



CAMP KNUTSON

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICE OF MINNESOTA

Annual Report 2015

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.



FULL CIRCLE

Inclusion. Belonging. To enjoy life, friends, be carefree. It is what many of us long for and wish for our children to experience in their childhood. To be connected and part of something — to laugh and play, share our lives with one another. To find self-acceptance.

For young **Katie Kacmarsky** inclusion and belonging wasn't always an easy place to find. As a young teen in the early '90s, Katie was one of the pioneering campers for the first American Academy of Dermatology skin camp at Camp Knutson. It meant having epidermolysis bullosa (EB) wasn't the first thing other kids noticed about her. It gave her a place to belong, to be included for all of who she was, and could be.

Epidermolysis Bullosa is a skin condition that causes blistering when skin encounters any friction. Simple tasks can lead to painful blistering and open wounds. Having visible differences meant stares and questions for young Katie. But at Camp K, she was free from that for a while and could relax into just being a kid at summer camp. It gave her a chance to connect with other kids her age who were facing similar challenges. A place where no one stared, and everyone was accepted and included.

Preteen years can be difficult to navigate. At a time when young people are at a stage of naturally differentiating from their families, exploring who they want to be and looking to align themselves with like-minded friends, being different can change the way a young person feels about who they are at the core. Today, Katie says her summers spent at Camp Knutson were instrumental in helping her come to terms with having EB and helped her navigate her world with friends who truly understood.

A couple of years ago, Camp Knutson was top of mind as Katie searched for a summer camp for her son, **Ethan**, who also has EB. She was thrilled to find that Camp K was still in operation and without hesitation, knew that was where she wanted Ethan to go.

“Without question, that was where Ethan needed to be. I wanted him to have the same experiences I had.”

Out came the photos and yearbooks and memorabilia of Katie's summers at Camp Knutson, carefully saved all these years. Now, photos of Ethan from this past summer at Camp K show a young man smiling, hands held high in a gesture of triumph.

continued on the back...



A YEAR OF CHANGE

In 2015 we began the changing of the guard here at Camp K. I'm pleased to report that we hired new camp director, Jared Griffin, and administrative assistant, Maria Holmen, and most recently, Caitlin Malin as our new program coordinator. This past year has given me the opportunity to mentor our new personnel and prepare a smooth transition as the baton of leadership is handed over.

To everyone whom I have met here over the years both professionally and personally, I want to say thank you for your support and for believing in our mission to serve campers with identified needs. I began my journey here in 1988 and so after 28 years I have decided to leave camp this spring on April 15, 2016. For my family, wife, Beth, and my two girls who grew up here at camp, this is a bittersweet time. It is always difficult to say goodbye to this magnificent place; I did it once before in 1996 when I left for two summers and it feels much the same today.

It has been a blessing to be here and what a wonderful journey it has been. Camp Knutson has changed in so many positive ways from the rebuilding of camp to the ability to serve more campers than ever before. My deep appreciation goes out to all my loyal staff and to all of you for making my career here at Camp Knutson an experience of a lifetime.



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



NIGHT UNDER THE STARS

Thank you to all the “Camp Knutson Volunteers” for your time and effort this year. The “Night Under the Stars” fundraising event was a huge success! The theme All That Jazz made for a stylish night of fun and fundraising. Over \$80,000 was raised to serve children with identified needs.



ICE TEE OPEN

Winter at its best! – The 14th Ice Tee open was held at Moonlite Bay in Crosslake. The annual fundraiser brought in \$27,000 to support Camp Knutson’s campers.

The challenging golf course on ice was designed by Golden Eagle Golf Course and enjoyed by over 120 golfers this year. Our appreciation to our 25 Club members — donors who gave \$500 to support the Ice Tee Open. Many thanks to the participants in the Silent Auction.



TASTING LUNCHEON



DREW, NOLAN & JARED

Angel Flight – It was a stormy day in July when young Nolan Krause arrived at the Brainerd airport en route to Camp Knutson. “I thought that I could fly on a stormy day because I’m 10 now,” the brave trooper stated. The flight was a little scary for him he admitted, “I was a little shivery and also excited.”

