

The FRIEDENSWORD

Camp Friedenswald

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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

Several years ago, before rebuilding new cabins, volunteers spent a weekend dismantling the original cabins from 1950. In addition to salvaging old boards for future projects and bunks for the new cabins, an opened box of tissues wound up back in the Maintenance Shop. From then on, whenever staff held a tissue to their nose, they were transported back to the old cabins. I can hardly describe that *unique* scent, but I trust that if you stayed in those cabins, you know!

Whether the cabins, a walk past the fen when the ground is warming, a stroll through the woods after rain, or the smell of cinnamon rolls baking in the camp kitchen...these are smells that awaken us to the present moment while simultaneously tapping into memories long forgotten, but held somewhere in our bodies.

Following a recent weekend retreat, a participant reflected on her experience at Camp sharing that “breathing in the scent of the woods was nourishing” and that she experienced “cellular level refreshment and healing of body, mind, heart, and soul” from her time in the peaceful woods.

The *cellular level refreshment* that she described helped put words to an experience that is not unique. I often hear people reflect on the ways that their time at Camp Friedenswald offered the gifts of renewal of spirit, reconnection with others and God, and reorientation to how they want to live in this world. Undoubtedly, the space created by faithful volunteers and staff play a role in helping facilitate these experiences, and yet I recognize there is something *more* going on. **The land itself, the creatures, the plants, and waters – they are all part of the larger whole that creates this unique space that touches us human beings in profound and lasting ways, drawing us back to Life itself.** Gwen Gustfason-Zook, our new program director, explores some of these relationships further in her reflections on page 3.

After a summer of record enrollment in our programs, and in listening to the stories of our summer staff (see www.friedenswald.org/blog to read them), I am convinced that **people of all ages are yearning for cellular level refreshment.** Collectively, we are seeking refreshment for our weary selves; we are longing for renewal and restoration for our troubled communities, country, and world. I believe that is what continues to draw people to the peaceful woods, time and time again. And, so very often, the gift of refreshment and reorientation is received. It's a gift, a grace, from the woods, the people, and from God.

Just as we have needed this place of refreshment for the past 75 years, we are going to need a place in Camp Friedenswald that can continue to provide these gifts for us in the years to come. That is why I am excited to share about our plans to Sustain Friedenswald (see page 2) and to invite full community support. As we tend to this special place, it is my prayer that Camp Friedenswald will continue to provide opportunities for collective renewal and reconnection for the generations to come.

Jenna Liechty Martin
Executive Director

Introducing the Campaign to Sustain Friedenswald

Did you know that there are over 35 structures at Camp Friedenswald that support Camp's mission? Each year, with the support of Builders and faithful volunteers, Camp staff identify and address routine maintenance needs to ensure buildings are well maintained to effectively serve all who visit the peaceful woods.

As Camp Friedenswald approaches its 75th anniversary, several Camp structures need significant renovation and repair in order to continue to deliver a high-quality experience for campers and other guests. With this goal in mind, we are excited to share plans to "Sustain Friedenswald" - a five-year project that encompasses extensive renovation to several existing lodges and staff homes with commitments to environmental sustainability and accessibility.

As a result of strong support from Camp's Builders, we were able to begin the first project late last year. This important project included the replacement of the roof on Lakeview Lodge and the installation of additional insulation. In the spring of 2024, we initiated the construction of a new duplex that will replace the existing Fenwood staff residence. This single-family home (currently occupied by the Fridley family) will be replaced with a highly energy-efficient duplex that will serve as a home for two staff members and their families. This additional structure will facilitate additional year-round Camp staff members living at Camp and provide greater resilience in our staff community into the future. Upcoming projects involve a major renovation of Sycamore Lodge and the installation of a solar array at Lakeview Lodge.

Year-round staff

- Vicki Archer, *Dishwasher*
- Eric Emerson, *Food Service Director*
- Heather Emerson, *Housekeeper*
- Patrick Estell, *Sustainability Assistant*
- Jonathan Fridley, *Facilities Director*
- Julie Fridley, *Housekeeper*
- Andrea Golden, *Accountant*
- Gwen Gustafson-Zook, *Program Director*
- Jeremy Hostetler, *Facilities Assistant*
- Janessa Hostetler, *Kitchen Assistant*
- Amy Huser, *Sustainability & OE Director*
- Jenna Liechty Martin, *Executive Director*
- Amber Manes, *Housekeeper*
- Anita & Paul Pawelski, *Guest Hosts*
- Pat Pusko, *Housekeeper*
- Kenda Sprunger, *Admin. Assistant*
- Jess Whicker, *Guest Services Director*

Board of Directors

- Steve Hartman-Keiser, *Secretary*
- Evan Miller, *Vice-Chair*
- Chris Moser
- Sibonokuhle Ncube
- Deanna Risser, *Chair*
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- Sarah Werner
- Kendra Yoder

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



Sustain Friedenswald projects:

- Renovation to Sycamore Lodge, Tamarack Lodge, and the Health Center/Family Suite
- Remodeling or rebuilding three staff homes including Fenwood, Triplex, and Peace House
- Expanding solar energy to include Lakeview Lodge and other energy efficiency improvements across Camp
- Endowment growth to promote financial stability and sustainability



Artistic rendering of renovated Sycamore Lodge

Over its nearly 75-year history, Camp Friedenswald has been sustained by the generosity and faithfulness of a broad community of people who believe in and support Camp's mission! Without a strong base of donors and volunteers, Camp simply could not exist in its current form. If you would like to get involved as a volunteer or would like to provide financial support to this project, please contact Jenna Liechty Martin. You can follow along and view photos at Friedenswald.org/Sustain-Friedenswald.

