

October 2025 - Volume 36 - Issue 2

HIDDEN ACRES REVIEW

An Unlikely Assortment Leads to a Great Impact - from Josh Penfold, Program Director

On the very last day of camp after our final campers have gone home the staff do a clean up blitz before enjoying a final night together called De-Orientation. It's a time of sharing a meal together, sitting around the campfire, singing our favourite camp songs one more time and reflecting on the summer. This year our final meal was an amazing conglomeration of things, a pile on meal to try to use up all the leftovers at the end of the summer. After piling my plate full of this strange assortment of ingredients I looked at it and realized that this meal was an image of our staff team. Like the pile on meal, the staff were an unlikely assortment of ingredients that when brought together became an amazing dish. Though they were a group that worked together and supported one another well, it's unlikely they would have all naturally become friends outside



camp, yet it was their diversity in personality that was a gift to the camp. I was heartened to hear around the campfire that night the many stories of staff supporting one another when things were tough, often finding support from staff they weren't especially close to. They were experiencing life-giving connections with God and one another, just as our mission statement says. God's faithfulness was evident again this summer as we were blessed with a great staff team, fully staffed by the beginning of May, an unusual reality. We had a group of six LITs who ventured into the wilderness for a week-long canoe trip and returned with newly found confidence and leadership skills that they were...

continued on the next page

What Happens at Camp When the Summer is Over? - from Chris Pot, Executive Director

A pretty common question that we are asked each fall is "So now that summer camp is finished, what happens at Hidden Acres?" Some people assume that once summer camp is over, things quiet down and the staff kick back and relax. And while the staff do take some time to rest and refresh, camp stays a busy and active place. Here are some statistics from October 2024-September 2025 of how Hidden Acres is used:

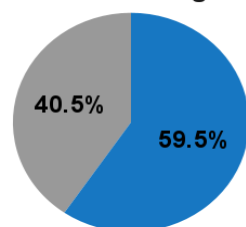
- We welcomed 216 rental groups
- We ran nine weeks of summer camp welcoming 521 campers, 6 LITs and 39 Summer Camp Staff.
- Our LINC programs ran on 63 days and welcomed 281 participants
- We hosted 51 days of school programming in the fall, winter and spring welcoming over 1800 students to camp
- We ran 6 retreats connecting with 185 people.

All of this equals **341 days** where someone was enjoying the camp's 22 acres of sacred space.

This past year the Board of Directors discussed what the right balance is between hosting rental groups and running Hidden Acres programs. The Board wanted to ensure that our programs, which are the active parts of our ministry where we directly impact the lives of those who come and participate in them, weren't being overshadowed by our ministry of providing a place for others to have those direct impacts. Both are important and valuable, but they wanted to set some guidelines for how Hidden Acres was used. In the end the Board determined that we will aim for 60-70% of our capacity available for rentals and 30-40% available for our programs. This past year, the balance was within that range as you can see in the chart.

We are thankful for all of the ways that Hidden Acres has an impact on all who come here. We are thankful to have grown into a place that responds to questions about what happens at camp after the summer with "Lots of things!".

Oct. 2024-Sept. 2025
● Rentals ● Programs



Thank You to the Ontario Trillium Foundation

From our early years Hidden Acres has been intentional about welcoming campers with special needs into its summer camp programs. In 2010, Hidden Acres expanded this welcome and started Supported Young Adults Camp (SYAC) as a way of providing a summer camp experience for young adults who still wanted to come to camp but were too old for our traditional summer camp programs. In the late 2010's, many SYAC campers and families began asking us about whether we could offer more programming throughout the year. At the time we felt we did not have the capacity but when COVID hit and our buildings largely sat empty we started the Community, Life And Skills Program (CLASP). It was a day program that ran once a week throughout the year to provide a place for young adults to connect, learn and grow together. As the demand for SYAC and CLASP grew, we explored how we could continue to increase our capacity for both programs which led to submitting an



application for a Resilient Communities Fund Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We were successful, and received a grant of \$63,300.