Strong head winds forced seasoned angel flight pilot Drew Gerling to alter the flight pattern as needed after he picked up Nolan from Battle Creek, MI. Drew has been volunteering flying for Odayin heart camps since 2004. “It’s a good excuse to fly and to be of service as well,” he said.

Both pilot and camper were welcomed by Jared Griffin when they arrived at the Brainerd airport.



ZION CHURCH OF AMOR VOLUNTEERS



PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Created by volunteers, **Where Spirits Fly** is a history of Camp Knutson in photo-rich coffee table format, celebrating Camp Knutson and the kids it serves.

Books are available on the Camp Knutson Website: www.campknutson.org

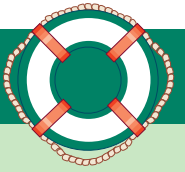


MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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 kids. We truly couldn’t do it without your generosity and great care.



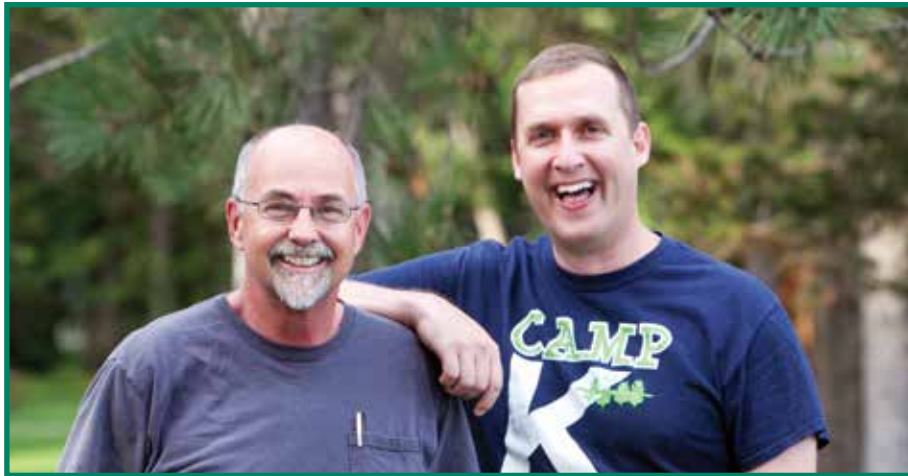
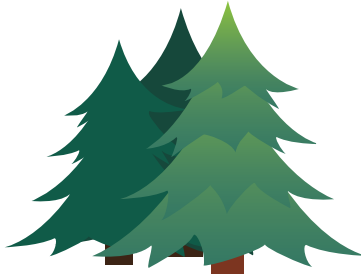
CAMP K ANNUAL REPORT 2015



STAFF TRANSITIONS

This year will be one of transition for Camp Knutson as both Senior Director, Rob Larson, and Assistant Director, Mary Kate Williams, prepare to retire.

Camp Director, Jared Griffin, and Program Coordinator, Caitlin Malin, are in full swing working alongside camp veterans Rob and Kate to make the transition a seamless and joyful occasion.



JARED GRIFFIN

Camp Director

Jared Griffin is camp's new director. He has been onboard since June and has been working closely with senior camp director, Rob Larson. Jared is a seasoned camp leader. He is joining us after several years of working as the program director for a special needs camp near the boundary waters.

Jared also has a background as a special education teacher. Jared and his wife, Jo, met while working at a summer camp. Jo is an occupational therapist now working in the Brainerd area. They will be welcoming their first baby this May. We are very happy and excited to welcome the Griffins to Camp Knutson!

CAITLIN MALIN

Program Coordinator

It's our pleasure to announce that Caitlin Malin has accepted the position of year-round Program Coordinator at Camp Knutson. Caitlin has been with camp for the past three summers as an activities coordinator and program counselor.

She has a Bachelor's Degree in Therapeutic Recreation from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse with a focus on Child Life. Caitlin will work alongside Mary "Kate" Williams, our Assistant Camp Director.



ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT



We had another stellar year for our campers! The Camp Knutson staff did an outstanding job and we so appreciate the loyalty and enthusiasm they bring each summer.

