



## **Strategic Plan - Progress report and steps taken (2023, 2024 and 2025)**

### **In 2023 we served:**

- 607 campers in summer (334 youth / 273 family), the most youth campers we've served since 2014 and the most family campers in over 20 years
- 1,800+ people through our school-based outdoor education program
- 20 church gatherings (13 Mennonite churches)
- 7,000+ guests
- 29,000+ meals served in the dining hall

### **In 2024 we served:**

- 699 (384 youth / 315 family) campers in summer, a record setting number
- 2,100+ people through our school-based outdoor education program
- 26 church gatherings (13 Mennonite churches)
- 8,100+ guests
- 28,700+ meals served in the dining hall

### **In 2025 we served:**

- 729 (416 youth/313 family) summer campers - breaking the record set in 2024
- 2100+ people through our school-based outdoor education program
- 24 church gatherings (16 Mennonite churches)
- 8,000+ guests
- 28,600+ meals served in the dining hall

As we worked to provide hospitality and programming to those who came through the peaceful woods, we also worked actively towards our strategic goals. Highlights of the steps we took in 2023-2025 are noted below.

### **Pillar 1 - Place**

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

Goal 1: To deepen our understanding, engagement, and love of this place and community.

- 2023 - Completed planting of 9,000 trees on north property

- 2023 - 800+ hours committed to land stewardship in the year (goal: 500)
- 2023 - Completed four hikes with staff (Turtle Hill with Bill Minter; Indigenous History; Paw paw hike; winter hike around Allan Hill)
- 2023 - Expanded garden wall outside kitchen to provide fresh herbs for cooking
- 2023 - Began work on planting of native plants outside Nature Center and began plans for native plantings on both beaches
- 2023 - Developed and implemented summer theme “Water Ways” - helping provide watershed education to all campers.
- 2024 - 360+ hours committed to land stewardship in the year (goal:500 hours)
- 2024 - Completed one natural history wagon ride with all staff (Main Trail / Red Oaks/ in the fall)
- 2024 - Made connections with Vic Bogosian (Pokagon Band) and Alax (CISMa) related to land stewardship
- 2024 - Continued to work at transitioning from invasive species to native plantings around Camp by replanting one area at Lakeview Lodge, new bushes at Main Beach, and adding native landscaping around Dining Hall.
- 2024 - Planted 22 trees around Main Camp
- 2024 - Worked with Jackson Steinmetz in preparing video to tell Camp’s story in preparation of 75 year anniversary
- 2025 - Completed 583 hours of land stewardship - beating goal of 500 hours
- 2025 - Honored 75 anniversary via newsletter, Builders Weekend, video, and twelve guest blog posts
- 2025 - Began keeping honey bees at camp

Goal 2: To increase local partnerships and collaborate with others to strengthen our connections within the watershed.

- 2023 - Offered two hikes (spring/fall) for neighbors (2 people attended spring hike; 18 in fall) Amy led
- 2023 - Partnered with Bethany Christian Schools for second year in providing year-long sustainability camp program (a series of 3 day-long experiences)
- 2023 - Formed and strengthened new food partnerships with local food suppliers (Gluten Free Sensations, Chops & Co., Jake’s Country Meats, Maple Row Sugarhouse)
- 2023 - Received Cass County Conservation District award for recycling, waste management, and sustainable purchasing
- 2023 - Added new/additional local and/or sustainable items into camp store (i.e. Soapy Gnome; coloring book; recycled content t-shirt and sweatshirt)
- 2023 - Collaborated with and supported Shavehead Lake Association in application of water monitoring grant for the lake
- 2024 - Received Michigan Sustainable Business Forum’s “2024 Michigan Sustainable Business of the Year” award for businesses in Southwest Michigan
- 2024 - Hosted annual Christmas at Friedenswald (with over 100 people in attendance)
- 2024 - Served as host site for monthly Shavehead Lake Association meetings in spring/summer

- 2024 - Fostered relationships with 30+ neighbors at winter social gathering
- 2024 - Drew on local neighbor support for volunteering
- 2024 - Began participating in the newly formed Materials Management Planning Committee for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties
- 2024 - Continued local food partnerships - spending over \$3,000 on food from growers/producers within 100 miles of Camp
- 2025 - Hosted annual Christmas at Friedenswald
- 2025 - Served as host site for monthly Shavehead Lake Association meetings in spring/summer
- 2025 - Former campers Skip Dyes and Peter Graber spoke at Builders Weekend on “The African American Community and Friedenswald (1960-75): Stories and Reflections”
- 2025 - Drew on local neighbor support for volunteering
- 2025 - Continued participating in the newly formed Materials Management Planning Committee for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties
- 2025 - Continued local food partnerships - spending \$2200 on food from growers/producers within 100 miles of Camp

## **Pillar 2 - Formation**

*We nurture and empower people for hopeful living through worship, play, rest, and skill-building.*

Goal 3: To clearly define our objectives and goals for programming and craft a compelling and fresh vision for programs in collaboration with stakeholders.

