

## BLOG POST FOR WOTV MARANDA'S 'WHERE YOU LIVE' WEBSITE

### *Challenge Accepted*

Some of you may be wondering why Ferris chooses to sponsor the climbing wall at Maranda's Park Parties each summer. In fact, it's a question we get quite often when we are working hard in the hot sun rather than standing in the shade of our tent handing out freebies. The truth is this- we like to practice what we preach. Ferris knows that both teaching *and* learning are about stepping out of your comfort zone and challenging your norms. Staff members from our Grand Rapids office volunteer to leave the normalcy of a day in the office and dive into the sunny, and often sweaty, environment of the Park Party to be a part of an incredible experience.

You see, staffing the climbing wall takes effort. It is the up and down, back and forth, securing and removing of harnesses, all done in the heat of sun that can really wear someone down. However, each infectious smile, excited giggle, 'oh my gosh Mom, I DID it', and chest puffing proud moment we get to be even a small part of, makes it all more than worth it. You simply can't beat that moment when a six year old reaches the top of the looming, seemingly insurmountable 30 foot climbing wall and rings that bell as proud as a peacock fanning his feathers. In that moment, that child realized he really CAN do more than he originally believed. She really DOES have what it takes.

Although most would take some convincing to believe it, the climbing wall is a *safe* opportunity that allows children in the community to step out of their comfort zone and push their limits. It is an opportunity to push themselves and discover the strength and determination they possess all on their own. Challenges like this prepare children for what is to come. This closely imitates the experience a college freshman has when mom and dad say goodbye and drive toward home without them. This opportunity allows them to experience success and failure in a safe environment, all part of the larger goal to encourage them to become confident, independent human beings.

It can be argued that it all begins at the wall. When a challenge presents itself, would you let it stop you, or would you accept the challenge and climb on?

Ferris urges you to climb on.