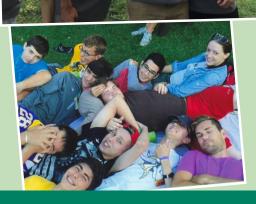


Camp Knutson provides camping services to children with heart disease, skin disorders, autism, Down syndrome, and families affected by HIV/AIDS. The camp also provides retreat services.

Annual Report 2016







GROWING UP STRONG

"To describe what Camp means to me is practically an impossible task, but I also thought it would be impossible to be comfortable with who I am given my heart disease," Anders writes in his letter to Camp K staff after his final summer attending camp.

"I came to realize that my heart is not something that holds me back or defines me. I will always be plagued by health concerns, but letting those concerns stop me from enjoying life is pointless. The memories I have made at Camp are some of my most cherished memories."

The sun shines on a small patch of Minnesota paradise where five young men sit around a table, joking and jostling one another. They speak of their shared history, the summers they have been meeting at camp. At the early ages of 6 and 7, they first met through Camp Odayin, a partner with Camp Knutson designed especially for youth with heart conditions. As they grew, day camp turned into overnight camp at Camp Knutson. It is an impressive list of years, starting in elementary school and progressing through high school.

And yet, they admit that they don't talk much about a key factor in how they ended up here together: between them they have sustained twenty-five surgeries for heart conditions. The weight of what they have had to cope with in their lives comes through as a deep and abiding sense of gratitude.

That they don't speak of their surgeries here is a testament to Camp Knutson and the carefully cultivated culture of inclusion, belonging, respect, and dignity. They don't talk about their surgeries because at Camp K, that they have sustained these traumas is understood. In the world outside camp, talking about it means they will be treated differently. But here they are an integral part of a community of campers who know what it is to grow up with a heart condition. And because it is a common understanding, these young men have the grand opportunity to let their guard down.

"Camp Knutson teaches you how much good there is in the world," says Will. "Over time you realize, these people really do understand. Heart patients can easily connect with one another here."

Robert chimes in, "Having friends at camp is different than regular friends because they actually understand what having a heart condition is like. Regular friends find out and they ask, 'oh no, do you need a heart transplant?' And they don't fully understand." They all agree, they share a camaraderie with one another that is unique and that having a heart condition can be a blessing in disguise.

Says Marcus, "People ask me, is it awful having heart disease, and I always respond no, it's a blessing. I have met amazing people through this. Camp has been a huge part of that and I probably wouldn't have the same attitude if it weren't for camp. I wouldn't have done all the fun activities we've been able to do together. I wouldn't have learned about what I can do even though I have heart disease. It's awesome."

Adds Robert, "I have a different sense of my own capabilities because of my experience at camp."

Carter explains, "Camp is super fun. I get to hang out with people who have heart problems like I do. You get to know each other and understand where they come from. You can have a lot more fun because you aren't scared to do anything."

These young men are poised, well-spoken, and joy-filled, ready to conquer the world, full of heart and spirit. Their resiliency is palpable. 2016 was their last summer as campers, as they head into their senior years of high school and first year of college.

continued on the back..

CAMP MISSION

Camp Knutson is dedicated to nurturing the well-being of persons with special needs in a setting which celebrates God's love for community and creation.



CAMP VOLUNTEERS



The Camp Knutson Volunteers presented "Magnificent Minnesota" during the 13th annual Night Under the Stars fundraiser. The entire evening featured many Minnesota icons and a very heartfelt message from Ally Taubenheim, raising over \$95,000 for the campers at Camp Knutson.



Winter at its best! – The 15th Ice Tee Open was sponsored by Moonlite Bay and Golden Eagle Golf Course. The annual golf course on ice fundraiser raised \$35,000 to support the campers at Camp Knutson.



The 30th Annual Quilt Auction, sponsored by the Paul Bunyan Regional Auxiliary, raised over \$60,000 for Camp Knutson. Beautiful quilts are contributed by churches, quilt groups, and individuals.



