six-and-a-half-hour drive to Big Bend. Thomas beamed with excitement. Once there, his confidence steadily bloomed and his journey of self-transformation commenced.

Step by step through the Chisos Mountains, Thomas came to realize that in order to help others, he had to first take care of himself. He thought about how he would prepare for the nine-hour summit hike to Emory Peak.



*For most of the boys, this trip provides their first opportunity to explore nature.*



*The summit hike is instrumental in growing self-confidence and learning valuable teamwork skills. It becomes a treasured, shareable memory.*

### ***Life Lessons Learned***

Successfully reaching Emory Peak made all the boys feel like superheroes. Standing in the clouds, soaked in the pride of accomplishment, each child let out a spirit animal howl and spent a few minutes reflecting on what it meant to be in that place, at that moment.

Shawn reminded the boys to compare this feeling of accomplishment to their past trauma as an indisputable truth that they could persevere, overcome, and triumph over whatever they put their minds to.

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**Thomas, in particular, was radiant. “I knew I could do this,” he said, smiling.**

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## **Your Partnership Creates Gifts that Last a Lifetime**

Of course, the trip’s impact doesn’t end when the boys return to 3H. The confidence they gain, the trust they find in those around them, the lifeskills learned all remain for a lifetime. Much like the memories.

These incredible gifts were made possible through your support, and we are truly grateful. Stay tuned for more updates on Thomas and 3H Ranch. It’s shaping up to be an exciting summer!

*The story above is true, but to protect the anonymity of children in our care, names have been changed.*