The following is a quote from a visiting staff member. Jeff's words tell the story and impact of our Camp Knutson summer staff.

"After five years of coming up with Camp Odayin, I thought I could not be more impressed each year by Camp K staff, but I am. To put it simply, if there were more people like y'all in the world it would be a better place. I have never seen kids grow so much in one week, and it happens every year at Camp K."

- Jeff "the wannabe Camp K counselor"

Our challenge every year is to create innovations which spark our camper's interest and enthusiasm. This year we provided new evening themes and interesting new twists to morning activities such as: using #10 cans for popping corn over an open campfire, taking an "Expedition to Mars" at the trust course, new archery games, fishing contests, nature games with a focus on Camp K's trees and vegetation, and more.

We are also so grateful to our Camp Knutson volunteers, all the men and women who so generously share their time and gifts with Camp K. Our core of volunteers continues to "be there" for us in so many ways. We look forward to their presence with enthusiasm as they bring an added dimension to our tailgate dinners with campers, helping to oversee our children with autism in their nightly "bike-a-thon," teaching beading during craft time, to mention only a few activities in which they participate.



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 Barbara Anderson
 Jim & Linnea Anderson
 Andy's Crosslake
 The Animal House
 Aunt Bea's Pantry
 Valerie Ayers
 Jim & Mary Bacha
 Bar Harbor Supper Club
 Glen Belgum
 Bertha Boatworks
 Big Axe Brewing Company
 Jerry & Sandy Bilski
 Mike & Jackie Bilski
 Andrea & Chuck Duddingston
 Birch Breeze Pottery
 Blue Paisley
 Booth Office Supply
 Borderview Lodge
 Brainerd International Speedway
 JoAnn Braun
 Breezy Point Resort
 Joe & Mardy Brodil
 Penny Bryce
 Carlson Hardware of Nisswa
 Cash Wise Liquor
 Cedar Chest
 Chanhassen Dinner Theatre
 The Chocolate Ox
 Christmas Point
 Judy Clarke
 Coco & Co
 College City Beverage, Inc
 Kelly & Mary Conger
 The Cottage Place
 Country Doc Veterinary Clinic
 Country Works
 Crosslake Auto Body
 Crosslake Dairy Queen
 Crosslake Dental
 Crosslake Hair Company
 Crosslake "Hookers"
 Crosslake Lutheran Stampers
 Crosswoods Golf
 Crow Wings Cycleworks
 Custom Comfort Beds
 Cyrus Swann Pottery & Fine Art
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 Eagle's Landing Golf Club
 Elite Detailing Auto & Boat
 Emily Greens Golf Course
 Hans & Sharon Engman
 Mike & Madelyn Erickson
 Expressions Shoe Center
 Dave & Joyce Fleck
 John & Carolyn Forney
 John & Cathie Foster
 Friday Morning Coffee Group
 Dennie & Sheila Fry
 Fun Sisters
 Generations Law Office
 June & Marlin Gens
 Ben & Jill Gibbs
 Grand Casino Mille Lacs
 Grand Champion Meats
 Grand View Lodge
 Great Furniture Gallery
 Karin Grossman
 Emily Gunn
 Guthrie Theater

