



HIDDEN ACRES CHRISTIAN CENTER

Hidden Acres Christian Center's Newsletter

December 2022

Pursuit '22 Wrap-Up

By Steve Pinkley

Hidden Acres is family. Whether you volunteer, donate, or visit occasionally, you are part of a big, joyful family! Every retreat and summer camp season is like a big reunion. I see the names of groups and individuals visiting soon, and I get so excited. I love seeing old friends and meeting new ones. The staff laughs at me because I walk around hollering, "It's people day!"

As much as I love weekend groups, summer camp is still the heart and soul of Hidden Acres. One of the reasons the Central District purchased land in 1979 was to have space for a summer camp program. We get the privilege of transforming into a ministry focused on youth each June and July. Our job for those seven weeks is to provide a place set apart for students to encounter Jesus.

This past summer was exceptional. God changed so many lives for the kingdom! We had 3,564 overnight campers and 313 day campers. We shared the gospel with all 3,877 and challenged them to grow in their faith. I am excited to announce that 326 campers accepted Jesus into their hearts for the first time, and another 111 rededicated their lives to Christ. Amen!

Over 160 amazing staff spent their summer pouring into campers' lives. At the same time, our permanent staff focused on building relationships with the summer staff. At the end of the summer, we heard countless stories of staff members growing in their faith through relationships with campers and other staff.

Thank you for being part of this Hidden Acres family!

Our Mission & Vision

By Steve Pinkley

A small group of lead staff has been meeting with EFCA Central District Superintendent Mike Shields this fall. He is helping us rework Hidden Acres' Mission, Vision, & Values. As our ministry and staff continue to grow, we think it is necessary to have a mission statement and vision that anyone can memorize and share with others. It provides people with a clear understanding of our purpose and gives our staff clarity and direction as we make decisions for the future of Hidden Acres.

Mission Statement: *A place set apart to encounter Jesus*
Vision: *Honoring God by providing camp experiences, sharing the gospel, and equipping Christ-followers.*

We chose this mission statement because we want to be a place set apart, free from routines and distractions, where Jesus' voice is easier to hear. Maybe that voice will speak to our guests of their need for salvation. Maybe in the still and quiet, someone will hear the challenge to go deeper in their faith or choose a future in ministry. We want everyone to encounter Jesus in a personal way during their visit.

Our vision statement expresses how we want to honor God. We want to provide fun and adventurous camp experiences. We want every group, event, and summer camp to focus on sharing the gospel and biblical truth. We also want to be intentional in equipping Christ-followers on full-time and summer staff as well as students in our Ministry School & Residency programs.

Please pray for us as we wrap up this process soon.

Partnering with Hidden Acres

Monthly Giving Program

Hidden Acres' Monthly Giving Program came out of the pandemic. During that time, we learned that we relied too heavily on retreat income and needed to increase individual and church giving. To remedy this imbalance, we created our Monthly Giving Program.

If you believe in the mission and ministry of Hidden Acres, will you consider partnering with us in this transformational giving program? Your gifts will provide scholarships to campers, help us hire more summer staff, maintain our facilities and grounds, and ultimately lead to an opportunity for more people to be encouraged in their faith or trust Jesus for the first time. If you join the monthly donor program, you will receive

a receipt letter each month that updates you on what is happening around Hidden Acres!

If your family wants to join for the first time, return the enclosed Commitment Card. If you already give monthly, thank you! If you want to continue in 2023, you do not need to do anything. If you want to make changes to your current monthly giving, call us at 515-547-2751.

One-Time Gifts

If you simply want to give a one-time gift to Hidden Acres before the end of the year, send a check in the envelope provided. **You do not need to use the Monthly Giving Commitment Card.** Envelopes postmarked by December 31 will be applied to your 2022 giving.

Tractor Donated!

Next time you visit Hidden Acres, you might see a beautiful new tractor driving around.



We wish we could buy such a nice tractor, but it's been loaned to us for one year by the Red Power Team as part of their Visibility Program. Red Power is a Case IH dealer with locations throughout Iowa.

Thank you CEO Rob Hinton and General Manager David Plahn for your generosity! Our maintenance and program staff has never had a tractor with A/C and heat before! They're excited to use it on projects this winter, and you'll see it around next year raking & baling hay and leading wagon tours!



"Hidden" Acres: Ben's Trail

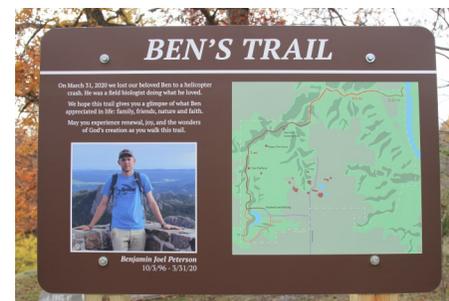
By Ryan Graden

Guests commonly ask me, "How big is Hidden Acres?" Our entire staff can answer from memory: 660 acres. For those of you who don't speak "agriculture," that is just over one square mile of property. That's a lot of land!

Not all of that land is developed. Of the 660 acres, I would estimate that most guests see around 200 acres in their average Hidden Acres experience. That 200 acres is filled with buildings, activity areas, horse trails, etc.

A few years ago, a staff member came to me with the idea to build hiking trails throughout camp's property. Hiking trails would add a passive activity to our free time options; guests could use them at any time during their stay for exercise, relaxation, or fun. I gave him the "green light" to look into it.

A few months later, I received a call from the Peterson family. Sadly, they had lost their 22-year-old son, Ben, in a tragic accident. In memory of Ben, they established a memorial fund in his name. They promised donors that the funds would be used for some sort of outdoor programming since Ben was an outdoors enthusiast. The Petersons asked if we had any outdoor programming needs, and I proposed the memorial funds be used for a hiking trail. The result of that phone conversation is Ben's Trail!



We decided to build Ben's Trail in two phases. Phase one was finished in October 2021. It is just over one mile long and takes guests through some of the most scenic areas at Hidden Acres. Along the trail are signs with quotes that Ben's family collected from correspondence with him. We added two limestone benches and a treehouse platform

along the trail where guests can rest and observe local wildlife.



Last month we started phase two of the trail construction. A good friend of camp spent the last few weeks in his mini excavator cutting a trail into another one of camp's deep ravines. This section will provide guests another rarely-seen area for rest and exploration! We will continue work on phase two next spring and summer. The end result will be a trail just over two miles in length, running from the lake area all the way to the horse pastures. It will show guests the more "hidden" parts of Hidden Acres. Some planned "extras" along this section include a camping area for hammocks, more benches, and picnic tables.



We received so much positive feedback after the first section of the trail was finished. As we know, God uses even simple things to bless people at the right time in their life. People love the trail and sharing their new experiences in the wilderness, including fun family moments, restful solitude, and time enjoying God's beautiful creation. Ben's trail will be a long-lasting landmark at Hidden Acres. We are excited for you to see it and use it. If it moves you, you can always ask how you might help us add more benches and rest spots along the way. See you soon on Ben's Trail!

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