The FRIEDENSWORD

Camp Friedenswald | Volume 34, Issue 2: Fall/Winter 2026

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

Letter from the Director … to Mitchell's satyr butterfly

by Jenna Liechty Martin

Dear Friend,

This was not the ending we had hoped for.

From the very start, we knew there was something special about you. Your appearance, while somewhat unassuming, was unique to you. Your movement, bobbing slowly up and down, close to the ground, was something to remember. Your presence, which we'd only "discovered" in 2003, illuminated just how unique prairie fens, your home, really are. With peat and marl soils, tamarack trees, grasses, sedges and wildflowers, we were reminded that glaciers once covered this area, leaving behind the possibility for such rich diversity to exist.

As we got to know you, you started showing up everywhere. In summer storytelling skits around the campfire, in special pamphlets in the brochure rack, even in a sculpture in the Amphitheater! In just a few years, campers of all ages knew you by name and asked for updates on how you were doing. Some even claimed to have spotted you while they were out walking.

Your presence among us brought us into relationship with new people and places, including researchers from Michigan State University, the Kalamazoo Nature Center, the local Department of Natural Resources, and even a special working group dedicated to your survival and flourishing. These people and organizations helped to support us in caring for the land and its unique habitats by providing expertise, assistance and funding. We undertook significant land-restoration projects with you in mind. At one point we even restored a prairie that created, in effect, a "bridge" between the west and east fens, thinking that perhaps you'd find your way from one to the other and establish a home there. Even though it was a lofty idea and you didn't migrate, we now have a restored prairie teeming with life and rich in biodiversity.

You became a story of hope. We hoped we could save you. We poured ourselves into caring for your habitat and the surrounding ecosystems. Knowing you lived among us animated so much of our life in the peaceful woods for the past 20 years that it's hard to imagine life without you here. And yet that is where we are today.

Following annual surveys in late June and early July (the time we'd expect to see you in flight), you were deemed extirpated—a scientific way of saying you're gone. After being present in this place for around 10,000 years, you are no longer here. What loss, what grief.

How will we remember you? How will we grieve together? How will your memory continue to energize us and our living on this land?

As I write, I'm aware that there are increasingly successful efforts underway to raise you in captivity with the goal of releasing you back into quality prairie fen habitats. Perhaps someday you'll return to the peaceful woods.

Until then, we remember your life. We honor your uniqueness and relationship with this place, its plants, waters and other creatures for thousands of years. You inspired us. And so we commit to continue listening, learning, and tending these unique lands and waters, caring for those who remain.

You are and will be missed.

Jenna Liechty Martin



Mitchell's satyr butterfly at Camp Friedenswald, June 30, 2021. Photo by Allan Blunt.

Sustain Friedenswald

We celebrate that nearly $3 million has been pledged or given toward the capital campaign to Sustain Friedenswald! In addition, in true Camp fashion many volunteers have assisted with the timely updates and renovations. We are grateful for the investment that is being made to help sustain Camp's mission into the future by investing in the buildings and grounds that serve thousands of guests and campers each year. Thank you!

COMPLETED PROJECTS:

- Replaced roof and added insulation to Lakeview Lodge
- Built new highly efficient staff home (Fenwood)
- Installed 46 solar panels at Lakeview Lodge
- Renovated Sycamore Lodge
- Remodeled staff home (Hugel Haus)

CURRENT PROJECT:

- Renovate Health Center (pictured)
- Remodel Tamarack Lodge

UP NEXT:

- Remodel staff home (Peace House)
- Replace roof on Nature Center



Year-round Staff
Vicki Archer, *Dishwasher*
Eric Emerson, *Food Service Director*
Heather Emerson, *Housekeeper*
Jonathan Fridley, *Facilities Director*
Erica Friesen, *Program Administrator*
Andrea Golden, *Accountant*
Betsy Harris, *Housekeeper*
Janessa Hostetler, *Kitchen Assistant*
Jeremy Hostetler, *Facilities Assistant*
Amy Huser, *Sustainability & Outdoor Education Director*
Hannah Lehman, *Program Director*
Jenna Liechty Martin, *Executive Director*
Alena Miller, *Sustainability Assistant*
Anita & Paul Pawelski, *Guest Hosts*
Elizabeth Schwartz, *Housekeeper*
Jess Whicker, *Guest Services Director*

Board of Directors
Abigail Greaser
Steve Hartman-Keiser, *Vice Chair*
Will Leichty, *Treasurer*
Brent Miller
Evan Miller, *Chair*
Chris Moser
Sibonokuhle Ncube
Mark Roeschley
Allison Troyer, *Secretary*
Kendra Yoder

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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!

