

The FRIEDENSWORD

Camp Friedenswald

Volume 31, Issue 2: Fall/Winter 2023

Camp Friedenswald provides people of all ages the opportunity to grow in relationship with God, self, others and nature.

Reflection from the director

By Jenna Liechty Martin

*As part of our 2023-25 strategic plan, we have identified four pillars to help uphold and guide our work: place, formation, justice, and resilience. In this reflection, I offer a glimpse into the ways that **place** has been woven throughout the past year.*

Place: We root our work and play in the St Joseph River watershed and commit to learning about, caring for, and being shaped by the place and its inhabitants.

On a brilliant sunny Saturday afternoon in early fall, just as the leaves were showing hints of changing, my son Henry and I ventured out in kayaks along with several other camp staff and kids. Our destination was the dam and rope swing at the end of the southwest channel on Shavehead Lake. With Main Beach still well within sight, Henry and I recognized that the excursion would likely go more smoothly if we tethered our boats together, helping each other along on this near three-hour adventure. Any early paddling frustration was forgotten as we watched a bald eagle circle overhead and then swoop down to the water in search of food. Once we reached the channel, we followed the stream of water until the narrow waterway opened into a larger wetland. **As we paddled, I recognized that we traveled the same course that every drop of water from Shavehead Lake takes as it flows through Mud Creek, into Long Lake, and then the St Joseph River, before flowing into Lake Michigan.**

When we reached the furthest point on our journey we thought our eyes were deceiving us as a great horned owl sat perched on a post. It wasn't until we were within feet of the owl that it was startled and flew off. **It took a moment to make sense of what we had experienced in being so close to this mysterious and majestic creature.**

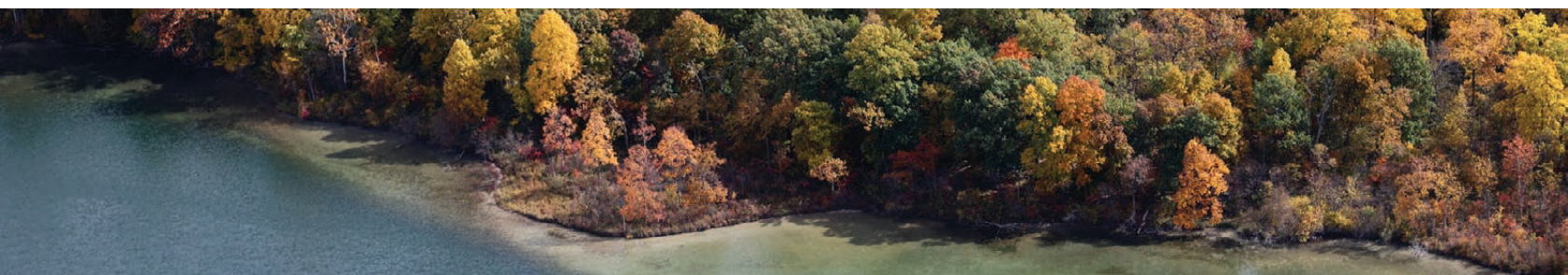
We pulled our boats onto shore and snacked on autumn olive berries that Oliver Fridley had picked for sustenance, reminding me that even the most pesky and invasive of species might just have something to offer. Some of the kids

braved the chilly waters before we climbed back into the boats for our return trip. Along the way there was another discovery: dead fish. Cisco, a native fish to the lake and an indicator species of a healthy ecosystem, was floating dead in the lake.

A few days later we learned that there was a mass die-off of Cisco this fall, like there was last fall. This gave a greater sense of urgency and need for a comprehensive study of the water, which was already being explored by the Lake Association. If funding is received from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, we will partner with our neighbors to help with water testing to learn more about any changes that are occurring in Shavehead Lake and to determine what actions could be taken to help improve the health of the lake.

This past summer we explored the theme of Water Ways, recognizing that both water and God's love sustains, connects, shapes, and calls us to right-relationship with one another and all of creation. Campers learned about the lake and basic canoeing strokes; they learned about the fish in Shavehead and had an opportunity to go fishing; they hiked the trails, pausing for moments of learning about the Indigenous Peoples who lived by these waters; and they made homemade paper out of scraps, learning how much water goes into the process. It was a rich summer of leaning into our pillar of place.

