



## Director's Year-End Reflections

It has been several months since the last "In Touch," and I hope you are doing well. That last letter mentioned that Dana and I had moved into the new director's cabin on the grounds. I wondered then if I would miss the hour commute, which gave me time to make phone calls and listen to podcasts, or if I would be able to embrace camp living with its different set of benefits. We have been here for eight months and Dana and I love it! The cabin is set along a beautiful, deep ravine and offers some great views. Many days over morning coffee, our thoughts get lost taking in God's creation. I hope you all get to enjoy creation daily like this.

Living here means having Dana close by again. For several years, our jobs kept us apart many nights each week. Now we are doing ministry side-by-side. Dana has found her place at the front desk of the office, answering phones, greeting guests, and helping with projects. She also accompanies me as I travel around to churches, speaking about Hidden Acres and telling people about our ministry.

Our church travels have been so encouraging this year. Last year, if I was able to visit a church, I saw empty parking lots and distance between friends. This year, we drive in, see full parking lots, and hear the buzz of people fellowshiping together again. I love the change and hope I never take such simple things for granted again.

The rebound at churches has happened at Hidden Acres as well. Camp was deserted and our retreat calendar was bare. Now restrictions have been lifted and people are back to enjoying camp life. We are so excited to be a place set apart from the distractions of the world where people can grow closer to Jesus and each other.

We recently welcomed a large junior high retreat from Des Moines. Their leader focused in on the absence of camp in 2020 when reviewing their weekend here: "We were so glad to be back at Hidden Acres, and it feels like the service and hospitality have continued to improve. Silly activities like joust and archery tag aren't a big deal to adults, but they're a big deal for kids who didn't get to do many fun activities last year. These kids noticed a difference in their youth group, felt less connected, and missed their time in the outdoors at Hidden Acres."



We also enjoyed growth in our summer camp ministry. We added an extra week of camp and a traveling Day Camp in 2021. In seven weeks we welcomed 3,702 campers and 162 summer staff. However, my favorite summer camp number is 594. We had 409 campers trust Jesus for the first time and 185 rededicate their life to Him, for a total of 594 decisions for Christ! I hope one day we have to replace the salvation bell because it is worn out! Amen?!

I hope you are able to be as encouraged by 2021 as I am. Thank you for your friendship, support, and prayers for the ministry of Hidden Acres. I hope to see you soon!

## Support our Ministry: Monthly Donor Program

We all learned things from the pandemic. Hidden Acres learned that we relied too heavily on retreat income and needed to increase our donor support. In response to this, we began 2021 with the new Monthly Donor Program.

We asked families to consider giving monthly to Hidden Acres—whatever amount they could.

Many people responded to this need! We increased our donor revenue from 6% to 10%, and we're well on our way to our ultimate goal of 20-25%.

If you believe in the ministry of Hidden Acres, would you partner with us in this transformational giving program? Your gifts will scholarship campers, help us hire more summer staff, grow our facilities to serve more guests, and ultimately lead to an opportunity for more people to be encouraged in their faith or trust Jesus for the first time.

To join this program, return the enclosed envelope and card and send your first donation in January. If you want to give one time, you can simply return a check in the envelope. Checks received by December 31 will be marked as 2021 donations unless you note otherwise.



# Programming Additions

By Taylor Mugge

This fall we added a great new passive activity at camp: Disc Golf. If you're not familiar with the sport, the rules are essentially the same as golf, but instead of hitting golf balls you throw golf discs (think of smaller, thinner frisbees), and you try to get them to land in a metal basket in as few throws as possible. We have nine baskets that were installed by 3one7 Discs, a disc golf company founded by an EFCA pastor in Missouri. We'll install signs and concrete tee pads in the spring.

Another big need we tackled this fall was replacing our carpetball tables. Many of them are very old, and the dimensions of each varied significantly. To solve this problem, we created a brand new standard carpetball table design, and to ensure consistency we assembled a detailed set of instructions for building it. Our goal was to have 22 new tables by summer camp 2022, and so far we have had 17 tables built or donated! To find the instructions, go to [hacamps.org/carpetball](http://hacamps.org/carpetball).

Both of these projects have only been successful because of our incredible donors and volunteers. To help us finish the disc golf course, a group of men from Oakdale EFC came down with skid loaders and chainsaws. Several people have donated funds for carpetball tables, and some have even built and delivered tables to us! All the carpet for 24 carpetball tables was recently donated as well. We love our volunteers!

If you'd like to support any of our projects by donating or volunteering, we'd love to partner with you. Stop by or send an email to [taylor.mugge@hacamps.org](mailto:taylor.mugge@hacamps.org).

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# PURSUIT: Summer Camp 2022



By Eric Smith

Summer camp planning is a year round process here at Hidden Acres! Even as the temperatures drop and the days get shorter in December, we're diligently planning for those warm summer days that will be here soon!



We recently announced our theme for Summer Camp 2022 – Pursuit. We will look at what the Bible says about how God pursues us and how we can pursue a relationship with Jesus and the people around us. Our theme verse, Luke 19:10, describes how God pursues us through His son, Jesus. It says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." We're excited to share the Gospel with all our campers this summer using the Pursuit theme.

Registration for summer camp opened November 1, and we already have over 400 campers registered! Some weeks of specialty camps are even full already! There's an early bird discount of \$20 per child if you register by March 31st, but we would encourage you to **register as soon as possible** before even more camps fill up. It's going to be another great summer!

We're also in the process of hiring our summer staff of high school and college students. Our application deadline is January 1st and we've already had over 165 students apply! If you're interested in spending a summer making a difference at Hidden Acres, or you know someone who would be a good fit on our team, encourage them to apply as soon as possible. We will still accept applications after January 1st until every position has been filled.