CAMP FRIEDENSWALD
the peaceful woods

GET INVOLVED:

If you are interested in supporting the current or upcoming projects by volunteering or through a financial gift, please reach out to Jenna Liechty Martin. You can follow along on our website at Friedenswald.org/sustain-friedenswald.

Sustain Friedenswald

Program Team Update

This fall Gwen Gustafson-Zook retired from her role as Program Director. We are grateful for her wise and steady leadership of Friedenswald's programs over the past two years. Highlights of Gwen's time were her work with the summer staff and inspiring the spring Creativity Retreat, which we plan to run again in the spring of 2027. Keep an eye out for more information!

Hannah Lehman, former Assistant Program Director (and summer staff), has transitioned into the role of Program Director. Erica Friesen, who joined us earlier this year, will continue to provide administrative support to all our programs in her role as Program Administrator. Be sure to say "hello" to these fine folks next time you're in the peaceful woods!

On the following page you will find reflections from Hannah and Gwen, each of them focused on the gifts found in and through the work of Camp Friedenswald. To read the full articles, please visit our blog at https://friedenswald.org/blog/.

Staff Milestones



This year three staff members celebrated significant milestones in their time at Camp Friedenswald! Thank you, Andrea Golden (10 years), Jess Whicker (5 years), and Jonathan Fridley (15 years) for your dedication and service to Friedenswald!



The Gift of Presence

by Hannah Lehman

The garbled calls of several sandhill cranes echo across the upper flat and extend to the prairie where I'm standing—a euphony of life. // I hardly register the sound. I'm more concerned with calculating how fast I need to walk to finish my nature hike—at the exact right time.

A sudden, strong breeze releases hundreds of orange and yellow leaves from their tree branches. They scatter this way and that before gently making their way to the ground, their new home. // I see this in my periphery as I hurry home, my brain focused on its mental list of chores it told me I needed to work on that afternoon—as soon as possible.

A gray squirrel perches on an oak tree branch, acorn in hand, gnawing on it in that funny way that squirrels do. // I give the squirrel a mere glance as I pass by, nothing more.

But then, something tells me to turn back, to be more present with that squirrel as it eats its acorn. So I return. I stand under the oak tree, my heart, soul and mind fully present, communing with the squirrel, listening to the sounds of its tiny teeth, soaking in the late-afternoon sun peeking through the leaves the wind hasn't yet taken. And I see something new: I see these small golden threads of connection all around me, tethering myself to the squirrel, the acorn, the tree it came from, the people who planted it and the seemingly impossible circumstances that led to me being able to enjoy this exact moment. I feel my heart rate slow, my shoulders relax and a deep peace settle into my spirit. What was that something nudging me to be present? Was it God? I'm inclined to believe so …

To read Hannah's full reflection on The Gift of Presence, visit our blog at www.friedenswald.org/blog.

The Gifts of the Peaceful Woods

by Gwen Gustafson-Zook

The mops flew back and forth across the dining hall floor, removing the lingering signs of outdoor adventure from the weekend church groups as we prepared for fifth-grade school children who would arrive the next day for Outdoor Education. Our weekly "Dance of the Dining Hall Flip" was well underway when I realized that I was perfectly in sync with Alena, our 20-something Sustainability Assistant. Mere seconds passed before we both noticed that Jonathan had joined us in our synchronized mopping: a trio of mops, side by side from the lake-side to the kitchen-side, back and forth and back and forth.

We laughed at the delight of this holy synchronicity—synchronicity because we had found a collective rhythm, holy because the work of Camp Friedenswald is sacred work wherein a small group of people, supported by a larger group of volunteers and supporters and campers and summer staff, join together to create something that is well beyond the sum of its parts. It is holy because what is created at Camp Friedenswald is an embodiment of the gifts of the Holy, showing up over and over again, season after season, year after year.

