

The FRIEDENSWORD

Camp Friedenswald

Volume 33, Issue 2: Fall/Winter 2025

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

Reflections from the Director

by Jenna Liechty Martin

“It’s [the] little human interactions that accumulate over and over again ... and they layer this place.” – David Moser in “Camp Friedenswald: 75 Years of Service” (video)

Nearly 12 years ago, Peter and I moved into Friedenhaus. Built 40 years ago, it has housed, according to my best estimation, seven Executive Directors and several other staff in the intervening years. On move-in day, family members helped us. At some point in the process, my dad disappeared into the basement to check out the mechanical room. When he returned, he shared his findings: My grandpa Lynn Liechty’s handwriting was unmistakably inscribed across the water heater, noting the date of installation decades earlier. He died in 2009.

In the days and months to follow, as I settled in and navigated the challenges of the new role, I drew on the memory and presence of my grandpa — a person who advocated for women in leadership within the church and who gave generously of his gifts in service to Camp Friedenswald. I knew I was not alone. Initials on waterheaters, fingerprints on walls, signatures in guest books. This place is layered.

Earlier this year, on the night before we said farewell to the remaining summer staff, we gathered for ice cream to celebrate. Our conversation led us to reminiscing about theme songs of summers past. After summer staff members recounted their favorites from the past decade, they turned to me: What were the theme songs when you were on summer staff? After getting over the fact that many of them were not even alive when I was on summer staff, I whipped out my best rendition of “On That Mountain,” the theme song for a summer focused on the Beatitudes of Jesus.

It took me back to the summer of 2005 when Annabeth Roeschley and I, heading into our junior year at Bluffton University, stepped into the roles of co-worship leaders. Before the first campfire, we trekked to the top of Inspiration Point, full of nerves and praying for inspiration and courage to lead! That summer I was invited to assume responsibilities that stretched and challenged me, that helped form and shape me as a leader. I’m reminded that this is what we do at Camp, year after year after year. Shaping the next generation of leaders.

Last fall, almost 20 years later, Annabeth and I gathered once again in Mosquito Hollow. This time, Annabeth in their role as Executive Director of Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, and me in my role as Executive Director at Camp Friedenswald. We brought together a group of people representing our respective organizations for a ritual of repair to mark a journey our organizations had been on the previous two years. As we reflected in an

April 3, 2025, article in [Anabaptist World](#): “We wonder how our organizations might continue this experiment in repair. We are grateful for a widening circle to hold and tell this story with us. Our reparative process doesn’t absolve all the harm done to LGBTQ+ people or the church’s moral injury. But it may be a fractal of healing that ripples out as MC USA lives into repentance and transformation. With despair pressing upon our world in so many ways, may this act of repair be a balm of possibility.” Layers of relationship.

At the end of a week of summer camp, counselors are invited to write a handwritten note to each of their campers. While this “invitation” is actually more of a requirement, it’s become an important practice. It’s an opportunity for staff to reflect on their experiences of the week and the unique gifts each camper brought to their cabin, and it’s a chance for campers to receive a final word of encouragement and care from their counselors. I often remind the staff that I still have a letter from one of my first camp counselors tucked away in my desk drawer.

In 2015, a year after moving to Camp, I gave birth to our first child. It was a somewhat complicated birth, disorienting and scary for a first-time mother. My nurse, Leah Richardson



Jenna pictured with her father, John Liechty
(Family Camp, 1988)



(nee Steinmetz), accompanied me in the hours leading up to the delivery and was there immediately following Henry's birth. Her presence, encouragement and care were welcome gifts in those life-changing hours.

After that experience, I wrote a letter to Leah, one of my first camp counselors, letting her know that I had kept her letter all these years later. Layer, upon layer, upon layer ...

I close with gratitude for the place that is Camp Friedenswald and for all the little human interactions that accumulate, year after year, layering this place with meaning. Thanks be to God.

In honor of Camp Friedenswald's 75th anniversary, people have been invited to share stories reflecting on the impact Camp has had on their life or on the lives of others. From stories of six generations of Gundys, to mealtimes in the Dining Hall, to Camp's involvement in the local community, each story points to something of what makes Camp Friedenswald what it is today. You can read these stories at friedenswald.org/blog and consider sharing your story with us.

Year-round Staff

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

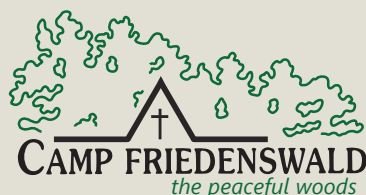
Board of Directors

Steve Hartman-Keiser, *Secretary*
 Brent Miller
 Evan Miller, *Vice-Chair*
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 Deanna Risser, *Chair*
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 Kendra Yoder

Contact us:

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

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



Sustain Friedenswald

We celebrate the commitment that many people have made to help us Sustain Friedenswald! Over \$2.6 million has been pledged or given toward the capital campaign, and countless hours have been volunteered to assist with these special projects. As we celebrate 75 years at Camp Friedenswald, we are grateful for the investment that is being made to help sustain Camp's mission into the future. Thank you!