Talented Volunteers - Both the North American Banking group and Zion volunteers share their time and talents to help prepare the camp for each summer camping season.





A huge thanks to all who helped get camp back in shape after the July 21st storm where 80 + trees were lost. We are especially grateful for the efforts of the Crosslake Lutheran Men's group, Mike's Tree Service, and the North American Banking crew. Plans are already in the works to do replanting. If you are interested in helping us replant, please contact us!

THANK YOU! – Our heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers for the time and energy they gave to enhance camp during 2016. Each of you have made a significant impact on our Camp Community with your involvement in the work crews, beading, gardening, mowing, airport support, fishing, Pancake Breakfast, cleaning of cabins, special events and more.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Camp Knutson is deeply grateful for the support of all our donors, sponsors, volunteers, attendees, and Camp K staff.

Thank you to all of you on behalf of Camp Knutson campers. We truly couldn't do it without your generosity and great care.



CAMP K ANNUAL REPORT 2016





A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This has been an unbelievable year for Camp Knutson. We are so thankful for all the support that has been given to us.

In 2016, we served more people than ever before. We had a very full summer serving families who have been impacted by HIV and AIDS, camps for kids with Down's syndrome, autism, skin and heart conditions, as well as adults with mental health needs. Our services during the fall, winter, and spring also included opportunities for veterans to have some healing time at camp, a family camp for adopted youth to strengthen their bonds with their new families, and a program for youth experiencing homelessness.

With your support, we continue to strive to find ways to strengthen our communities and inspire hope. We believe Camp Knutson is a place where gifts can be shared and talents can be realized. It is a place where lifelong friendships and memories are made. It is a place where fun happens and worries are put to rest. A place where our campers say there is no other place they'd rather be.

Again, we are grateful to everyone who helped make all this possible. Thank you for choosing to be a part of our mission. We look forward to all the excitement in the year ahead.

faced shiffin

Jared.Griffin@lssmn.org



A NOTE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Camp K was filled with a "Gold Medalists" this summer, fulfilling our theme of *Go for the Gold*, which was inspired by the summer Olympic Games.

The wonderful creativity and strong leadership of our new and returning staff meant we were able to offer some new programs to our campers. The interactive games of Bird Migration during the Nature program and the new elements included in Traveling Back in Time during our Low Ropes Course were two of the many favorites our campers experienced. Each staff member stepped seamlessly into the intentional, inclusive culture of Camp K and helped whole-heartedly create a fun, empowering summer for our campers.

The joys of camp were evident every day as the atmosphere was filled with high energy, singing, laughter and friendship. Our volunteers contributed to that aura by sharing their time and talents during tailgate dinners, arts and crafts, beading, biking and so much more.

Our hearts are so grateful for the time, energy, and enthusiasm our dedicated staff, volunteers, donors and partner organizations contributed to the 2016 "award winning" camp experience.

Caitlin Malin

Caitlin.Malin@lssmn.org

SHINE ON, KATE!



After 17 years as assistant director for Camp Knutson, Mary Kate Wiliams steps forward into her next adventure with these words: "I have more to give."

These are easy words to believe once you have encountered "Kate." Every once in a while life brings you someone who turns your view of the world around, who just by their very being challenges what you think you know or who you think you are. She is one of them. Her heart is huge and her vision even larger.

This she knows: the sum is greater than the parts. This is a truism she has carried with her in the many facets of her life. She is like a cat with more than nine lives: she has been a beekeeper, gardener, a high school and college biology teacher, and assistant principal; she ran a stenciling company; she volunteers with the local historical society; she has served on the Minnesota Gambling Control Board; and she has thrown her considerable energy behind Camp Knutson for many years.

It is clear to see she is a dweller in possibility. Her office at Camp K was a reflection of the mosaic that is Kate, a reflection of her busy, joy-filled mind. A duck "flew" down the wall, wings outstretched. A bright green hat with white flowers hung jauntily off one edge of the window. One wall was teacher fare: notes and books tidily lined up on shelves – until the floor came into view where there were more stacks. Also an accomplished artist, her office space boasted beautiful, delicate watercolors of her own making.

