



Volume 34 Issue 1 - June 2023

HIDDEN ACRES REVIEW

Reflections on the early beginnings of HAC - Herb & Shirley Schultz



Herb and Shirley have many memories of the "beginnings" of Hidden Acres Camp. Herb reflected on being officially appointed by the Mission Board of the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference as liaison and being an original member of the Camping Committee/HAC Board, beginning in 1962. Together they recalled that initially a camp had been set up along the banks of the Nith River, however there was a desire to find a more permanent location. The Mission Board had recently opened two new churches, one in London and one in Stratford; they were aware that inner city children in these cities did not have access to the country, and they wanted to create an area of compassionate care and Christian witness to these children. Shirley remembers being part of these first steps, when as a teenager, she and a young adult friend set up a tent and camped with some girls from London on the "river flats" on a farm outside of Wellesley. These were the first steps to creating a camping experience for children from the inner cities of London and Stratford to experience time in the country; the beginnings of a dream that resulted in the creation of Hidden Acres. "Fifty to sixty years ago a lot of rural people wanted to help urban children."

Herb recalls accompanying a few other persons on a cold walk on hard snow in 1962 to look at a desolate farm property to see if it was a suitable place for a summer camp for boys and girls. The decision was made that it was, and in quite rustic conditions the first camp convened that summer. Both Herb and Shirley reflected that no-one could imagine where Hidden Acres would be today. "Hidden Acres started on a shoestring budget with support from families and area churches who even provided meals & transportation." Herb remembers participating in a fundraising Walkathon from Topping to Hidden Acres. "I don't remember how much I raised, but I remember that I raised blisters". Another connection to the camp was in 1971 when Herb and Shirley and two of their young daughters lived in Stonehouse for the month of June, in part to support Big Jim who was living alone in his own small cabin on the camp property. Herb and Shirley also remember fondly that their daughters Jane, Ann and Beth enjoyed time at Hidden Acres summer camp with friends.

Submitted by Joy Wagler

*"With tender loving care
and a vision that involved risk taking -
who could have imagined that not only children,
but teenagers, young adults and seniors,
families of many compositions,
church and community groups,
schools and other institutions,
would come and be nurtured here?
Thanks be to God." Herb and Shirley.*



Photo of the original camping committee: Mike Gerber, Mahlon Leis, Laverne Lichti (original owner of the property), Mahlon Bender & Herb Schultz.

2nd Annual Alumni Gathering

May 19-21 marked the 2nd Annual HAC Alumni gathering. This year we expanded from an Alumni Day to an Alumni Weekend, inviting people to stay in the cabins, retreat rooms, or set up a tent/trailer and around 50 people attended over the course of the weekend. Attendees enjoyed lots of singing, crafts, climbing, canoeing, bird watching and more. A few even swam despite the cooler temperatures. Highlights included a fantastic Crazy All Camp Activity, an unforgettable campfire skit, and lots of great reminiscing and catching up with old friends. A huge thank-you to Cyndi Pugh who made

continued on next page

'Alumni' continued...

every meal a hit. Thanks to everyone who volunteered and made the weekend a success. Mark your calendar for next year's gathering happening in May 2024.

At the Alumni Gathering, Chris Pot, HAC's Executive Director, shared about what's been happening at camp including the challenges that the camp is facing with hiring summer camp staff. Like many places, there is difficulty recruiting enough staff to run our summer programs with one of the main challenges being the wage we offer. Chris reflected on the many benefits that camp has to offer young people and encouraged the alumni community to recall the impact that camp has had on their life and consider supporting the camp in it's efforts to pay a fair and competitive wage to the summer



staff. The challenge was put out for the alumni community to raise \$10,000 to support the increase in summer staff wages either through one-time or monthly donations. Chris also offered an opportunity for the alumni community to think about ways that they could encourage our current summer staff team through praying for them, writing notes of encouragement, providing snacks that they can enjoy throughout the summer or sponsor a special pizza or ice cream social night.

If you're interested in supporting either through a donation or an encouragement, whether alumni or not, contact Chris for more details.

Submitted by the Alumni Association Committee: Josh, Joy, Roxanne, Ryan, Chris & Emily



Busy Spring Season for Outdoor Education

After the last few years of cancelled or limited school trips because of COVID it was unclear what this spring season was going to be like for Outdoor Ed at Hidden Acres. But through the winter months the spring calendar has steadily filled up. This spring we welcome fifteen different school groups from five different school boards as well as one homeschool group. Some have been here previously but many are coming to Hidden Acres for the first time. I started as the Outdoor Ed Director just after the Fall School season finished so it has been months of planning, communications, and development and I am excited to see all the administrative work bloom into six weeks of programming where our spring staff team lead hundreds of students in experiencing all the beauty, fun and learning that Hidden Acres has to offer.

Submitted by Josh Penfold, Outdoor Ed Director

Retreats and Summer Camp Update

This past winter we were able to return to running retreats that we hadn't run since before the pandemic. This return to full programming is exciting and keeps us busy here at camp! In February we had our **Family Day Open House** with over 100 people coming out to enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities, including making delicious pretzels, crafting and doing scavenger hunts around the camp property. **Grandparent and Grandchild Day** was a highlight for all ages! Greg and Carolyn Taylor taught us about the "God of Wonders: Discovering the Creator Through Space," taking us on a grand tour of "local space" through Greg's astrophotography photos. We had 28 grandchildren and 20 grandparents join us for crafts, games and a model rocket launch. On May 1st our **Spring Senior's Retreat** was hosted by the Senior Retreat Committee.