Tom & Monica Hammersten
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 Lakes Area Gallery & Frame Shoppe
 Lakes Latte
 Lands End Development LLC
 Landsburg Nursery
 Larson Group Real Estate
 Whitey & Kathy Larson
 Latte' Da Coffee and Gifts
 Jeff & Jan Laurel
 Leisure Day Rental at Al's Marine
 Leslie's
 Dr. Linda Lewis
 Roberta & Ruth Link
 Loide' Oils & Vinegars, Nisswa
 Terry & Barb Lowe
 Lundrigans Clothing - Crosslake
 Lundrigans Clothing - Nisswa
 Manhattan Beach
 John Manning
 Martin's Sport Shop
 Dan & Caroline Mason
 Massie Creek
 Maucieri's
 Meg's Cabin
 Dale & Sandra Melberg
 Merritt Jewelers
 Moonlite Bay
 Moonlite Liquors
 Moonlite Square Conv Store
 John & Kathy Morgan
 Judy Morgan
 Moxy Hair Studio Nisswa
 Lincoln & Holly Mueller
 Murray Properties, Inc
 Natural Tones
 Herb & Lori Nelson
 Jon & Susan Newsome
 Nordic Haus
 North American Banking
 Northland Pet Lodge
 Northwoods Inne
 Norway Ridge Supper Club
 Old Log Theater
 Karin Olson
 Lynn Olson
 Mary Ann & Chris Olson
 Jon & Carla Parrington
 Pequot Eye Center
 Pequot Lakes Snap Fitness
 Pine Peaks Gifts
 Pine River Riding Stables
 Prairie Bay Grill & Catering
 Jim & Pat Postlewaite
 Arlys Precht
 Rafferty's Pizza Restaurant
 Rapid River Water Park /
 Comfort Suites
 Jon Rappath & Stephanie Haider
 Don & Sharon Rother
 Rustica Home Furnishings
 Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge
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 Seeds of Sommer
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 Wes Hanson Builders
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 Whitefish Properties LLC
 Wild Daisy
 Wildwedge Golf & RV Park
 Wind Water Wheels
 Xcel Energy
 Zorbaz On The Lake

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 Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church,
 Minneapolis
 Bethel Lutheran Church, Brainerd
 Bethel Lutheran Church Women,
 Battle Lake
 Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aitkin
 Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brainerd
 Cambridge Evangelical Lutheran
 Church, Cambridge
 Cormorant Lutheran Church,

Lake Park
 Crosslake Lutheran Church, Crosslake
 East Chain Lutheran Church,
 Blue Earth
 First Lutheran Church, Aitkin
 First Lutheran Church, Brainerd
 First Lutheran Church, Little Falls
 First Presbyterian Church,
 Redwood Falls
 Glenwood Lutheran Church,
 Glenwood
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 Pequot Lakes
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 Hazel Run Lutheran Church,
 Hazel Run
 Hope Lutheran Church, Minneapolis
 Hope Lutheran Church Women,
 Walker
 Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Baxter
 Mission of the Cross Ladies Guild,
 Crosslake
 New Life Lutheran Church, Rothsay
 Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Outing
 St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran
 Church, Le Center
 St. Paul Lutheran Church, Crookston
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Brainerd
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Wanamingo
 Zion Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids
 Zion Lutheran Church, Milaca
 Zion Lutheran Church of Markville
 Women, Markville

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 Gary Swoverland
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*deceased



TO REMEMBER ...

Curtis Austin
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Lydia Brynildson
Glenn E. Bakke

Gertrude Buchman
David & Karen Jensen

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Jean An Sprague

Irene Sunt
Virginia A. Peters

Mildred Thacker
North American
Banking Company

TO HONOR ...

Katie & Amy Bierlein
Leonard A. Bierlein
Edna J. Mumm

**Gerald A Bilski's
80th Birthday**
Sandra R. Adducci
Gerald A. Bilski
Robert E. Krammer
Pamela M. Traeger

Joe & Mardy Brodil
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Sharon Corbin's Family
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Casey Stewart

Pauly Polaczyk
Joseph Polaczyk
Mary R. Polaczyk
Amy Sunderland

Linda Renner
James D. Higgins

Janet Strand
Mary Ann Strand

M K Williams
Emily Gunn



THANK YOU FOR YOUR EXTRAORDINARY SUPPORT IN 2015!

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



A SUMMER OF FIRSTS

Tony knows what it is like to have his activities limited by his medical condition. So being able to experience several "firsts" as a teenager was thrilling. This summer, Tony came from the east coast for the AAD skin camp at Camp Knutson and went tubing and horseback riding for the first time in his life. The strong supportive community at Camp K is what Tony says is the best part of his summer experience here. And another first? Playing the piano and singing in the talent show.

