



From the Desk of the Executive Director

This time of year it's fun for me to reflect and be thankful for all God has done at Hidden Acres. One of the things I'm so thankful for is the opportunity to lead the amazing staff here, a group of people who love Jesus and love serving you. You've probably met a handful of them if you visited over the years. Did you know that there's just as many you probably haven't met who work behind the scenes? During a visit you may see our Retreat, Programming, Maintenance, Hospitality, or Food Service teams at work, but there's just as much going on in other departments like Finance & Human Resources, Marketing & Registration, Retail, Student Ministries, Church Relations, Construction & Grounds, Technology, Equine, and Décor & Design. And many of our staff serve in multiple departments. I am constantly blessed by such a hardworking, talented team. I hope you feel blessed by them, too! Please continue to pray for the staff at Hidden Acres and the important task assigned to them to continue to change lives for the glory of God.



Another thing I'm thankful for this year is your financial support. It helps our ministry continue, it helps the camp function and grow, and it allows us to help other people. In 2019 we provided \$43,000 in summer camp scholarships so that everyone who so desired could send their children to camp. Your donations also allowed us to be able to give pastors, missionaries, volunteers, and families in need discounts for Hidden Acres programmed events. Gifts like yours allow us to provide the Wester and Anderson cabins – two small cottages – free of charge to pastors and missionaries looking for a personal retreat. They also help cover the cost of an EFCA Pastors & Wives retreat focused on relaxation, learning fellowship, and worship.

I've mentioned before my focus when I became director in 2016. Earl and DeDe Taylor's vision for building up the camp over their 30 years of service was remarkable. Hidden Acres could not be what it is today without their hard work. When I took over, I felt the camp was in a good place to pause and maintain what we already had. The last three years have been full of improved maintenance procedures, building remodels, and countless grounds improvements. With 2020 on the horizon, I want to continue this trend but include a few more noticeable improvements, too. If you choose to give to Hidden Acres financially, you may be supporting one of these projects.

If you've received this newsletter for a while or follow us on Facebook, you will have seen that we are in the middle of a large Welcome Center project. We are rebuilding the basement walls, adding new egress windows, remodeling the basement interior, and creating a welcoming outdoor space with a basement walk-out. The finished basement will also serve as the nurse's station for summer camp, since the old nurse's station will become two new offices and a new conference room.



Another project slated for 2020 involves improvements to the Main Lodge. We will be adding a new steel roof and new windows, doors and gutters. Our décor team will then move in to make the entryway and fireside area more inviting.

There's also major work planned for the Hickory Grove cabins, or "Girls Cabins." Our plan was to remove the 30-year-old cabins and build something new. However, after hearing of campers' disappointment with not being able to stay in the old cabins, we changed our mind. We'll keep them, but we'll be starting a repair schedule. The first phase will start in the spring as we move cabins 1, 2, and 3 to higher ground between cabins 6 & 7. We'll also build new foundations under cabins 1-6 and give each of them a new set of stairs. If time permits, we'll continue on to roof repairs, windows, and paint throughout 2020.

At this time of year, I hear great non-profit organizations talk about year-end giving and I wonder, "Why not be intentional and encourage our friends of Hidden Acres to do the same for the camp?" I know God has blessed so many of you this year and you all have stories of how important camp has been in your lives and the lives of your friends, relatives, and church family. Hidden Acres is a place set apart for you, and it has been a place where God can show up in a big way and change lives for the Kingdom. If you truly believe, as I do, that camp can make a difference in the life of a child, give rest to a tired parent, strengthen a marriage, or provide a greater Biblical foundation to a summer staffer, then I ask you to support Hidden Acres before year's end. We'll be able to use those funds in 2020 to continue growing, improving, helping, and serving.

Enclosed is an envelope marked "Year End Giving." If you feel led to donate, return your check in this envelope. Make sure you mark the check memo blank with your desired fund. Donating to the "General Fund" will benefit areas like retreat & summer camp scholarships or general operating costs, and writing "Development Fund" will help with current construction projects. If you don't write anything, Hidden Acres will use our judgement to decide where your funds will go.