- 2023 - Reviewed and revised camp pastor information sheet (which includes clearer objectives for summer and winter programs)
- 2023 - Learned and gathered information from ACA, referenced CDC stakeholders, as well as the larger body of work informing best practices at camps. (Jane)
  - Continue to get info from ACA (attended staffing summits)
  - Attending and participating in CDC leadership councils and meetings (Jenna)
- 2023, 2024, 2025 - Ensured camp licensing requirements were met for State of Michigan
- 2023, 2024, 2025 - Staff attended Mennonite Camping Association gathering
  - 2023 - 3 staff attended MCA gathering (Eric, Jonathan, Jenna)
  - 2024 - 3 staff attended MCA gathering, Jonathan and Amy presented on camp’s new black locust playground structure and on incorporating a dedicated space at camp for loose parts play.
  - 2025 - Majority of year-round staff attended MCA gathering at Amigo

Goal 4: To develop deep spiritual wells and practices for sharing Anabaptist Christian faith and values.

- 2023 - Book study of Rooted Faith as a staff team
- 2023 - Developed and implemented summer theme “Water Ways” that drew in concepts of watershed discipleship

- 2024 - Summer theme Animal kin-dom reflected on our interconnectedness with other animals and considered how God's vision of shalom is all-encompassing and calls us to be in right-relationship
- 2024 - 80 women listened to Cyneatha Millsaps, Executive Director of Mennonite Women USA, speak on the theme of Women's Prophetic Voices at Women's Retreat
- 2024 - 75 people heard Sarah Augustine, co founder and executive director of the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition, speak on themes of decolonizing and ecological overshoot at Restoration Retreat
- 2025 - 200+ youth/sponsors explored "Sacred Connections" with God, Nature, Others, and Ourselves during Winter Camps with Sarah Werner (HS) and Clayton Gladish (Jr High).
- 2025 - Facilitated a new retreat, "Sacred Connections: Knitting Retreat"
- 2025 - Camp Friedenswald staff experienced connection to the "beyond human" world through guided Forest Bathing with Susan Harrison.
- 2025 - Summer Camp tapped into the "Wisdom of Trees: Instructions of Living", giving campers and staff, alike, opportunities to experience the spiritual significance of tree sits and relationship-building with the trees who accompany us at Camp Friedenswald. 400+ youth campers, 32 Summer Staff, +/-300 family campers, and lots of volunteers explored the "Wisdom of Trees" over the course of the summer.
- 2025 - 70 women gathered for Women's Retreat and heard Rev Dr Rosalind Young expound on "Rooted in Love: When Trees Talk".
- 2025 - 25 people explored the theme, "Heavy and Light: A weekend of grief, imagination, and climate resilience" with Meghan Reha and Josh Richardson

Goal 5: To cultivate joy and practical life skills that foster resilience among staff and those we serve.

- 2023 - Completed natural playground (and dedication at Builders)
- 2023 - Further developed loose parts play area
- 2023 - Played as a staff - tried to find times for hikes, meals, and time together
- 2023 - Provided professional development opportunities (i.e. CampBrain conference attended by two people; Rooted and Grounded Conference attended by two people, Michigan Sustainability Conference attended by one person)
- 2024 - Intentional practice of self-care and integration or balance in work/life among some staff
- 2024 - Tapped maple trees on main camp and made maple syrup for staff families
- 2024 - Post-summer retreat day for reflection and relaxation
- 2024 - Annual staff Christmas party
- 2024 - Offered spiritual direction during summer to all staff (through a volunteer)
- 2025 - Staff trained in CPR and First Aid
- 2025 - Post-summer retreat day for reflection and relaxation
- 2025 - Annual staff Christmas party

### **Pillar 3 - Justice**

*We value diversity, equity, and inclusion, and will examine the power structures that contribute to climate change, discrimination, oppression, marginalization, and other forms of injustice, responding with individual and collective action.*

Goal 6: To articulate and embed DEI commitments into the fabric of who we are at Camp Friedenswald through policies, procedures, and staff training.