But perhaps what she is best known for is her capacity to bring out the best in people and to bring people together to create something larger than themselves.

She will be remembered for her efforts in the late 1990s to help rally the community behind Camp Knutson during the "Rebuilding for Good" Campaign.

continued on the back...



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TO REMEMBER ...

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Janet Strand Mary Ann Strand

Mary Kate Williams Camp Knutson Volunteers Emily Gunn

Elizabeth Wyland Caitlin R. Malin

THANK YOU FOR YOUR EXTRAORDINARY SUPPORT IN 2016!

If we have forgotten a name or made an incorrect listing, we apologize. Please let us know.



CAMP FOR YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Camp Knutson received a grant from St. Joseph's Essentia Health Foundation – Brainerd to host a Homeless Youth camp during the last week of August. Camp Knutson partnered with LSS Homeless Youth – Metro, LSS Homeless Youth – Brainerd and The Shop from Brainerd to serve 25 campers throughout the week. Below are a few testimonies from campers about the week:

"That was a really, really, really fun time, you guys don't understand how much I needed that. Just to get away, out of the stress of the city and escape from my daily struggles. It was really special."

"I didn't know that stars looked like that, I never knew the Milky Way was something you could actually see."

If you would be interested in supporting our Homeless Youth Camp for 2017, please contact Jared!



CAMP K SUMMER 2017

June 5 - 9 Camp Benedict - HIV/AIDS

June 11 - 15 Down Syndrome Foundation Camp

June 18 - 23 Camp Discovery JR - Skin Conditions

June 25 - 30 Camp Hand in Hand I - Autism

July 2 - 7 Camp Discovery Teen - Skin Conditions

July 10 - 14 Camp Odayin I - Heart Disease

15 Night Under the Stars

luly 17 - 21 Camp Odayin II - Heart Disease

July 24 - 28 Camp Odayin III - Heart Disease

30 - August 4 Camp Hand in Hand II - *Autism* **August 6 - 11** Camp Hand in Hand III - *Autism*

August 12 Quilt Auction

August 13 - 18 Camp Hand in Hand IV - Autism

August 21 - 24 Camp Red - Burn Survivors

August 28 - 30 Youth Experiencing Homelessness

September 2 Pancake Breakfast

September 4 - 8 Minneapolis Community Group

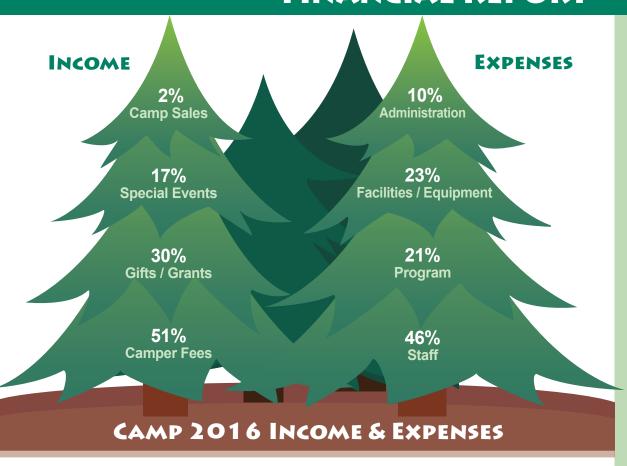
WISH LIST FOR 2017

Archery Arrows
Camperships
Flat Bed Hauling Trailer
Golf Cart
Horseback Riding
Programming for Youth
Experiencing Homelessness

Storage Garage
Tree Planting
Upholstery of Boats
Waterfront Accessibility
Project
Yoga Mats



FINANCIAL REPORT







ADOPTIVE FAMILIES STRENGTHENED THROUGH TIME AT CAMP

In May 2016, Camp Knutson partnered with **Ampersand Families** to host a Family Camp. The mission of Ampersand Families is to recruit and support permanent families for older youth, and to champion practices in adoption and permanency that restore belonging, dignity and hope. The weekend at Camp Knutson allowed families to continue to grow as a central unit, and connect and meet others in similar situations.

