



## From the Desk of Steve Pinkley

The last thing I want to be remembered as is the Director who cut down the Prayer Tree! I laugh about that, but the Prayer Tree does have a special place in the hearts and minds of everyone who visits and loves Hidden Acres. It is a destination for people when they come to camp; it's part of our history and it's even our camp logo.

If you have visited the Prayer Tree recently, you will have noticed that the tree is definitely changing. Most of it is



dead, with only a couple branches that still have life. We have decided to cut the rest of the tree down to ensure we can save the remaining good branches before a storm can cause damage.

We would never do away with the Prayer Tree area. It holds so much history and many memories for camp, the Evangelical Free Church families, and our guests.

We have prayed a lot about what to do. We are going to hold a ceremony on Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> at 3:00pm. It will follow our Senior Saints event that same day. You are invited to come to Senior Saints Day and stay for the Prayer Tree ceremony, or just come for the ceremony at 3:00pm.

We will gather at the Prayer Tree area, have a couple people say a few words, sing a couple hymns, and then cut down the remaining good branches. We are going to have the branches taken to a saw mill to be made into good lumber. After a drying process, the oak will be made into a coffee table that will be used in the new Dining Hall.

We are excited to see that there are offspring of the mighty oak growing around the original tree. We plan to preserve these small trees and see which one will eventually become the next Prayer Tree. I'm honored to keep this tradition alive so our children and grandchildren can enjoy the Prayer Tree area.

### WHAT: Prayer Tree Ceremony

WHEN: Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3:00pm

WHERE: Hidden Acres—meet at the Main Lodge for a wagon ride, or head straight out to the Prayer Tree upon arrival

HOW: Call us at 515-547-2751 to let us know that you're coming!

## History of the Prayer Tree



The Prayer Tree in 1981.

In March of 1979, the district conference gave the Camp Board the green light to begin looking for property for a camp. On Memorial Day weekend, Paul & Colleen Erdmann and Vel & Pat Shicks were touring along the Des Moines River in search of a potential site.

While eating lunch at Carlson Park, they prayed that the Lord would give them the right property. Within weeks, the land that is now Hidden Acres came on the market. It was just over the hill from

Carlson Park where the two couples had prayed weeks before.

Once the land had been identified as a potential site, the board and trustees toured the property. It was this group who came upon a giant oak and decided to stop, pray, and ask the Lord for guidance about purchasing the property.

Those present were: Superintendent Ray Johnson, Director Vel Shicks, Bob Kennedy, Ray Neswold, Milt & Bunny

Aunan, Arnold Hammer, Paul Erdmann, Dave Stevenson, Don Frank, Merlin Egland, Dale Anderson, Karen Lathrum, Jim Anderson, and Margaret Wilson.

From the beginning, the Prayer Tree has had a special place in the hearts and minds of everyone who loves Hidden Acres. Today, the site includes a gazebo built in honor of former Superintendent Dave Martin, several benches, hiking trails, and a nearby cabin overlooking a beautiful ravine.

# Ministry Corner

by Ryan Graden

Our fall retreat season is in full swing. It's one of my favorite times of year. I love the new faces, the smells, and the cooler temperatures. It's a great time to be at Hidden Acres, and we hope to see you if you're attending a weekend event here soon.

November 1<sup>st</sup> is a big day for camp. That's when registration opens for Hidden Acres' 2018 retreats and summer camps. Our office loves to see familiar names register; it's like old friends coming back for a visit. There is nothing better than a smile and a hug as we see each other again! It's one of the best parts about working here.

We're currently welcoming guest groups each weekend and preparing for our next Hidden Acres event. Senior Saints Day is Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>. It's filled with delicious food, a message from speaker Larry Ostercamp, and activities like wagon rides, crafts, and apple picking.