Thanks to the grant, over the last 18 months our programs for young adults with special needs

have developed and grown. SYAC, continues to be a summer camp program running for two weeks each summer, however CLASP turned into LINC (Learning IN Community). LINC includes two day programs, LINC-Connect and LINC-Skills, a fall and winter LINC-Retreat to provide respite care for young adults and their families and LINC-Summer, a week-long life and leadership skills development program.



Now that the work of the grant is complete, we are thankful that we can say that the outcomes of the grant have been achieved. We have increased the capacity of our programs serving young adults with special needs and their families and created new revenue streams for the camp. We are grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for recognizing the value of these programs both for Hidden Acres and for the young adults and their families and we are excited to continue to offer these important programs for many years to come.

An Unlikely Assortment...continued

...able to put into practice working alongside the summer staff.

We were blessed with 527 campers, many of them returning campers excited to be back in the safe, fun and welcoming setting of camp.

A fond memory I have of this summer is from an overnight week that had a lot of return campers. At Focus, our daily time for spiritual exploration, we often need to teach song actions to campers the first day or two and by the end of the week they are confidently singing and doing the actions. This particular week most of the campers knew the songs and on Monday were singing with a typical Friday gusto. It was encouraging to see so many campers feeling so at home at camp.

I also want to share some summer staff reflections from the summer. Bree, a cabin leader, says "I love working here and I feel like at another summer job like a fast food restaurant, I wouldn't get the same feeling that I have here, the sense of community, the people, and the fun, it's just as fun as being a camper."

Mya, our Program Coordinator, says "I've never worked in a more supportive environment! I felt like I was able to wrestle through what it meant to serve God and our community, even when I felt weak sometimes, but also know that God or camp wasn't requiring me to be perfect in order to be loved. It was cool to be able to seek support, make mistakes, and grow, while also being encouraged in my giftings."

Henry, a cabin leader, appreciated living in a phone free camp environment so much this summer that it inspired him and some friends to delete their social media from their phone and use that time for things like reading and going on walks.

Lauren, our waterfront director, reflected on the staff's impact this summer, saying "You don't always see the outcomes of what you put into the world, but every now and again you get a glimpse of something that you started to change, and that's always really fun and encouraging when you see the little bit of impact you made, sometimes it's just one person, but you know that for every one that you see there's that many more that you don't."

This summer we have seen little glimpses of the impact that we've had on campers, but we trust that there are countless stories that we haven't heard of God working in the lives of campers and staff.



Year-Round Staff Updates

This year saw some staff transitions at camp.

Margaret Wolf and Jessica Wolf ended their time as a part of the Housekeeping team. Thank you Margaret and Jessica for all of your help over the last couple of years.



Joining us to help with Housekeeping is **Esperance Nyantungane**. She joined us in July and has been a great addition to the team.

In September, **CC Weber** returned to school to complete a master's degree and has wrapped up her time coordinating our LINC program. We are grateful to CC for providing leadership to the change from CLASP to LINC and the growth of the program that resulted from the Resilient Communities Fund Grant through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. You can read more on LINC and the grant on the previous page.



Stepping into the role of LINC Coordinator this fall is **Cassie Lebold**. Cassie is no stranger to Hidden Acres as she has worked in many different roles over six summers of camp as well as coordinating CLASP in 2021 & 2022.

Cassie will also be filling in for our Assistant Program Director, Emily Riegert, as she begins maternity leave in January. Congratulations to Emily and welcome back Cassie!



Some Improvements are Less Glamorous Than Others

Over the course of this past year we have made a number of improvements to camp. Some of them are visible and very tangibly help those who visit Hidden Acres while others are less obvious and unless we told you, you probably wouldn't know they happened. One of those hidden upgrades that is less glamorous than a new sports court or climbing tower is a new septic tank for the brown staff house where Brent & Mary Anne Musser and their family live. We want to thank Aaron Jantzi and Rhino Excavating for generously supporting and completing this project.



