

COMMUNITY: **Southwind / Harbor Village, Aurora**

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR: **Josenique Cherfils**

### **Taya Murdock**

"Do you want to go to TNT?" That question lit a fuse in soft-spoken 16-year-old Taya Murdock and sparked the next steps of spiritual self-discovery. It transformed a laid-back young woman into a budding leader who has since rowed a canoe, led young kids in crafts, helped make a kayak, and continued her journey toward Christ. Until Riverworks Community Coordinator Josenique Cherfils invited her to a TNT (Teen Night Together) event, the world Taya (pronounced TAY-yuh) inhabited was a sparse and hardscrabble landscape. A resident of Aurora's Harbor Village Apartments, a 109-unit rental-complex of roughly 300 residents, Taya says there weren't many options for meeting others her age.

TNT proved a more enriching choice.

Soon after Josenique invited Taya, in 2013, she told her about Riverwoods summer leadership program. Despite some so-so feedback she got from friends, she said yes. Taya recalls a teambuilding exercise at camp. One person stood on the ground directing those standing on a log. "We had to stand on a big log that wasn't that wide. We couldn't talk, which was hard for me, and had to switch places in line without falling off." Taya says the team-building exercise helped them "trust and help go around each other by holding on" even though "a lot of people stepped off and we had to start all over. But eventually we got it."

"At first I didn't see myself as a leader," she says, "but now I think I am because of the way I carry myself and how I'm like a mom to my sisters." She admits she and her sisters used to argue a lot, but after 24 months with the Riverwoods and Riverworks programs, Taya and her three sisters have "toned down a lot." Getting college and career guidance from the ministry, including academic trips to Elgin Community College and Coyne College, has broadened her outlook, Taya says.

She's started praying and reading the Bible more. A verse from Luke 9:61, echoes on her heart, "I will follow you Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family" (NIV). Taya won't have to say goodbye to her family just yet. She credits her mom's support and deep-seated faith. "I was always close to my mom, and she wants to be involved because she sees the change in us" (Taya and her siblings).

Taya has developed as a leader in her low-key way. "I don't know if I *like* to be in charge, but when counselors ask for volunteers I'm usually the one who raises a hand." That helping hand pitched in on another practical teambuilding project as she and other Riverwoods teens helped build a kayak. In a final step, Taya recalls how she "put the epoxy on to make it glossy."

Looking at Taya's life, one could reflect how the Lord has been applying His "Spirit-led epoxy" to a vessel destined for greater things!

Written by Judah Soledad



TAYA AT SUMMER CAMP



Dear {Salutation},

Fall 2014

I am so thankful for your partnership in ministry! This past summer God blessed us with the opportunity to touch the hearts and lives of 800 children and teenagers through the Riverwoods summer program. (See Taya's story on the back page of this letter!)

One of the most exciting aspects of this summer was to see church partners getting involved. Over the past several years Christ Community Church has been intentionally reaching out to Clifford Court, a public housing community on the west side of Elgin. During the week that the kids from Clifford Court came to camp, Christ Community sent 15 people to serve alongside of our staff. It was great to see people from the church pour themselves into the kids for 5 days. **This is just one more step in the church's commitment to long-term ministry in Clifford Court that will go way beyond summer camp!**

As we transition from summer to fall, our Community Coordinators are working alongside Christ Community and other church partners to engage in deeper levels of ministry in communities like Clifford Court.

This fall our Community Coordinators are mentoring and discipling high school teenagers who participated in our summer leadership program. This includes meeting with teens twice a month in our TNT program and working to find places for teens to "plug in" to local church youth ministries. Our Community Coordinators are also supporting church partners who are welcoming children from our communities into their churches for weekly discipleship clubs.

In October, our Community Coordinators will be leading several churches through our Community Ministry 101 class. **The class will help teams of church leaders develop a long term strategy for extended church ministry in a local housing community.** Community Coordinators will also be working with churches to engage in home visits, prayer walks, community events, etc.

**Even though summer is over, the Riverworks ministry continues; serving alongside churches to love and care for families in the housing communities throughout the year!**

In a few weeks we will be calling to ask for your support of this ongoing ministry. I hope you'll respond with a generous gift of \$250, \$500 or \$1,000 to keep our Community Coordinators serving in the housing communities and helping our church partners to make a difference!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jay'.

Jay Curtis  
President & CEO

**PS Please send your most generous gift today to keep our Community Coordinators serving in the housing communities and making a difference!**



JOSENIQUE AND TAYA