CAMP K SUMMER 2016

- May 23** Summer Staff Training Begins
- June 6 - 10** Camp Benedict
- June 12 - 16** Down Syndrome Foundation Camp
- June 19 - 24** "Little Pine"
American Academy of Dermatology
- June 26 - July 1** Camp Hand in Hand I
- July 3 - 8** "Big Trout"
American Academy of Dermatology
- July 11 - 15** Heart Camp I - Camp Odayin
- July 16** Night Under the Stars
- July 18 - 22** Heart Camp II - Camp Odayin
- July 25 - 29** Heart Camp III - Camp Odayin
- July 31 - August 5** Camp Hand in Hand II
- August 7 - 12** Camp Hand in Hand III
- August 14 - 19** Camp Hand in Hand IV
- September 3** Pancake Breakfast
- September 5 - 9** Minneapolis Community Group



FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME

EXPENSES

2%
Camp Sales

10%
Administration

17%
Special Events

18%
Facilities / Equipment

27%
Gifts / Grants

19%
Program

54%
Camper Fees

53%
Staff

CAMP 2015 INCOME & EXPENSES

2015 Camp K Advisory Committee

Char Erickson
Dick Erickson
Dave Fischer
Jared Griffin
Deb James
Steven James
Judith Jopp
Rob Larson
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 2015 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 Diseases
- Families affected by HIV / AIDS



WISH LIST FOR 2016

New Boat Lift
Tubes for Tubing
Fencing for Beach Path
Archery Equipment - Bows

New Swim Dock
Horseback Riding
Tree Removal & Planting
Bedding for Camper Bunks

Camperships
New / Used SUV
Audio Visual Equipment
Interior & Exterior Painting

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS!



RENNER CABIN

The new “Rennet” cabin was completed and dedicated on June 6th. Our thanks to Jim and Linda Renner for their loyal support and to all the donors who made this new two-story cabin possible. The building is magnificent!

*“I love our new cabin,
it is the best ever.”*

– Camper



FULL CIRCLE CONT.

The power of having a haven where no one stares, where inclusion and belonging are a given, where a young person can be at ease and explore fun activities others take for granted — that is the power and gift of Camp Knutson.

Katie remembers the pure joy of taking the pontoon across the lake for ice cream and being allowed to drive. She remembers afternoons on horseback and hanging out with friends. A time to be carefree, as any kid should be enjoying summer on the lake.

As for Ethan, Katie sees a stronger sense of independence in her son since he came home from Camp Knutson – and a greater connection to other young people in his life. He, too, shares joyous memories of being on the lake, and having fun without worrying about how others will react to how he looks. Being pulled behind the boat on the couch-shaped float where kids can safely go “tubing” was a great joy for Ethan. According to his mother, he talks about his Minnesota summers all year and is excited to be coming back again next year.

“I am so excited to see that they have managed to keep it going. It is so important to have services like this. It made such a difference to me and I am so glad my son can have the same experiences I had. Camp Knutson helped me accept having EB. To be able to just be a kid without being stared at, to just hang out and laugh with my friends.”

Belonging and inclusion can strengthen a young person’s self-acceptance. This is part of what becomes the bedrock of being strong in ourselves as we move through our lives. Camp K is a place that fosters a stronger sense of self that can be hard to find for young people living with medical conditions. For Katie and Ethan, summer brings their story full circle as mother and son share with one another the power of being part of Camp Knutson.

BRIDGING HEARTS

The Lonely Middle: this is what Denise Martin calls the place young adults with mild disabilities often experience as they watch siblings and acquaintances move into their new adult lives. It is not uncommon for young adults with mild disabilities to have no peers and they, essentially, get left behind as other young people their age grow up and move on.

Denise, along with other parents, saw a need to provide services for their adult children experiencing “the lonely middle.” Bridging Hearts was born with a mission to provide high quality social interactions for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Connection to one another is often identified as a key factor in well-being. Bridging Hearts facilitates that social connection so young adults feel connected and have friends.

This year Bridging Hearts had a wonderful retreat at Camp Knutson. Andrew Million, a Camp K staff member, saw the potential for his sister Kelly, a member of Bridging Hearts, to experience the magic of camp. Family connections like this help strengthen Camp K and brought the Bridging Hearts members to the shore of the lake for a fabulous time paddle boarding and enjoying each other’s company in the natural beauty of Camp.

Denise’s daughter, Natalie, stated as she proudly displayed her new stand-up paddle board skills, “this was my summer dream!”