Chicken BBQ & Pie Auction Update

The weather was perfect for this year's BBQ and Pie Auction, and we really appreciated the many people and their enthusiasm to support Hidden Acres. At the BBQ we served approximately 740 meals and raised over \$10,000.

This year's pie auction raised over \$6,400 from 72 pies. We had the unique experience of someone purchasing a \$425 pie and then donating it back to the auction, where it was purchased by another bidder for \$400. This resulted in an elderberry pie being the highest selling pie of the evening raising \$825!

Thank you to everyone who came out and helped raise over \$16,000 in support of our summer camp ministry.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM, CUT IT OFF AND MAIL IT TO THE CAMP OR FILL IT OUT ELECTRONICALLY USING THE QR CODE

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 of "providing a welcoming, peaceful gathering place where diverse groups of people experience life-giving connections with God, one another and nature." My annual contribution as a member is:

- ☐ A minimum donation of \$25
- ☐ Serving on a Hidden Acres Committee (Alumni, Property, Chicken BBQ, Bowlathon, Board of Directors or Seniors Retreat)
- ☐ Volunteering a minimum of 10 hours in the year.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____





We are grateful for, and appreciate the support of the many individuals, groups, organizations and businesses that give their time, energy and finances to support the mission of Hidden Acres.

- **Terry Gitzel** - for donating his time to take the old wooden Stonehouse dining room tables and turn them into new desks and shelves for the staff to use in the office.
- **Esperance Nyantungane** - for donating a dryer.
- **George Poole** - for donating his time to help with various electrical tasks around the camp as well as installing new 30 and 15 amp outlets in our camping area.
- **Brad Mavin** - for donating his time to repair the Woodhouse Oven.
- **Mark, Andrea and Ian Cole** - for donating their time to repair the Focus Shelter swing set.
- **Dorothy Martin** - for donating handmade quilts for retreat centre beds.



School Sisters of Notre Dame Legacy Fund

We are thankful for the **School Sisters of Notre Dame Legacy Fund** who gifted **\$5,445** towards camper subsidies this summer through **The Waterloo Region Record - Lyle S. Hallman Foundation Kids to Camp Fund**.



Waterloo Region Community Fund
Douglas Mitten Endowment Fund
School Sisters of Notre Dame Legacy Fund
Weiland Family Foundation Fund

We are thankful for the following funds, held at **Waterloo Region Community Foundation**, for their support of Single Moms Camp:



Lily, Nicole & Greg Hallman Family Fund

- **Waterloo Region Community Fund**
- **Douglas Mitten Endowment Fund**
- **School Sisters of Notre Dame Legacy Fund**
- **Weiland Family Foundation Fund**
- **Lily, Nicole & Greg Hallman Family Fund**

Together, their support totalled **\$30,900**.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED:

- Bring your youth group, bible study, staff team, etc. to help with a project or work day at camp.
- Volunteer on a committee or the Board of Directors.
- Pray for Hidden Acres and its staff team.
- Help Hidden Acres continue making an impact in the lives of thousands of people each year by making a donation towards Summer Camp, Single Moms Camp or a general donation.

WISHLIST

- Bagless vacuum cleaner in good working condition
- Composite Adirondack/Muskoka chairs and benches
- A volunteer(s) to sew new couch cushion covers for the Woodhouse
- Single or double burner camping stove
- Picnic tables
- New or in good condition volleyballs, soccer balls, basketballs and footballs.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **LINC Connect & Skills:** Mondays & Tuesdays from September to May
- **Men's Retreat:** November 28-29, 2025
- **Annual General Meeting:** December 2, 2025
- **Office Closed for Christmas:** Dec. 25-26 & Jan. 1-2
- **Family Day Open House:** February 16, 2026
- **Winter LINC Retreat:** March 2-4, 2026
- **Grandparent & Grandchild Day:** March 16, 2026



We are proud to be a part of the following associations:



CHECK US OUT ON