Cathi Watson and Chip Bender from Interfaith Community Counselling Centre joined us to talk about "Unlearning Loneliness: Relearning Community." 33 seniors joined us for a day of intentional connecting and fellowship. We were challenged and encouraged to reach out beyond ourselves and engage in community after some especially lonely years. As the seasons changed from winter to spring, and now spring to summer, we are looking ahead to a full **Summer Camp** season! We are in preparation mode at camp right now. Our spring staff have arrived and are planning lots of fun programming for all of our campers that will come through our nine weeks of summer camps. Our staff are

filled with the energy and anticipation that the weeks of preparation bring before we welcome campers and dive into the busy, magical summer camp season. We are continuing to hire the last of our summer staff team and are excited for them to join us in July and August for two months of fun, faith formation and friendship. If you are interested in working at camp, contact Emily.



Submitted by Emily Taylor, Program Director



Facilities Update

Most of the Stonehouse kitchen has had stainless steel counter tops for quite a few years. After some cracks started to form in the island counter and it was found impractical to repair them, Cress-Ridge Machine was contracted to cover the counter with stainless steel to match the rest. Thanks to Cress-Ridge for donating a portion of the cost!

An ongoing project has been the improvement of our playground area. We have been raising money to add some additional playground equipment that makes it more accessible and gives it a natural feel. The first step was to remove the old shuffleboard courts. It was sad to see them go, but they had become unplayable due to cracks. (We hope to soon have new lines painted in the Focus Shelter so that the games can go on!). We anticipate building a slide (or several) into the hill. While this project will happen in several stages we anticipate adding some new natural play features to the area in the not too distant future.

Submitted by Brent Musser, Facilities & Environmental Stewardship Director

The Annual Bowlathon Continues with Strong Support

This year's Bowlathon was another success with over \$28,600 raised! We had 25 bowlers, with the youngest being seven and the oldest in their 90's, join us at New Hamburg Lanes on March 25th for an afternoon of bowling, pizza, prizes and fun! The money raised is helping us continue moving forward with the playground project, purchase new mattresses for the Hilltop Cabins, upgrade the electrical panel for our water treatment system and add new picnic tables. Thank you to everyone who came out and to everyone who supported the fundraiser.



Welcome to Jessica Wolf

We are excited to share that in February we welcomed Jessica Wolf to our year-round staff team helping with Housekeeping.

cut here and mail in

Membership Application

cut here and mail in

I would like to support the ministry of Hidden Acres by becoming a member of the Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp Association. I agree with the Hidden Acres mission statement which is "to provide a welcoming, peaceful gathering place where diverse groups of people experience life-giving connections with God , one another and nature."

Enclosed is my \$25 membership donation

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

THANK YOU

Many individuals, groups, organizations and businesses give their time, energy and finances to support the mission of Hidden Acres. While we can't list every name of those who help us, here are some of them. Thank you for your support.



The Waterloo Region
Record - Lyle S.
Hallman Foundation
Kids to Camp Fund

We are thankful to have received \$2,500 from the **Waterloo Region Record - Lyle S. Hallman Foundation Kids to Camp Fund** held at Waterloo Region Community Foundation, to go towards camper subsidies this summer. This grant will help us ensure that campers from Waterloo Region as well as Cambridge and North Dumfries will not experience financial barriers preventing them from coming to camp.

Thank You to all of our **MANY wonderful volunteers!**

- The Steinmann Mennonite Youth Group who volunteered to do some spring clean up on the grounds this spring.
- Bruce Bechtel for repairs done on the heater in the Focus Shelter washroom.
- The Property Committee for helping with our Annual Spring Workday. The day included preparing the camp for the summer as well as removing some dead and dying trees.
- Dan Cressman, John Ilett, Justin Hunsberger and Freddy Lapelle who contributed time, expertise and equipment to remove the shuffleboard court in preparation for the development of the new playground.
- Carl Erb and John Iutzi for help with mowing our 22 acres.

Wish-list

If you have any of the following items or expertise and are willing to share them with the camp, please let us know:

- Metal picnic tables or frames
- Pillow Protectors/Mattress Protectors
- Kitchen Blender
- Cedar and/or black walnut logs or posts
- Someone with graphic design experience to help update the maps of camp

Upcoming Events

- **Family Camping Weekend:** June 30 - July 2, 2023
- **Summer Camps:** July 3 - August 30, 2023
- **Rally for Recreation:** October 2023
- **Fall Seniors Retreat:** October 2, 2023
- **Annual General Meeting:** November 21, 2023
- **Family Day Open House:** February 19, 2024

Opportunities to get involved

- Pray for Hidden Acres
- Become a Member (see page 3)
- Help out with a project around camp or coordinate your group (youth, men's/women's, bible study, book club, etc.) to come and help out.
- Volunteer on our Board of Directors or one of our committees (property, seniors retreat, alumni, bowlathon or chicken BBQ)
- Support a camper or Single Mom by making a donation towards a subsidy.

Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp & Retreat Centre

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