COMPLETED PROJECTS:

- Replaced roof and added insulation to Lakeview Lodge
- Built new highly efficient staff housing duplex (Fenwood Duplex)
- Installed 46 solar panels to power Lakeview Lodge
- Renovated Sycamore Lodge (pictured below)

CURRENT PROJECT:

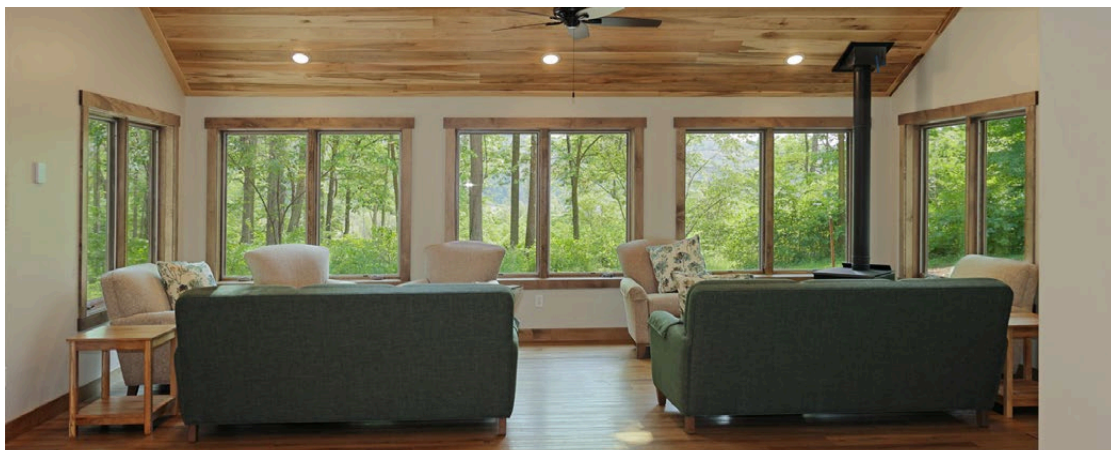
- Remodel Triplex/Hugel House (staff home)

UP NEXT:

- Remodel Family Suite/Health Center
- Update Tamarack Lodge
- Renovate Peace House (staff home)
- Grow Endowment Fund to \$750,000+



If you want to get involved and help Sustain Friedenswald, please reach out to Jenna Liechty Martin. You can follow along on our website at friedenswald.org/sustain-friedenswald.





The Blessing of the Trees

by Gwen Gustafson-Zook, Program Director

Fifty women sat around the blazing fire as the darkness of the crisp autumn evening settled on Mosquito Hollow.

The popcorn had been popped, distributed and eaten.

We had talked about our past summer theme, “The Wisdom of Trees” (which was informing our Women’s Retreat, “Rooted and Grounded in Love”).

We had pondered how trees are sustained by “heartwood,” the strong core made of the sacred life that has come before — arboreal, cellular ancestors of sorts.

We had wondered about how we, too, are sustained by a kind of “heartwood” — a source of strength in hard times.

The singing had resumed: “How many deaths will it take ‘til he knows that too many people have died? The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind.”

This had led into “Kumbaya”: “Someone’s crying, Lord, come by here.”

And with the somber awareness of the suffering in our lives and in our world, the music had flowed into “Don’t be afraid, my love is stronger than your fear” before flowing back into “Kumbaya”.

Somewhere in the midst of the awareness of the suffering and the pleading for God to be near, a mysterious Wind emerged, swirling around the upper branches of the trees of Mosquito Hollow, drawing our attention upward. And within seconds hundreds of golden leaves began raining down on the women gathered on the well-worn logs circling the campfire, settling on heads and hands and hearts and feet and on our neighbors, as well. Giggling and curiosity gave way to silence, which gave way to song: “The peace of the earth be with you ... deep peace, falling over you. God’s peace flowing in you.”

In that sacred space we received “The Blessing of the Trees”: encouragement to carry on, to trust that we are not alone, to lean into Love, and into the “heartwood” that is in us and around us (in the trees!) and *very real* all the time. It was a moment of delight that we will remember for a long time — a Holy gift from “The Wisdom of Trees.”



A BIG THANK YOU to our talented, hard-working and caring 2025 summer staff team! Together they helped to serve more youth and family campers combined since the early 1990s. *We couldn’t have done it without you.*

Pictured front row left to right: Alysson Barkman, Maggie Maurer, Abby Hartzler, Isaac Sawatzky, Ben Hartzler, Lexi Bishop, Mila Bontrager, Tinsley Yoder, Dianny Valencia. Second row: Catherine Wilcox, Lindsey Morris, Peter Moser, Brock Liechty, Haley Bishop, Claire Reichenbach, Adam Siemens-Rhodes, Vivian McClellan, Juliana David. Third row: Lawson Kauffman, Theo Andreas, Madison Rittenhouse, Joryn Yoder, Alina Bergstresser, Evelyn Gary. Fourth row: Emma Larimer, Keegan Wyse, Lucas Lehman, Noah Boyer-Edwards, Levi Moser. Not pictured: Simon Derstine.



2026 PROGRAM CALENDAR

High School Winter Retreat: January 9-11

Junior High Winter Retreat: January 16-18

Family Winter Retreat: February 13-15

Men's Retreat: March 6-9

Creativity Retreat: April 10-12

High School (grades 9-12): June 14-19

Junior High (grades 7-8): June 21-26

Pre-Junior (grades 3-4): June 28-July 1

Junior (grades 5-6): July 5-10

Family Camp I: July 13-17

Builders Weekend: July 18-19

Family Camp II: July 20-24

Family Camp III: July 27-31

Visit Friedenswald.org for more info and to register!

Read and Recycle 

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Cassopolis, MI 49031