The Camp Board of Directors has given their full support to this strategically important Campaign to Sustain Friedeenswald and has approved a campaign goal of \$2.5 million. **We are very pleased to report that over \$1.75 million has been raised to date. We are confident that, with continued support from Camp's many friends, we will achieve our goal.**



Thank you to our 2024 summer staff!

Haiku: On the death of the ancient Red Oak

*What all has she seen,
our sacred oak ancestor,
forest guardian?*

Creation as Kin

By Gwen Gustafson-Zook, Program Director



Along the Main Trail, about 100 yards into the woods, stands an old Red Oak tree. She is dying. It is clear that the staff here at Camp Friedenswald harbor a kind of collective grief bearing witness to her passing.

Jonathan Fridley, steward and tender of the grounds and facilities, has come to know this ancient tree as a kind

of friend; a sacred presence in the forest over his 13 years of working in her midst. During my second week at camp Jonathan accompanied me into the forest to introduce me to this ancient and beloved Red Oak tree.

We can't tell for certain how old she is without "an autopsy". But we don't want to cut her down to assuage our curiosity. The fullness of her life is honored more by our standing back and watching; allowing the cycle of her life to come full circle, offering life to those plants and animals that find energy, vitality, spirit in her decaying frame. A substantial branch - one that had reached out as if to say, "Welcome" - broke off and fell to the ground several years ago. Today that branch is home to a thriving collective of fungi, nourished by the decaying substance of her being.

Keeping vigil with her as she dies, I wonder: what has this oak ancestor borne witness to over the course of the many years that she has stood, deeply rooted in the sandy soil just up from Shavehead Lake? We have a map from 1938 that clearly reveals her prolific presence eighty-five years ago. She was the largest tree in the area. Might she have been growing for 100 years prior to 1938? What did she witness over those many years? Did she bear witness to the grief of Potawatomi Elders¹ as

they lit a fire in the shade of her young branches in the years between 1833-1835, grieving the loss of their land; land taken from them in the 5 million acre land-grab that was the Treaty of Chicago; a treaty of which the Potawatomi leader Chief Aptekezhick noted that The Great Spirit warned that the negotiations were with a "bad bird"²; a treaty that displaced the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa from Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin?

Did the elders seek the wisdom and resilience of the Red Oak tree, trusting their collective knowledge that she, like all the plants and animals of the forest, was their kin?

While I can not answer these questions for certain, I can stand back in awe before this ancient Red Oak and wonder.

The book of Psalms proclaims that all nature reveals the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-4). The prophet Isaiah names "Oaks of righteousness" as descriptors of those who will live out God's ways of justice in the world (Isaiah 61:3). And forebearers of the Radical Reformation, Francis and Clare of Assis, understood and named all creation as kin: brother sun, sister moon.

Though often neglected, this is part of our story, too. So with this sacred wisdom emanating from her presence, I stand in the shadow of our dying sister, Ancient Red Oak, acknowledging that for too long I have dismissed her as something to be used; a commodity to be exploited rather than KIN to be respected and honored and loved.

She seems to invite me - invite us - to a more sacred way; a way of love. And in so doing, she invites us to respectfully join the Potawatomi people, past, present, and future in relating to the world around us as beloved kin.³

¹ A literal translation of "Potawatomi" means "Keepers of the Sacred Fire"

² <https://www.hussproject.com/history/events/1833-treaty-of-chicago>

³ Robin Wall Kimmerer, Lecture, July 12, 2024, Kalamazoo Nature Center.



2025 WINTER & SUMMER PROGRAM DATES

January 3-5 - High School Winter Camp (speaker: Sarah Werner)

January 10-12 - Jr High Winter Camp (speaker: Clayton Gladish)

February 14-16 - Family Winter Camp

Registration is OPEN for all winter programs.

June 8-13 - High School Camp (grades* 9-12; graduating seniors welcome!)

June 15-20 - Junior High Camp (grades* 7 & 8)

June 22-25 - Pre-Junior Camp (grades* 3 & 4)

June 29 - July 4 - Junior Camp (grades* 5 & 6)

July 7 -11 - Family Camp I

July 12-13 - Builders Weekend


July 14-18 - Family Camp II

July 21-25 - Family Camp III

Registration opens February 3, 2025 for all summer programs.

**Consider grade entering in fall 2025 when determining camp week.*

Visit Friedenswald.org for more info and to register!

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15406 Watercross Way
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