

2026 Summer Campers

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HIDDEN ACRES REVIEW

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Join in God's Circle of Peace - Summer Camp 2026

On the back of this year's staff shirt is the lyric "Join in God's circle of peace" from the song Be A Sower that we often sing during Focus.

As a business, Hidden Acres continues to work on increasing our camper retention through great programming, stellar staff and good customer service. It has been encouraging that our registration and retention numbers are beginning to return to pre COVID numbers. This summer we had 568 campers over nine weeks with about 57% returning campers. It is so good to have campers return to camp. As a ministry, however, we are excited to welcome new campers and offer them an opportunity, as our mission states, to experience life-giving connections with God, one another and nature. Whether a returning or new camper, all were invited this summer to join in God's circle of peace.



2026 Summer Camp Staff Team

This year we hired 45 summer staff. Of those hired 55% of them were either returning staff or had participated in our LIT program the summer before and already had practical experience at camp. This is nearly double the number from two years ago. These numbers are all encouraging signs that Hidden Acres continues to move in a positive direction after weathering the challenges of COVID.

This summer was Naomi Dejan's third summer working as the Inclusion Program Facilitator. She shares about the impact of camp:



Over the past three summers, Hidden Acres has taught me so much about how to care for others and how to be cared for by others in return. My role as Inclusion Program Facilitator has been one of the most fulfilling and rewarding gifts God has given me. The opportunity to support the campers and families involved in our inclusion program, build strong relationships over the years, and foster trust that Hidden Acres will care for their children's needs is a privilege I do not take for granted and is deeply precious to me. This camp has seen me through many phases of my life and allowed me to grow as a person, in my education, and in my faith. The community the staff have built is full of warmth, empathy, encouragement, and fun; the time we spend together is just as amazing as the time we share with our campers! Each season I am invited back to Hidden Acres reinforces my love for God and for the community here. I am incredibly thankful for that gift.

Simon Bolhous, also in his third year on staff, was the LIT (Leader In Training) Director this summer.

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Creating Space

by Amanda Pot

"The first day I walked and talked to God…the second day I discovered two seats had been placed in the centre, so I sat down. I was sitting on one bench and God was sitting on the other….I was drawn to that space again on the third day."

- From a mom who came to Single Moms Camp in August about her experience with the new Labyrinth

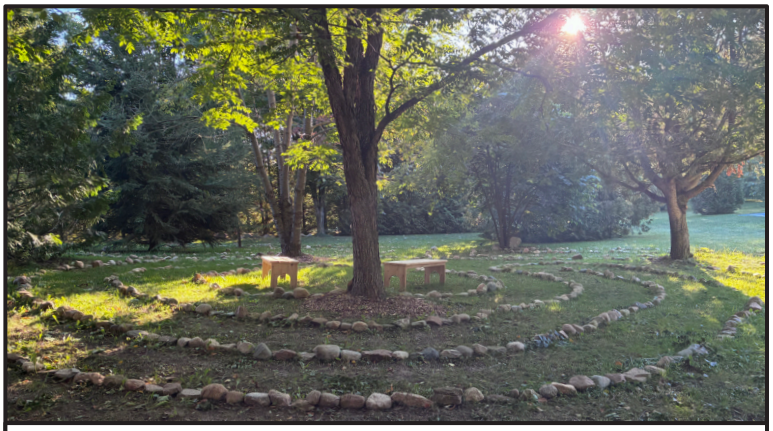
Another summer has passed where we could provide space for Single Moms and their children to land. I was so deeply reminded, again, of how important it is to understand the importance of just providing space. So often we feel the need to fill space with words, when, most often, what people need is space to just be. Space to breathe, sit, walk, wonder, cry, scream. Space to sit in what is and space to hope for what can be.

One place we could provide for them this year, for the first time, was the newly created Labyrinth. Unlike a traditional maze (which has dead ends and forces you to solve a puzzle), a traditional labyrinth has a single, continuous path that leads from an outer entrance to a central point. It's used for walking meditation, mindfulness, and prayer, or, as I like to think of it 'praying with your feet'.

Many Moms, and even kids (who often ran through it thinking it was a fun game, which is ok!), took the time to walk through it, and a few of them chose to do it multiple times because they found it grounding and comforting. A common theme when listening to the Moms reflect this year was just that, many had a deep appreciation of the space created for them to settle into their thoughts and to have moments of not just rest but release. They walk away not being 'fixed', but having felt a sense of grounding and hope from a space that held all that they carry.



August Single Moms Camp Group Photo



The Labyrinth in the Arboretum

The labyrinth has been a project that has been many years in the making. We are very thankful for the experience and expertise that Patricia Wagler shared with the camp as she designed and laid out the path with the support of Amanda Pot and Mary Anne Musser. Patricia, Amanda and Mary Anne along with some of the 'camp kids', Hana, Ben, Theo, Cora and Evie, then spent many hours gathering stones from a neighbours rock pile and from the Lebold farm just outside of Wellesley, and laying them out to mark the path. After the paths were complete, Patricia's husband Larry built two cedar benches to go in the centre as well as a sign to mark the entrance.