- 2023 - DEI task force worked on charter and met throughout the year
- 2023 - Created and adopted a welcome/inclusion statement and placed on website
- 2023 - Joined Supportive Communities Network
- 2023 - Took steps towards repentance and repair to Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests for past harms
- 2023 - Staff training (March 2023) on LGBTQ+ inclusion
- 2024 - Started an "Accessibility at Camp" document to track various levels of accessibility
- 2024 - Strategic DEI work, drawing on Nekeisha Alayna Alexis (AMBS). Four sessions total, including one full board session of training. Resulted in goal setting.
- 2024 - Included accessibility in building updates (including elevator shaft in new home and other considerations for physical accessibility in renovations)
- 2024 - Ritual of Repair with BMC at Restoration Retreat, the culmination/next step of a two year journey
- 2025 - Told the story of BMC/CF repair journey in Anabaptist World
- 2025 - Made the restroom behind red room ADA accessible
- 2025 - Translated a variety of camp signage and documents to Spanish
- 2025 - Gave over \$20,000 in camp scholarships to ensure all are able to attend (highest amount given in camp scholarships since beginning to track this)

Goal 7: To participate in the [Repair Network \(of the DDoD Coalition\)](#) and actively follow through on the commitments of learning and lament, truth-telling, relationship-building and the work of repair.

- 2023 - Commitment to meet at least twice a year in order to carry forward repair work goals
- 2023 - Met with local group (Elkhart County and beyond) of Mennonite leaders engaged in similar work; plan to continue meeting going forward
- 2023 - Incorporated indigenous history hike in summer program; all campers went on hike
- 2023 - As part of a new hire checklist, included training on indigenous history and land acknowledgment
- 2024 - Hosted another Restoration Retreat, bringing in the largest attendance to date. Sarah Augustine was the main speaker.
- 2024 - Land acknowledgement framed and hung in all gathering places across Camp
- 2024 - Met with local leaders of the Repair Network
- 2024 - Featured Indigenous history of this place during Builders Weekend (Luke Gascho presenting)

- 2024 - Planned a visit to the Dowagiac River re-meandering site during Restoration Retreat
- 2025 - Continue to participate in regional Repair Network Consortium
- 2025 - Created and installed signage on Main Trail noting that it had been part of an extensive network of Indigenous trails in the area
- 2025 - Staff toured Pokagon Band's Dowagiac re-meandering river restoration site, led by Pokagon Band Kowabdanawa odë kè director, Jennifer Kanine.
- 2025 - Citizen Band Potawatomi artisan, Anna Johnson, led a workshop on Potawatomi teachings and finger weaving at Women's retreat

Goal 8: To reduce our contribution to climate change through specific strategies that seek to lower greenhouse gas emissions, serving as a role model to other camps and churches.

- 2023 - Established a baseline for greenhouse gas emissions at camp
- 2023 - Researched geothermal
- 2023 - Connection with Mark Goertzen (sent "extra" food waste to feed pigs)
- 2023 - Developed a plan for cardboard recycling and transitioned to pick-up of all single stream recycling
- 2024 - Board approved [climate action plan](#). Camp aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from propane, electricity, gasoline, and diesel used at Camp 75% by 2030 (from 2015 baseline year).
- 2024 - Greenhouse gas emissions for scope 1 and 2 (propane, electricity, gasoline, and diesel) decreased 4% from 2023 and were 66% lower than baseline year of 2015.
- 2024 - Feasibility study of additional solar at Camp - with contract signed by year end to add solar for Lakeview Lodge
- 2024 - Tracked grants and funding opportunities, applying for one specific grant (which we did not receive)
- 2024: Replaced the fireplace at Lakeview with a more efficient insert
- 2024 - Served 9 vegetarian meals each week of youth summer camps - making 60% of their meals for the week vegetarian and reducing our carbon footprint
- 2024 - Donated Sycamore renovation items: furnace, cabinets, sinks, toilets, doors, ceiling fans, and lights - diverting these items from landfill
- 2025 - 5 groups made it into our "Zero food waste club"
- 2025 - Donated more items from building renovations
- 2025 - Salvaged wood from building renovations to use for other projects at Camp, including two new compost cubes
- 2025 - Installed 46 solar panels at Lakeview (which produce as much electricity as that building uses in a year)
- 2025 - For the second year in a row, vegetarian meals served for 60% of meals during summer youth camps
- 2025 - Eliminated two propane tanks, prioritizing using electric energy in renovations

- 2025 - Installed electric vehicle chargers at Lakeview, Tamarack, and Sycamore and began to monitor usage
- 2025 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions were down 60% from 2015, up 6% from 2024

#### **Pillar 4 - Resilience**

*We creatively adapt and embrace sustainable stewardship of our built environment and financial and personnel resources in order to sustain Camp Friedenswald's purpose into the future.*

Goal 9: To renovate and expand staff housing and to update other aging facilities across Camp keeping "green" practices, accessibility, and beauty at the forefront of our planning.