We also have the Men's Retreat on January 19-21. We just increased our attendance by 80 to over 300 men. I issued the same challenge for this year's retreat. We need to get more men to experience this great weekend. Send your husbands, fathers, brothers, older sons, and friends who could use a weekend of fun, fellowship, preaching, and food. This year we have Kyle Schiff, pastor at Crossroads EFC in Earlham, as our speaker. We will also be adding a smoked meats contest alongside our whole hog roast for Saturday dinner.

Things continue to move at Hidden Acres. God is doing great things and many are coming to experience Him and His creation. We look forward to seeing you soon!

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# Dining Hall Update

by Steve Pinkley

The Dining Hall is open! The majority of the dining space and serving area was finished this spring, but August was a busy month in the new kitchen with equipment installations, inspections, and finishing touches. During the week of August 21st, we started moving supplies and food from the Main Lodge kitchen to the Dining Hall kitchen. Our entire staff, from the office, housekeeping, and maintenance teams, joined in on Thursday and Friday to move, unpack, organize, and clean. We finished things just in time to serve the District's Latino Family Camp on August 25th. That weekend allowed us a test run of the facilities so we could fine-tune a few things before Labor Day Family Camp.



On Labor Day weekend, we served between 550 and 700 people at each meal in the new Dining Hall. We didn't have to serve in shifts and everyone easily found a place to sit. It was so wonderful to see our Family Camp friends enjoy this new space. It's going to provide much-needed dining space (and meeting options!) for our retreat groups for years to come.

I wanted to extend a huge thanks to our building foreman, Seth Peterson. Seth has been a part of our staff for many years and has had a hand in many of the buildings at Hidden Acres. Seth and his team worked relentlessly for over two years to get us ready for opening day. I'm so grateful for their hard work and dedication.

There are still several things to finish in the building, including a storage room for tables and chairs, a dining room for our staff that connects to the kitchen, and some behind-the-scenes work in the utility room. We're still taking donations for the Dining Hall so we can finish up these last details and purchase more equipment.

We're excited to work on small projects and renovations over the next two years, then continue on to the next big project. Thank you for your friendship and support of Hidden Acres over the years.

# Around the Grounds

by Elly Mullen

What a great last few months! We have been blessed with some fantastic volunteer groups. They've been a big help with our special projects and I enjoy having them.

The Dining Hall hasn't been our only project. We are clearing a new parking lot for Lechler Lake to allow easy access to the shelter house. We're adding finishing touches to the landscaping around Lodge 139. We have been working on improving drainage, adding gravel to the roads, re-seeding 28 acres of CRP, and increasing the productivity of our pastures and hay ground. We also have a few horses ready to retire to good homes. If anyone is interested, they can email me at [elly.hacamp@gmail.com](mailto:elly.hacamp@gmail.com).

As I look ahead, I'm excited about a few future projects, like transforming the Main Lodge, rethinking the Boys' and Girls' Cabins, and giving a facelift to the Treetoppers. I also have "dream projects" like building more picnic tables, adding RV sites, adding new cabins/mini lodges near Lodge 139, and adding a new playground. Email me if you can help with any of these projects!

Finally, we would love to hire a couple part-time housekeepers to keep up with our growing facilities. Reach out if you or someone you know could help.

# Summer Camp Sideline

by Eric Smith

This summer was our largest ever, with 2,375 campers! We had 97 campers who accepted Christ and 54 more who told their counselor they rededicated their lives to Christ! God was at work in the hearts of our campers as we learned what it meant to have a Heartbeat in Christ. We had an incredible summer staff who selflessly poured their lives into our campers, and God used the ministry to change them, too. We had six staff members make the decision to get baptized at camp this summer! Praise God for all the lives, both campers' and staff members', that were changed this summer.

Preparations for next summer have begun already! Keep an eye out for the Summer Camp 2018 theme, which will be announced soon. Also, if you know anyone who is interested in being a part of our summer staff next year, please encourage them to apply. Applications can be found on our website. Email me at [eric.smith@hacamps.org](mailto:eric.smith@hacamps.org) with questions.