

# A WILD ADVENTURE: 3RD GRADE CLASS EXPLORES THE SANTA BARBARA ZOO ON A SAFARI SLEEPOVER

The anticipation bubbled like a pot of stew as the 3rd grade class gathered for their much awaited overnight field trip to the Santa Barbara Zoo. Excitement filled the air as they embarked on an adventure like no other - a safari sleepover amidst the captivating creatures of the wild.

Before setting foot in the zoo, the class met for a delicious dinner at Kyle's Kitchen in Santa Barbara. Little did they know, this dinner would be more than just a meal; it would be a moment that touched their hearts forever. Kyle, a child with an undiagnosed brain injury and the inspiration behind Kyle's Kitchen, welcomed them with open arms. His eyes sparkled with joy as he received a WVCS spirit shirt, beanie, and bag. Thrilled to be amongst newfound friends, Kyle enthusiastically shared his experiences and even took pictures with the class, cherishing every moment. Tyler shared, *"I am thankful we could go to Kyle's Kitchen and meet Kyle."* Skylar observed, *"Kyle was very inspirational because he was so joyful and wanted to bring kindness to the world."*

The adventure truly began upon arrival at the zoo when they were greeted by a slithering surprise - a python snake! Wide-eyed and curious, the children learned about this fascinating creature and its importance in the ecosystem.

But the journey didn't stop there. The class delved deeper into the zoo's inner workings with a behind-the-scenes tour of the animal kitchen and animal medical center. The students were impressed to learn how the medical staff care for the animals as well as how the food is stored and prepared for each animal. The students were not impressed with the smell in the kitchen!

As night descended, the excitement continued with s'mores under the stars and a mesmerizing nighttime tour of the zoo. Amidst the nocturnal calls of the animals, the children marveled at the wonders of God's handiwork and creativity. Kurtis shared that his favorite part of the trip was walking around at night and seeing the constellations because there is less light pollution in Santa Barbara than in Los Angeles.

Morning brought with it the promise of new adventures. After a hot pancake breakfast, the class gathered for a nature talk with an expert on the zoo's red panda and tawny frogmouth bird. Eager minds absorbed every detail, eager to learn more about these magnificent creatures. Scarlett and Abby were excited to learn that the red panda was the first panda to be discovered, but they actually are more closely related to the weasel, ferret and raccoon families than the traditional pandas. Kai, JJ, and Jacob shared that they learned, *"The frogmouths are adaptable and do not migrate, camouflage in the trees, and are insectivores."*

One of the highlights of the trip was the train ride around the park, offering panoramic views of the zoo's inhabitants. With free time to explore, the children raced to the animals they had been waiting to see. One of the most unforgettable moments came when they had the opportunity to feed the giraffes. With outstretched arms and hearts full of wonder, they experienced a connection with these gentle giants that would stay with them for a lifetime.

For many of the children, this safari sleepover marked their first big sleepover, a milestone they would cherish forever. As they bid farewell to the Santa Barbara Zoo, their hearts brimmed with gratitude for the memories made, appreciation for God's creation, and gratefulness for the chaperone's who made this trip extra fun. Olivia shared, *"We get to do a whole overnight field trip and not many kids have this privilege. It is difficult for teachers to make something educational and fun at the same time, but this trip was both."*

As they look forward to their next adventure, a fourth-grade trip to Riley's Farm, the third-grade class carries with them the lessons learned and the bonds strengthened on their wild journey through the Santa Barbara Zoo.

# Thank You to Our Amazing Chaperones!