- 2023 - Developed plans for remodel of Fenwood and Sycamore. Steps were taken to help set us up for renovation in 2024 of these two buildings. Existing plans for Tamarack, Family Suite, TriPlex and Peace House were drawn by an architect and initial discussion about anticipated needs was had.
- 2023 - Identified and selected a builder who prioritizes sustainability and green practices
- 2023 - Switched to low/non-toxic all purpose cleaner (and trained summer staff on use)
- 2023 - Installed automatic door openers in Main Dining Hall (and received grant funding for project)
- 2023 - Completed new standing seam metal roof and additional insulation on Lakeview roof (\$170,000 project)
- 2023 - Completed new covered seating area and storage area at Lakeview Beach
- 2024 - Began construction (April) of highly energy efficient new staff duplex that received a blower door rating of .04 ACH.
- 2024 - Began construction (October) of Sycamore Lodge
- 2024 - Installed sound absorption panels in the Main Dining Hall
- 2024 - Switched one additional cleaning product over to a "green" option
- 2025 - Completed green staff duplex (Fenwood)
- 2025 - Completed renovation and addition of Sycamore Lodge
- 2025 - Began renovation of Tri-plex/Hugel Haus staff house

Goal 10: To ensure sufficient financial support to sustain Camp's operations and a capital campaign, while promoting Endowment growth.

- 2023 - Began to identify costs of capital projects; created plans for new duplex and received pricing/costs. Met regularly with the Building Committee to move projects forward.
- 2023 - Began quiet phase of capital campaign - over \$600,000 in new gifts/pledges by year end (in addition to \$1m of unrestricted giving and operational cash)
- 2023 - Reviewed pricing of all programs and services and made adjustments
- 2023 - Received grants to support ongoing land stewardship, accessibility, and education efforts.  
Grants included:
  - \$6,000 - from DNR
  - \$14,000 - for Mitchel's satyr habitat work

- \$9,000 - from Mennonite Men for tree planting
- \$8,000 - from Federal Government's CRP program (one-time payment + on-going lease)
- \$8,000 - from Bontrager Family Foundation for door openers
- \$500 - from Anabaptist Disabilities Network
- \$1200 from DNR for supplies for outdoor education classes
- 2024 - Moved from quiet phase of capital campaign to public phase, announcing at Builders Weekend that \$1.75 had been pledged or given
- 2024 - Maintained strong and steady giving to annual fund
- 2024 - Received grants and funding, including:
  - \$1500 from DNR (Department of Natural Resources) for summer outdoor education classes
  - \$3200 in CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) payments for tree planting site
  - \$12,000 grant for Mitchell's satyr butterfly habitat restoration project
- 2024 - Successfully completed first ever full financial audit (and received a "clean" report)
- 2025 - \$2.7 raised for Campaign to Sustain Friedenswald; new goal of \$3.1 million
- 2025 - Camp endowment reaches \$770,000 for the first time

Goal 11: To evaluate staffing and volunteer needs to ensure that ample support is available to achieve goals, while wholeheartedly investing in Camp's people by ensuring benefits and compensation reflect a living wage.

- 2023 - Filled full-time facility & land stewardship assistant position
- 2023 - Filled part-time food service assistant position (and moved to full-time)
- 2023 - Created and filled new part-time administrative assistant position
- 2023 - Changed eligibility requirements for health insurance benefits (from 40 to 32 hours/week), directly impacting 3 staff
- 2023 - Filled VS Sustainability & Program Assistant position
- 2023 - Created comprehensive "new hire checklist" to help onboard all year-round staff
- 2023 - Met living wage benchmarks for Cass County (for single person) and built into budget
- 2023 - Reviewed and revised food service offerings and schedule in order to make work more sustainable for staff
- 2023 - Focused on volunteer appreciation: created special "volunteer" t-shirt for regular volunteers
- 2023 - 780 days of volunteer engagement at Camp
- 2023 - Hired 31 summer staff
- 2024 - Full review of Staff Handbook and select employee benefits; updated (increased) PTO days for hourly staff
- 2024 - Completed 360 review of executive director
- 2024 - Evaluated voluntary service position and hired Patrick Estell in fall
- 2024 - Reconfigured housekeeping team to include 4 part-time staff, building in resilience

- 2024 - Reconsidered “living wage” as criteria and adjusted wording in handbook
- 2024 - 996 days of volunteer engagement at Camp
- 2024 - Hired 30 summer staff
- 2025 - 818 days of volunteer engagement at Camp
- 2025 - Filled VS Sustainability and Program Assistant position
- 2025 - Increased wages in line with the published cost-of-living adjustment
- 2025 - Hired 31 summer staff