Thank you again for your support of Hidden Acres. I hope you all have a wonderful time with family this season. Merry Christmas!

Marketing Minute

by Rachelle Heisterkamp

Last newsletter we introduced the online store. Now you can shop from your home for Hidden Acres apparel and gifts. Don't forget to check it out at store.hacamps.org

The store website has been open for just over two months so we wanted to provide some fun facts on how it's performing. So far we've had 1,091 visitors to the site and made 42 sales totaling over \$1,500 worth of merchandise. In November alone we sold over 16 lbs of items which in turn logged over 1,100 miles in delivery trucks.

New stock is in the works, too! We added new sweatpants and stocking hats this month, and we have more items coming for spring and summer. Our Retail Manager, Paige, is currently designing six new stickers, four new drinkware items, new phone accessories, and picture frames. She's also adding three new clothing items for toddlers and infants, three new tops for kids, and over ten new apparel items for adults. Some of these new items were even designed by our Ministry School students!

These are fun facts and figures to think about, but what's the goal here? We would love for a child to ask their friend about their t-shirt, or a coworker to ask you where you got your sweatshirt. What starts as the thought, "What is Hidden Acres?" may end with a neat conversation about camp and who Jesus is, or a late night internet search into our mission and ministry. It might become a new family signing their children up for summer camp, or a guy coming to the Sportsmen's Retreat for the first time. Then maybe, while they're here, they'll meet Jesus and want to learn more about who He is.

So if you've ever purchased something from our gift shop, it means you're part of all of this. Thanks for supporting our mission!

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Student Ministries Update

by Eric Smith

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Cor. 3:17-18

One of my favorite parts about working at Hidden Acres is seeing the transformation in individuals' hearts and lives as they are made more into the image of Christ. This might happen in a camper's life in one week at camp, or in the life of a staff member over the course of the summer. Sometimes we witness transformation over the course of a school year in the life of a Ministry School student. No matter when it happens or how long it takes, it's an incredible privilege to be able to play a small part in God's transformative work!

During 2019's summer camp we had 236 campers tell their counselors that they had made a decision to follow Christ for the first time! That's 236 lives that were transformed for eternity!



One counselor told me the story of a camper who came into the week with a defensive attitude. She didn't want to listen to anything, struggled to get along with the other campers, and seemed like she just didn't want to be at camp. The counselors continued to love her, pray for her, and teach her the truth of the Gospel.

By the end of the week, the girl had been completely transformed! She made a decision to follow Christ, became best friends with the other girls in her cabin, and didn't want to leave camp! Her counselor said, "She had a complete heart change all because of the power of prayer and the love of Jesus." Amen! What an incredible transformation we were able to witness in this camper's life.

The campers aren't the only ones who experienced transformation this summer. Our summer staff of 155 high school and college students also experienced growth and transformation during their summer of ministry.

One counselor reflected on her experience by saying, "I gained so much confidence in myself and as a leader this summer. I was challenged and thrown out of my comfort zone in many ways, which allowed me to grow so much. I feel like God used this summer to prepare me to lead a connection group when I go back to school in the fall." Her experience on staff transformed her more into the image of Christ and equipped her to feel comfortable leading a Bible study at her school. Another staff member said, "God showed me His desire for me to go into ministry or missions after high school, so that's awesome!"



The transformation these counselors experienced by working on our summer staff will have a far-reaching impact as they continue to follow the Lord wherever He leads them, whether that's a Bible study at school or a career in ministry.

Another way that we witnessed transformation this year was in the lives of our Ministry School students, our gap year program for college-age students to live and work at camp during the school year. We had three students graduate in May and another six students start this fall.



The transformation that occurs in students' lives over the course of an entire school year is remarkable. And like our summer staff, they leave camp equipped for life and ministry because of their time at Hidden Acres. One former student said, "The Ministry School helped me learn how to problem solve, communicate better, and clean just about anything! I am very thankful for all the things I tried and areas I grew in because of my year at Hidden Acres"

We're thankful for how God used Hidden Acres to change lives and are excited to see what He's going to do in 2020! Thank you for your prayers and partnership in the transformative ministry at Hidden Acres!