



Do You Call Hidden Acres YOUR Camp?

If you ask my grandchildren who owns Hidden Acres, you may very well hear "my Papa does!" Often I have to remind them that the camp isn't mine or theirs, but I think it's precious that our grandkids love camp so much they talk about it and keep it close to their hearts.

How about you? For many years our motto has been "A place set apart for you." Do you feel like Hidden Acres is a place set apart for you and your family? Do you, your kids, or your grandchildren call Hidden Acres "my camp"? Do they get a sense of ownership of the camp? I hope so, and I hope Hidden Acres feels like a second home. When you turn down Union Avenue and pass the welcome sign, I want you to feel excitement and the anticipation of arriving at camp and visiting your favorite spots. I want a calm and a peace to wash over you. I want you to feel God's presence.



I've worked in the hospitality industry for most of my adult life, and I've watched a lot of training videos. I remember in one video the speaker suggested our end goal shouldn't be becoming the "best of" something. In fact, a better goal and one of the best compliments is being someone's "favorite." I know that Hidden Acres might not be the best at everything, but I hope that we're one of your favorite places to be!

It seems like everywhere I go I run into someone who knows and loves camp! We may recognize each other or simply see Hidden Acres attire and start chatting. I love making connections and hearing your stories. It confirms how many lives have been transformed by Jesus through the ministry of Hidden Acres.

I was just at my granddaughter's baptism on Easter and another girl being baptized shared about ringing the Salvation Bell at Hidden Acres. I was at a 25-year anniversary of an Awana program and they shared about giving out over 1,700 partial scholarships over the years for kids to attend Hidden Acres. I recently attended a funeral of a longtime supporter of Hidden Acres and relatives shared how camp has strengthened their family for generations. While visiting a church in Beresford, SD, I listened as ministry leaders described their unique partnership with the local school system that allowed them to send kids from their community to camp. Then I heard testimonies from some about how camp changed their lives! I could go on and on with stories and I know you could tell many yourself!

Whatever your relationship is with Hidden Acres – summer staff, board member, volunteer, local church staff, donor, retreat guest, or summer camper – I hope you call us YOUR camp! I hope we're your favorite and this place is like a second home. I want you to be an ambassador for Hidden Acres. I pray camp is a refuge for you, a place set apart for your family. I hope you rejoice with us when you hear the testimonies of lives transformed here for the Kingdom. I hope when you talk about Hidden Acres, you start out by saying, "At MY camp..."

Please continue sharing your stories with me and with others. Talk about how Jesus has touched your life and strengthened your faith at Hidden Acres, YOUR camp!



Ministry School & Residency Program Update

By Eric Smith

This May will conclude our fourth and largest year of The Ministry School, our gap year program at camp. Our students have worked incredibly hard throughout the school year, taking classes from Emmaus Bible College, participating in life skills classes and Bible studies, and working alongside every department at camp.

The students have been an incredible blessing to our ministry this year. If you've been to camp recently, you've almost certainly experienced the impact of their ministry. Whether it's washing dishes, running activities, working in the snack shop, or doing any of the other countless tasks that allow our camp to run smoothly, our students have served our ministry faithfully for nine months. While it will be sad to see them leave, we're excited to see where God takes them next!

In addition to our Ministry School students, this year we've added two graduate students in The Residency,

our new one-year master's degree program. The mission of The Residency is to "educate, equip, and empower the next generation of servant-leaders for a lifetime of Christian ministry." Both residents will graduate in May with a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership, serve in leadership on our summer staff, and be commissioned in August to continue a lifetime of Christian ministry wherever God leads them next.

As part of the program, residents serve in a personalized ministry placement throughout the year. One of our residents has been serving at Hidden Acres and the other has been at Ankeny Free Church in youth ministry. We're excited to announce that one resident, Ryan Smith, will continue his ministry within EFCA Central next year, as he was recently hired as a Youth Pastor at Grace Church in Mason City. We're so thankful for Ryan's impact at Hidden Acres and Ankeny Free and are excited to see how God uses him in a lifetime of ministry.

PURSUIT 2022: Summer Camp Curriculum

By Taylor Muge

Our summer camp theme this year is Pursuit, and we'll be learning all about God's pursuit of His people. Our primary Scripture will be the three parables in Luke 15: The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son.

In these parables, Jesus is painting a picture of what our lives look like without God, and it's pretty ugly. The Bible says "we all like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6), and "no one seeks for God" (Romans 3:11). We see that, on our own, we will always run away from God and pursue things that don't satisfy. And just like with the prodigal son, those things eventually run out.

We'll learn that after he spends his dad's money, the prodigal son can't even afford food. He gets so hungry he begins to want pig food! And that's sort of what we look like when we run away from God. He is the only source of true peace and joy, so in comparison all other things just look like pig food.

But every camper this summer will hear the best news on the planet: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). While we were still wandering in the wilderness, pursuing things that look like pig food,

Jesus Christ became one of us in order to find us, lay us on his shoulders, and carry us home. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). We all earned the pig-pen by running away from God, but Jesus earned life forever with God by always following Him. And then He switched places with us. He gave us his reward and took our punishment. He died the death we deserved to give us the life He earned. He took our place in the pig-pen to give us His seat at the celebration feast.

Campers will learn that once you place your faith in Christ, He not only changes your eternal finish line, but He also changes the way you run the race here on earth. The son in the parable realizes how awful his sin is, and he runs away from it. The Bible says that once you trust Jesus to switch places with you, He will also send His Holy Spirit to live inside of you to teach you how to run away from sin and pursue a relationship with God for the rest of your life.

We're so excited to teach this to campers this summer, and we hope you'll join us in praying for changed hearts, impacted lives, and an overwhelming response to the gospel.

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**Summer
Camp
2021
Blessings**

Our summer staff and campers are the heart of our ministry! Please continue to pray for these programs. Here's a recap of God's work in 2021:

- 162 high school & college students as summer staff
- 3500 overnight campers attended a week of camp
- 200 kids attended our new traveling Day Camp
- 185 campers rededicated their life to Christ
- 409 salvation decisions - Thank you, Jesus!