For the past two years I have had a front seat enabling me to bear witness to these life-affirming gifts. They've emerged almost like a liturgical "daily office" of a Benedictine monastery wherein the flow of *ora et labora*—prayer and work—marks the hours of the day with regular return to the attention of the Holy.

To read Gwen's interpretation of Camp Friedenswald's "daily office," visit our blog at www.friedenswald.org/blog.

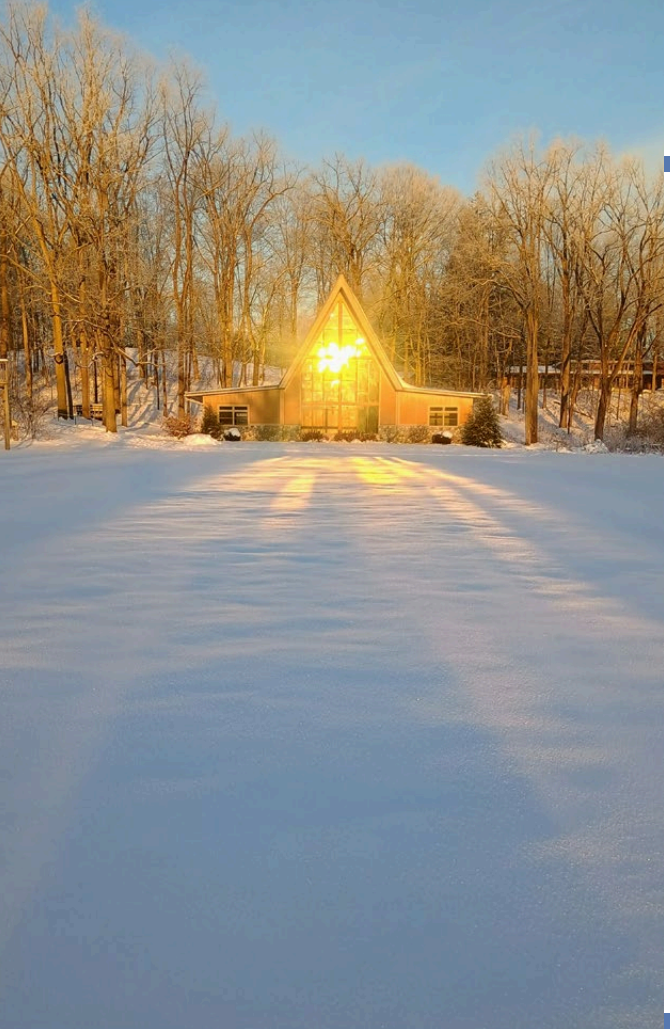


A **BIG THANK YOU** to our 2026 summer staff!

Together they helped to serve over 750 campers throughout the season. We could not have done it without you!



First row, left to right: Ben Hartzler, Graciela Leahy, Claire Troyer, Ethan Blount, Greta Miller, Emerson Landis, Kaleigh Coffman, Brock Liechty, Mila Bontrager, Carson Kauffman, Ava Sommer, Evelyn Gary. Second row: Clarissa Martinez, Andrew Swartz, Gabo Brenneman-Ochoa, Lara Claassen, Josiah Eisenhour, Toby Mast, Marta Bergstresser, Tristan Keener, Alena Miller, Jacob Shenk, Elizabeth Ripperger, Jonah Reichenbach. Third row: Gregory Miller, Alysson Barkman, Claire Reichenbach, Eli Simones, Joryn Yoder, Maggie Maurer, Peter Moser, Emma Larimer, Lucas Lehman, Alina Bergstresser, Anton Alstrom.



2027 PROGRAM CALENDAR

High School Winter Retreat: January 8-10
Junior High Winter Retreat: January 15-17
Family Winter Retreat I: February 12-14
Family Winter Retreat II: February 19-21
Creativity Retreat: April 16-18
High School (grades 9-12): June 13-18
Junior High (grades 7-8): June 20-25
Junior (grades 5-6): June 27-July 2
Pre-Junior (grades 3-4): July 5-9
Primary (grade 2): July 5-7
Family Camp I: July 12-16
Builders Weekend: July 17-18
Family Camp II: July 19-23
Family Camp III: July 26-30

Visit Friedenswald.org for more info and to register!

Read and Recycle

Return Service Requested

15406 Watercress Way
Cassopolis, MI 49031

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