

# In Touch

from Hidden Acres' Executive Director

July 2009

## A place set apart

by Earl Taylor, Executive Director



Heather and Matt Yoder met while working at camp and were married in our chapel this summer.

*More than we can imagine! Know the song? That is just how I feel about how Hidden Acres has developed over the years.*

*30 years of growth, 30 years of ministry, 30 years of countless counselors and staff who have poured their lives into others, creates many memories and spiritual decisions that I would love to hear about over the next month.*

*Would you drop me a note and share with me your favorite story or life changing encounter with the Almighty that I can pass on to our friends at family camp? I am always looking and listening for one more great story of how Hidden Acres has impacted your life.*

*Email or drop me a note and help me as I share with our church family what the Lord has done through the ministry of the camp. It would be my goal someday to put together a small book of great camp stories and pictures... let me include yours!*

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It was in July, 30 years ago that a group of men and women began to make the push to purchase a piece of property that would eventually be called Hidden Acres. It was the desire of the District Camp Board to “Own our Own Camp!” This board set off across the Central District and visited each of the 45 Free churches, trying to sell acres to individuals and Sunday school classes. By early fall, nearly all 640 acres were subscribed to and a contract was drawn up with the Darrel Johnson family to purchase this ground for \$817,000.00 to be paid in installments over the next ten years. It took a few more years than 10 to pay off this mountain of debt, but by the mid 90’s, Hidden Acres burned their mortgage.

I usually like to talk about all the buildings that have been built in the last 25 years; there has been over 70+ buildings. From 6 rustic tentel cabins with a total of 48 beds, the camp has grown to have over 800 beds. From an above ground swimming pool, the camp has built a gym, an indoor pool, 2 ponds, a climbing tower, a mini-golf, a horse barn and many other program areas.

What excites me the most is the ministry that has happened over the last 30 years. Just last week, a young man who has struggled with life and family came to

paintball camp; it was a last chance attempt to come clean before leaving for the Marine Corp in the fall. It was during this one week of camp that this young man got his life straightened out, and that he sought the Lord and was found. The counselor told me later, “Here was a young man who was fighting for survival with addictions and struggles and left camp on Friday renewed and with new direction for his life.”

Over my 25 years, I have heard this story repeated over and over again. I have watched counselors arrive at camp with little spiritual fire in their belly, and leave after a summer, with “the call” put on their life for full time ministry. I have seen campers attend year after year, and finally, God’s Word becomes alive to them and they begin to grow by leaps and bounds. Marriages have been healed, couples have met and later married, and we have seen many of our dear friends who initiated the vision of the camp, go home to be with the Lord.

Over the last 30 years, we have watched the Lord supply every need just in time, we have witnessed His faithfulness in all situations, and we look forward to His continued blessings. Thank you again for all you have done to help us fulfill the dreams of the founding board of 1979.

## A favorite letter:

### Dear friends at camp:

"Summer '09 began with me moving back to Iowa to look for a better job and gain more experience by volunteering with the youth group I was raised in. Since job searching leaves a lot of free time I have been thinking about life and what I have done with it. I found it emotional to find out that nearly every other memory I have is from Hidden Acres. Never have I found a place that I feel more at home than camp. I want to thank you and all of the staff for such a wonderful experience and please, please, please keep up the good work.

I begged my parents to let me pick up my little sister from camp and as I arrived I was overcome with the same emotions I had coming home from my first semester of college. Chapel was amazing as usual and the battle cries of the quads were intense. I will never forget what I went through at camp and thank God for that. Once again I want to encourage you to keep up the wonderful work you do at Hidden Acres because even though I don't have kids, or wife, or even a girlfriend, I plan on sending my future kids to Hidden Acres to experience what I did." Sincerely,  
Josh Jaarsma, Pella, Iowa

We say, "Thanks for such a great letter. We know that year after year, many counselors leave camp with the same life changing experience."

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## Schlichting Inn Update:

The push is on to finish up the building yet this summer; our first group to use this building will be arriving on July 24th; and we have much to do before they arrive.

We have come a long way since our volunteer sheet rockers helped us out in March. We are now painting the upstairs bedrooms and beginning to lay tile in bathrooms. Carpet is to be laid in at least 10 rooms by July 18th. All the final touches to the rooms should be nearly completed before the group arrives. Nearly all the siding is on and the porches and carports are functional. Our new geothermal pond will be built during July.

However, that is just the upstairs. We have yet to put up any sheetrock in any of the 13 downstairs bedrooms. We are looking for more crews to come and help us get these rooms rocked and mudded.

I am also looking for a few more dollars to finish off the building completely; I am estimating that we will need another \$50,000 to buy the needed furniture and flooring. Use the enclosed envelope to send in your gift. Several of our rooms have been adopted by families and individuals as a memorial to a loved one. Contact Earl to discuss this possibility. 515-230-1083 or earldtaylor@yahoo.com



**Booking the Inn:** We are now taking reservations for the fall months. Contact DeDe to arrange a time for your family or church group to come to camp for a weekend and enjoy the grounds and facilities. Family reunions, senior adult groups, family camps are all welcome to use this new 27 room Inn. Each room will be furnished with a queen size bed along with 2 sets of bunk beds. A few of the rooms will have a small kitchenette with small refrigerator and microwave. Our church family is also encouraged to come and RV or tent camp during our summer and fall weekends. Meals can be provided if pre-arranged with the office prior to your arrival.

## Labor Day Weekend: Celebrating 30 years of ministry.

There are few spots available to sleep, but come and celebrate with us over the Labor Day weekend. There could be a level spot to pitch a tent or set up a pop up without electricity. We are anticipating 600+ campers over the weekend. Tom Nesbitt will be preaching. Doug Peterson and Heartsong will be leading music and having a concert. Pork BBQ on Sunday evening. Frog jumping contest, minnow races, canoe races, tower, paintball, and tours of the new Schlichting Inn will fill the weekend.

Enjoy video clips from the past: the tent chapel, Swen and Ole, Dave and Carol Martin, Suzi Q, and our campers.

## Ten Most Wanted

1. Wildlife art prints
2. Walk in cooler/freezer
3. Gator type vehicle
4. Picnic tables
5. Water slide for lake
6. Trees for around new pond
7. Benches around new pond
8. Lighting around new pond
9. Fountain for the middle of new pond... a big one!!
10. Fish for the new pond