2016 Camp K Advisory Council

Le Boyer

Char Erikson

Dick Erikson

Dave Fischer

Jared Griffin

Deb James

Steven James

Judith Jopp

Rob Larson

Caitlin Malin

Anna Mason

Dan Mason

Judy Morgan

Mary Ella Pratte

Jeri Schoonover

Dan Thorson

Mary Kate Williams

Susann Zeug-Hoese



Special thank you to our summer camping partners:

American Academy

of Dermatology

Autism Society of Minnesota

Camp Benedict

Camp Odayin

Down Syndrome Foundation Minneapolis Community Group

Plymouth Congregational Church



In 2016 Camp Knutson served the following campers:

- Adults with mental health challenges
- Children & Adults with autism
- · Children with Down syndrome
- Children with heart disease
- · Children with skin conditions
- Families affected by HIV/AIDS
- Families with kids who are adoptedYoung Adults with mild disabilities
- Youth experiencing homelessness
- ...
- Veterans

OPEN YEAR AROUND!

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota Camp Knutson / Knutson Point Retreat Center

2485 Como Avenue Saint Paul, MN 55108 1.800.582.5260

www.lssmn.org

Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS!



They talk about the "vacation from life" camp has given them – the respite from worry, and a place where they came to understand, "I can live with this [heart condition]." Here they learned to focus on what they can do, on learning to be comfortable with who they are, and to embrace the life they have.

As they leave this community as campers, they talk about the desire to give back, exploring the possibility of becoming counselors. They share how their names came to be etched above the newly installed water fountain on the waterfront.

Marcus explains, "Nurses and counselors are always telling you to drink water because cardiac kids need to stay hydrated. Staff were always bringing jugs of water down to the waterfront. The fountain is our way to say thank you for all they have done for us and our families. It's not about the destination, it's about the journey. All these years, you are learning about yourself, about your friends, about your heart condition. It's been a heck of a lot of fun."

Will seems to sum up what they all are feeling when he says, Camp has taught me how great the world can be.

When you get so many people who have been through so much, it's the most incredible experience – these will be the guys I remember from my childhood. Camp reminds you that everything is going to be alright."



SHINE ON, KATE! CONT.

Then in true Williams' fashion, she stepped forward and helped Camp Knutson become what it is today: a haven for children and adults with disabilities and medical challenges, and for youth challenged by life experiences of homelessness. She has carefully, deliberately, masterfully thrown her weight into helping create an accepting and welcoming community that blends people of all ages and abilities into a seamless whole.

But "once a teacher, always a teacher," she says, and that curious, giving spirit flowed through her mentoring and training staff and in developing camp programs. Dignity, compassion, respect, service — these are values she modeled, reinforced and instilled in every volunteer, every camper, every staff person. The result is a camp culture that truly, deeply values the gifts of each individual and campers come to believe in themselves in ways that are transformative. As she has designed camp programs through the years, she is quick to point out how they also support second level learning — strengthening life skills that campers can rely on once they are back home facing day-to-day challenges.

Of her time at Camp K, Kate says, "I am grateful for the life that I have had and the gifts that I have been able to share. I love the mission and love what happens here – it is life giving to me. It charges me and gives me hope. I've been blessed."

While her daily duties at Camp K officially came to an end with her retirement in September, she does plan on remaining an active member of the Camp Knutson Advisory Council.

For the next leg of her journey, she says, "I want to do something meaningful. I am still able do a lot of things. I hope I don't slow down." Kate slowing down seems unimaginable.

As she has often told others, "No matter who you are or what you've done, you can continue to bring happiness and purpose to others."

Shine on, Kate!

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