Memories of the fall paddling excursion remain with me as I reflect on the past year and the ways that we have sought to root our work and play in our watershed. The more we root ourselves in this particular place, the more we are drawn to learn about and care for the water, land, and all creatures. **In doing so, we recognize that our lives and wellbeing are inextricably connected – to our paddling partners, to the eagle, the owl, the Cisco, and even the invasive plants. We are being shaped by the world around us; we are shaping the world around us. I hope and pray it is for the better.**



Camp sustains my faith: a reflection from summer

By Lydia Nolt



After spending many summers as a camper, Lydia Nolt served on the summer leadership team in 2023 and on summer staff in 2021. She is a graduate of Goshen College and is currently living in Lancaster, PA where she is volunteering with the Shalom Project.

I am continually in awe of the beauty of creation at Camp Friedenswald. Working at camp, I often found beauty in the busyness of camp life: the eager activity of campers running around during recreation, groundhogs hurriedly scurrying away, and the never ceasing, rippling water on Shavehead Lake. Camp is teeming with life. A life that is crazy and complicated and connected and an embodiment of the unwearied God. Yet my faith is sustained in the quiet moments when the Divine calms my body and my thoughts. I breathe in the stillness.

I experienced this quietness one evening as I was walking back from the South cabin area with a few other leadership staff (after campers were asleep). We noticed the intense brightness of the full moon; where it peeked through the trees there was dappled moonlight so brilliant we could see our shadows. We could see that the moon was hanging low and reflecting on the water so we walked down to the Lower Flat to get a better view. Out in the open, across the grass, the moon was magnificent. Each crater was visible and it shone like the sun. The lake was black, save for the bright reflection. Though it still rippled, the water appeared to be solid glass; I got the feeling that you could just walk off the dock and just keep walking out on the water. We were in awe of the beauty of the moon and the hush of the lake. God's perfect creation. A moment of peace. We were so mesmerized with the sight that when we finally decided to pull ourselves away from the moon and go to bed, we walked backwards for as long as we could.

As we all stood wordlessly together that evening, I was reminded of something that was told to me on a winter night hike many years ago when I was a middle school camper at Friedenswald. You will never be in the same place, with these same people, in the exact same way as you are now, so breathe deeply and hold the moment in sacred silence. **The brevity of our time and these moments is terrifying. I hate to let go. How can I hold on to something forever?** Still, it is a beautiful thing that our human lives and the whole of creation have come together in this moment, in this place, to witness God in community. A God present in the finite and in the infinite.

Though not every full moon is as awe-inspiring as that evening, throughout this past summer there were many times where I paused to rest in the moments of laughter, on my solitary walk on the dewy morning grass to the bell, or in the expectant silence right before a turtle left its log to dive into Shavehead Lake. I caught and held on to glimpses of the Creator in the midst of the crazy and busyness of camp. This continual awareness of the small but extraordinary life around me is what has always drawn me to the peaceful woods. I am grateful that my time at Camp Friedenswald, though finite, has again brought me into relation with this space, these people, and the God that can hold it all.

The moon at Main Beach in early August 2023.



Year-round staff

- Vicki Archer, Dishwasher
- Liam Elias, Program & Sustainability Assistant
- Eric Emerson, Food Service Director
- Heather Emerson, Housekeeper
- Jonathan Fridley, Facilities Director
- Andrea Golden, Bookkeeper
- Jeremy Hostetler, Facilities Assistant
- Janessa Hostetler, Kitchen Assistant
- Amy Huser, Sustainability & OE Director
- Jane Litwiller, Program Director
- Jenna Liechty Martin, Executive Director
- Lora Nafziger, Program Advisor
- Anita & Paul Pawelski, Guest Hosts
- Kendra Sprunger, Administrative Assistant
- Jess Whicker, Guest Services Director

Board of Directors

- Steve Hartman-Keiser
- Todd Kirkton, Secretary
- Evan Miller, Vice-Chair
- Chris Moser
- Deanna Risser, Chair
- Mark Roeschley
- Sarah Werner
- Alita Yoder
- Kendra Yoder

Contact us:

15406 Watercress Way
Cassopolis, MI 49031
269-476-9744
camp@friedenswald.org
www.friedenswald.org

Moving? Need to update your address? Please let us know!



