

VAN BUREN YOUTH CAMP

UPDATES FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Greetings from the woods!

Greetings from Great Bear Lake!

What an amazing summer we had at VBYC. Not only did we experience record camper enrollment, we also had the largest staff we've ever had. We hired eight international friends to work with us this summer. Sila & Mehmet from Turkey, El and Beth from England, Katie from Scotland, Klara from the Czech Republic, Kora from Poland, and Camilo from Colombia. Adding these folks to the team we had already gathered from around Michigan and beyond, we had one of the most diverse staff groups we've ever hosted. It was a lot of fun for Hannah and I, as directors, put this team together. We also had two new cooks this summer who served some pretty amazing food. Please take a look at our Meet The Staff page for details of the entire team. So much talent came together to make an amazing summer of Camp magic for campers, counselors, and staff.

892 campers served, 88 camperships awarded, and 9 sessions of regular camp season. Paw Paw High School Band and MYOI Camps at the end of our traditional sessions rounded out our summer. Events planned this fall will keep me busy through October and I am most excited about the Fall Counselor Reunion. A weekend just for the staff and counselors who worked at Camp this summer to come together to reconnect and celebrate our hard work, evaluate the 2023 season, brainstorm for next year, and have some Halloween fun together.

We could not do what we do without the support of our Camp families, staff, board of directors, donors, parents, alumni, and others. So many lovely comments from parents and alumni friends about how impressed they are with what we do here. One parent said "Thank you to staff members for finding creative ways to make each week the BEST week of the summer for the attending campers".

Just a testament to the 1000% the staff and counselors give of themselves each week to make this happen.

Cheers to another great season -
thank you for allowing me to stay in the driver's seat!

Dottie



Catching Up With Alumni

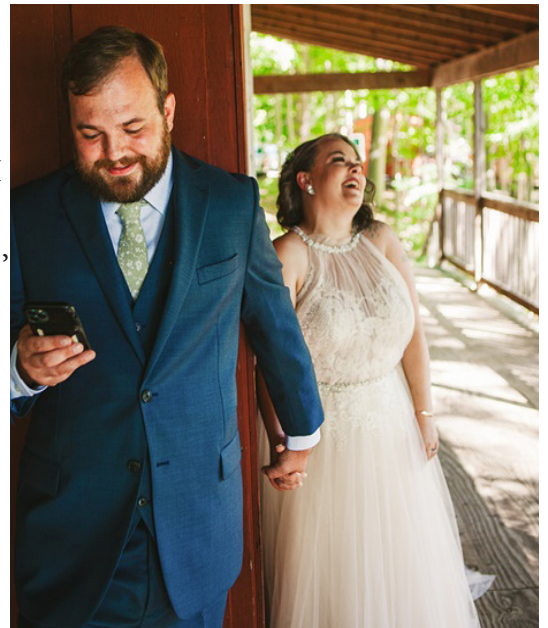


“I was a camper, counselor, and staff member at VBYC from 1962 through 1975, from age 12 to 25. The friends, role models and experiences had a profound impact on my career and my life. What a privilege at age 14 to have the responsibility as a cabin counselor for eight boys, and during all of those staff years, to try to live every day by the motto ‘camper safety first, camper fun second, myself last.’” - Ken Pituch

Pictured here: Ken Pituch and long time friend and mentor Tim Washburn at VBYC in August 2022.

Ken retired in 2022 and is now Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics at the University of Michigan. In the last 20 years of his career he specialized in hospice and palliative care. He was honored this year with the Ilene Beal Courageous Provider Award for providing exceptional family-centered care in circumstances of serious childhood illness.

“I’m BEN HOLT! I started going to camp in 2000 and had so much fun running around as a camper, making new friends, coming up with stories like how I owned a giraffe. (Which I got an award for.) Camp was a way for me to be creative and open without feeling pressure from my normal life. Leadership helped me grow into who I am now. It guided me and gave me opportunities to figure out who I was and how to be a better person. I joined as a staff member in 2011, and spent three years on staff. Two in the kitchen as a “Kitchen Boy” and one teaching Initiatives. Being on staff those summers gave me my closest friends that I still rely on and call every day. Working in the kitchen gave me confidence, taught me how to do the job right, and how to have FUN while working. I joined the Board after having my wedding at Camp in 2021 helping behind the scenes to make the magic of Camp happen. This past winter I decided to open my own bike shop, Jackson Family Cycle in Three Oaks, MI, where I carry on all of the lessons I learned as a camper, counselor, and staff member.”