Thank you to Patricia, Larry, Amanda, Mary Anne, the camp kids and to our neighbour Bonnie Bean and Terry & Sue Lebold.

While the labyrinth is not open to the general public at this time, those who are visiting camp for a group or personal retreat are welcome to journey through it.



Join in God's Circle of Peace continued...

He shares about his experience of working at camp:

What camp has been to me could be summed up in how I have grown and how I've changed. During my time at camp I've become more confident in being a leader, improvising, working with kids in all situations, sharing my faith, and even working inside of a team. I have taken so much away from my experience at camp that will add to so many other places in my life and continue to benefit me and the people around me, but what camp has done most for me is what I've seen in others. While I was at camp I saw campers learning to love singing silly camp songs, but also faith based songs. I've seen campers who have never opened a Bible before ask the camp pastor big questions about the character of God. Staff have grown at camp and shared their testimony because of how camp has shaped their lives. The biggest thing that I take away from my time at Hidden Acres is seeing how God continues to move in places where his people actively work for his good and work to seek him. My experience at camp has encouraged me to give that to others.

Though summer camp is a significant part of our ministry at camp, it's not the only thing happening over the summer months. On the weekends between camp weeks there are rental groups, church camping and family reunions happening. This year we hosted our family camping weekend over Labour Day weekend rather than the traditional July long weekend allowing campers to camp one extra night. Summers at Hidden Acres are full, full with many people and groups, full of fun and full of holy moments.

2026 Chicken BBQ

It was another great year for the Chicken BBQ and Pie Auction. We served 713 meals raising just over $9500 to support our summer camp ministries and the 66 pies that were auctioned off raised a further $6685!Thank you to everyone who purchased a ticket and bid for a pie. We also want to thank the 80 volunteers who help make the event happen and to all of the local businesses, organizations and individuals who gave their support: BW Feed & Seed, Erb Transport, Gerber Auctions, Mackay's No Frills, Pfennings Organic Farms, Ropp's Powerwash, Wellesley Apple Products, Anna Mae's Bakery, Guenther's Bakery, Maple Leaf Poultry, New Hamburg Home Hardware, Schmidtsville Restraurant, Schummhaven Farms, Vivi's Cafe, Brenda Poole, Nith Valley Mennonite Church, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Schmidt's Bulk Pantry, Shantz Mennonite Church, Stirling Ave. Mennonite Church & Wellesley Mennonite Church.



BECOME A MEMBER OF THE HIDDEN ACRES ASSOCIATION

As a member you're part of the association that cares for and stewards Hidden Acres, meaning you get a real voice and vote in how the camp operates. Becoming a member is easy, you just need to align with our mission and core values and make an annual contribution, which can be as simple as either a minimum $25 donation, volunteering 10 hours of your time, or serving on the Board of Directors or a committee. You can get more information or sign up to become a member by scanning the QR code to the left. Come be part of the community that keeps Hidden Acres thriving. If you're making a donation as a part of your renewal, scan the QR code to the right.

Membership Application

Make a Donation

In Memory

Two long-time supporters and members of Hidden Acres passed away this year. Both **Howard Lebold** and **Amsey Martin** have left a legacy at Hidden Acres that spans multiple generations with many of their children and grandchildren being connected to camp in some capacity over the years. We're thankful to their contributions and participation in many retreats, committees, fundraisers and events over many decades.

Thank You!

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

- **Kindred Credit Union:** for donating water bottles, notebooks and other items helping to equip our summer camp staff for their work at camp, and for making a donation towards camper subsidies.
- **Dino Trucking and Wayne Hoffman:** to Dino Trucking for donating sand to refresh the beach volleyball courts and to Wayne for helping to spread the sand out on the courts.
- **Gerry Pot & John Iutzi:** For helping to mow the lawn throughout the spring, summer and fall.
- **Stratford CRC SERVE Youth**: Over the course of a week in early July four different groups of youth from CRC churches across southwestern Ontario came and sanded, primed and painted the Hilltop Cabins.





OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED:

- Bring your youth group, bible study group, staff team, etc. to help with a project or work day at camp.
- Volunteer on a committee or on 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, camper subsidies, Single Moms Camp, a designated donation towards a project or a general donation to be used where most needed.

WISH LIST

- 40-50" Flat screen TV(s) for electronic display boards
- Picnic tables
- New or in good condition volleyballs, soccer balls, basketballs and footballs.
- A Terrarium or Aquarium
- Good quality, gently used couches/sofas

IMPORTANT DATES

- **LINC Connect & Skills:** Mon./Tues., Sept. to May
- **Annual General Meeting:** December 1
- **Family Day Open House:** February 15
- **Winter LINC Retreat:** March 1 - 3
- **Grandparent & Grandchild Day:** March 15
- **Spring Seniors Retreat:** April 19
- **Chicken BBQ & Pie Auction:** June 8

HIDDEN ACRES Mennonite Camp & Retreat Centre

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

CHECK US OUT ON

1921 Line 37, New Hamburg, ON, N3A 4B5 -- info@hiddenacres.ca -- www.hiddenacres.ca -- 519-625-8602