Tending the Peaceful Woods

Alongside summer camps and fall retreats, there has been a stream of new initiatives at Camp Friedenswald over the past year. While some of the projects involved planting something altogether new, the majority focused on tending to that which was built years ago. The following highlights provide a glimpse into the tending that has taken place in the natural and built environments.

9,000 trees planted – In late March, 9,000 tree seedlings were planted in an open field that had been conventionally farmed for years. Despite early stressors of drought and an infestation of spongy moth caterpillars, the trees have been resilient. In a late summer counting, the survival rate appeared to be around 90%. Volunteers and staff spent nearly 200 hours protecting over 1200 of the white oak trees (the favorite tree species of deer) by placing a mesh tree tube around them and securing the tubes with stakes. In time, our hope is that this new forest will aid in sequestering carbon, providing habitat for wildlife and contributing to the overall resilience and health of the natural communities in this area. *Pictured at top: Amy Huser and Sandi Hostetler work at staking white oak trees.*

Resurfaced court – In early summer, the tennis court with basketball hoops was resurfaced and lines were painted to include pickleball. The tennis court was first built in the 1990s with memorial gifts from family and friends of Dale Derstine (Bluffton, OH). With fresh paint and even surfaces, the court received much play-time this summer. *Pictured right: Four generations of Derstine family enjoyed the courts this summer during Family Camp.*

Wishing well – As our summer theme of “Water Ways” brought to the fore of our minds, water is essential to life. It seems fitting, therefore, that a wishing well, or drinking fountain, sits right at the center of Camp, not far from the bell and the Dining Hall. The wishing well was first built in 1956, soon after Camp was founded, in memory of David Sucker (Bluffton, OH). In late summer, Lynn Miller (also of Bluffton, OH) offered his masonry skills to help repair and tend to the decaying base and chipped bricks. *Pictured right: Lynn Miller beside the Wishing Well*

Locust Loft - At Builders Weekend we dedicated the new playground for play, wonder, and joy. The structure was built mostly of wood from black locust trees harvested from the land at Camp and was designed and built by Jonathan Fridley with the help of countless volunteers. Be sure to check out a full interview with Jonathan about the process of building the playground on our blog at friedenswald.org/blog. Not only is it a playground, it's a piece of art! *Pictured second from bottom: A scene from the dedication service on July 15, 2023*

Lakeview Lodge - In the fall, the roof at Lakeview Lodge underwent a major renovation. As part of our commitment to using less energy, the A-frame peak received four inches of insulation before a new metal roof was installed. With a 40+ year warranty, the Lakeview roof should not need to be tended again for a long time! *Pictured at bottom.*

Lakeview Beach - Late fall, with the help of many volunteer hands, a new storage area and gazebo was built at Lakeview Beach. The area will provide storage for kayaks, canoes, and paddles, while also providing a shady spot for beach-goers.

Automatic door openers - Earlier this year we conducted a brief accessibility review with the help of resources from Anabaptist Disabilities Network (AdNet), and recognized that one important step we could take was to remove barriers for entry into the Dining Hall by installing automatic door openers. With the help of a “Barrier-Free Grant” from AdNet, Women’s Retreat offering, and other generous donors, a door opener will be installed near the office entrance this winter.

*A special thanks to Marge Graber’s 50th anniversary book, *Vision, Faith, Service* for helping to date some of the projects noted above.





2024 WINTER & SUMMER PROGRAM DATES

January 5-7 - High School Winter Camp

January 12-14 - Jr High Winter Camp

February 16-18 - Family Winter Camp

Registration is now open for all winter programs.

June 9-14 - High School Camp (grades* 9-12; graduating seniors welcome!)

June 16-21 - Junior High Camp (grades* 7 & 8)

June 23-26 - Pre-Junior Camp (grades* 3 & 4)

June 30 - July 5 - Junior Camp (grades* 5 & 6)

July 8 -12 - Family Camp I

July 13-14 - Builders Weekend


July 15-19 - Family Camp II

July 22-26 - Family Camp III

Registration opens on February 1 for all summer programs.

**NOTE CHANGE: please consider grade entering in fall 2024 when registering.*

Visit Friedenswald.org for more info and to register!

Read and Recycle 

Return Service Requested

15406 Watercross Way
Cassopolis, MI 49031