Life Members:

Bob Gregory
Rick and Katherine Kinas
Russ Reynnells
Tim and Georgie Washburn
Jane Vaught
Joy Conrad

Board of Directors:

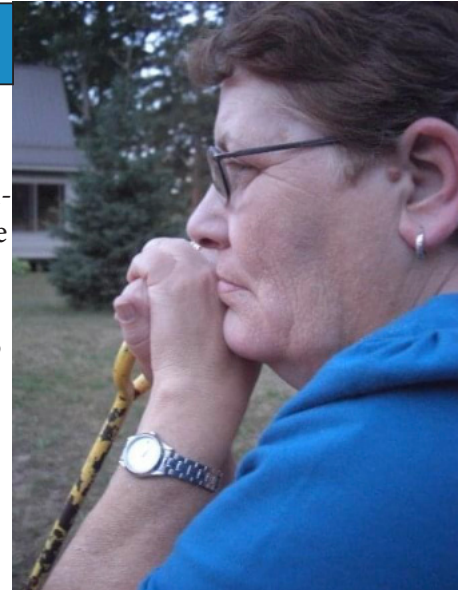
John Tapper (President)
Marge Durm-Hiatt (V.P.)
Sue Knudstrup
Brian Moon
Debra Berkey
Helene Moya

Nick and Abby Leonard
Eli and Danielle Field
Ben Holt
Lucia MacLeod
Dave Field

Remembering Sharon

Sharon and her family were strong supporters of Van Buren Youth Camp for many decades. Her grandfather was an active supporter in the early years of VBYC. Sharon began her time with Van Buren Youth Camp through the Conservation Camp. Sharon loved Camp and during her adult life Sharon became a member of the Van Buren Youth Camp Board of Directors.

During Sharon's time on the VBYC Board she spent many weekends at Camp doing whatever needed to be done. It might be cleaning, sewing curtains, laying tile, even pulling electric wire in the bathhouse. Sharon was generous with her talents bringing much joy and love of Camp to whomever she was with at Camp and beyond. Sharon served as Recording Secretary for the Board.



Sharon attended Central Michigan University and spent her entire career with the Van Buren Intermediate School District in the classroom teaching special needs students. In Sharon's final years she drove a VBISD bus. During Sharon's time in the classroom, she and her colleagues brought students out for a Camp day towards the end of the school year. It was one more way that Sharon shared her love of Camp with others.

In addition to Camp activities, Sharon sang in the Peace Lutheran Choir in South Haven. She also enjoyed collecting nature statues, quilting, basket weaving, antiquing and spending time in northern Michigan with family and friends.

Sharon passed away October 20, 2022 following a short illness.

Build the Campfire Light The Future

Camp needs you. It has been hit hard by rising costs and interest rates. You know that part of what makes Camp special is its affordability, which keeps our life-changing youth programs accessible. The maintenance and upkeep of our 41 structures and 93 acres, rising mortgage interest rates, and inflation are making that increasingly difficult. In these challenging times, your support will help implement sustainable strategies to move forward.

You can make a difference right now. When you help us pay off the \$75,000 mortgage and avoid rising interest costs, you help prepare Van Buren Youth Camp for generations to come.

Your gift now helps ensure that VBYC's 73-year legacy continues. You know that VBYC is a place where all children are free to be who they are, discover their innate talents, explore, grow, and learn.

Focusing on youth leadership, our programs serve Campers without regard to gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious, economic, or cultural background.

You can build the future of Camp. Scan the qr code to go to vbyc.org/donate



Van Buren Youth Camp
12370 45th St.
Bloomingtondale, MI 49026



Van Buren Youth Camp
Growing Leaders Since 1950

Camp Fest!



What a great afternoon to be at camp! Morning brought some fun rain showers but that only made the blue skies and sunshine even better. We had our largest turn out ever. Thank you to our Sponsors and Donor who contributed to the further of VBYC.

Payton and Annabelle, a raising star duo, provided the background music to yummy appetizers, delicious beers and wines followed by our best pulled pork dinner to date. Thanks to major supporter Dan Lance for heading up the kitchen, providing two fabulous dishwashers and sharing his love of cooking with all of us.

Our summer staff and counselors offered activities for the kids while their parents and grandparents enjoyed a relaxed afternoon at camp. Thank you to all who became Sponsors, bought tickets, donated to our silent auction, bought tickets for kids raffle, donated beer and wine, love Camp and continue to share that love.

Here's to Camp Fest 2024!