



Birchwood aBuzz

Spring 2011

Number 38

Celebrating 50 Years of Camping!

Alaska had been a state for just two years when Birchwood Camp began offering camping programs in 1961. Since those early days thousands of campers, church groups and community organizations have enjoyed the peaceful Chugiak location. We'll be offering several opportunities for people to celebrate and commemorate this landmark year— including special 50-year t-shirts that our campers will tie dye at camp this summer! To kick off this summer of celebration, Birchwood Camp will host a Founders Day event on May 14, 2011. Founders Day is open to anyone who wishes to learn about the camp, participate in family events, or

join in honoring those who organized the camp a half-century ago.



The May 14 events include:
8:30 a.m. 5-k trail race & fun run
10 a.m. Open House and tours of the cabins, waterfront and meeting/dining facilities. On display will be photographs and items from the camp's history.

11 a.m. Founders Day Program and dedication of Fireweed Hall. Speakers include John Schaffer, who helped lead the first camp in 1961; Walt Hays, another early camp organizer; and Dave Beckett, Alaska United Methodist Conference Superintendent.

Noon A camp-style lunch (complete with s'mores) will be provided, and a scavenger hunt and games will be organized for campers of all ages. Bring the family!

To learn more about the camp's history, facilities and programs visit our website:

www.birchwoodcamp.org



Save the Date: October 2, 2011

Birchwood Camp will continue the 50 Year celebration with an exciting Annual Dinner and Silent Auction. We hope you'll join us for this historic event!

Send a Child to Camp

It's nearly camp season again and we need your help! Many campers need financial assistance in order to attend camp. Please consider a gift to the Bruce Roberts Memorial Scholarship Fund; your gift will change a child's life!

Kitchen Repair

This spring the ancient commercial dishwasher in the camp kitchen washed its last dish! As things get old and break we have no choice but to replace them. We were fortunate to have the funds in reserves to purchase a new commercial dish sanitizer; we were equally fortunate to have several talented local volunteers who gave of their time to take care of installation and provide a much needed upgrade to kitchen pipes, sinks & drains. We are grateful for the way people give their skills to support this ministry!

CIT Program

Students entering their junior or senior year are encouraged to apply for our Counselor in Training (CIT) program. This is a great leadership development program for teens. Apply by May 1. Find details at <http://birchwoodcamp.org/get-involved/cit-program/>.

Register for Summer Camps

Summer Camp registration is open for our 2011 camps! Birchwood Camp offers dynamic, faith-based camping programs for children and youth focused on building community, self discovery and faith formation. We have camping opportunities for children entering first grade to recent high school grads. These camps are sponsored by the United Methodist Church but are open to all.

New in 2011: Register and pay for Camps online! You can find a brochure and all the information you need on our website. Registrations received before May 1 receive an early bird discount! Also, check out our NEW Adventure Canoe Camp for High School students.

Register online and find info at:

www.birchwoodcamp.org/camps/



Why Camp Matters: How Camp Shaped my Life

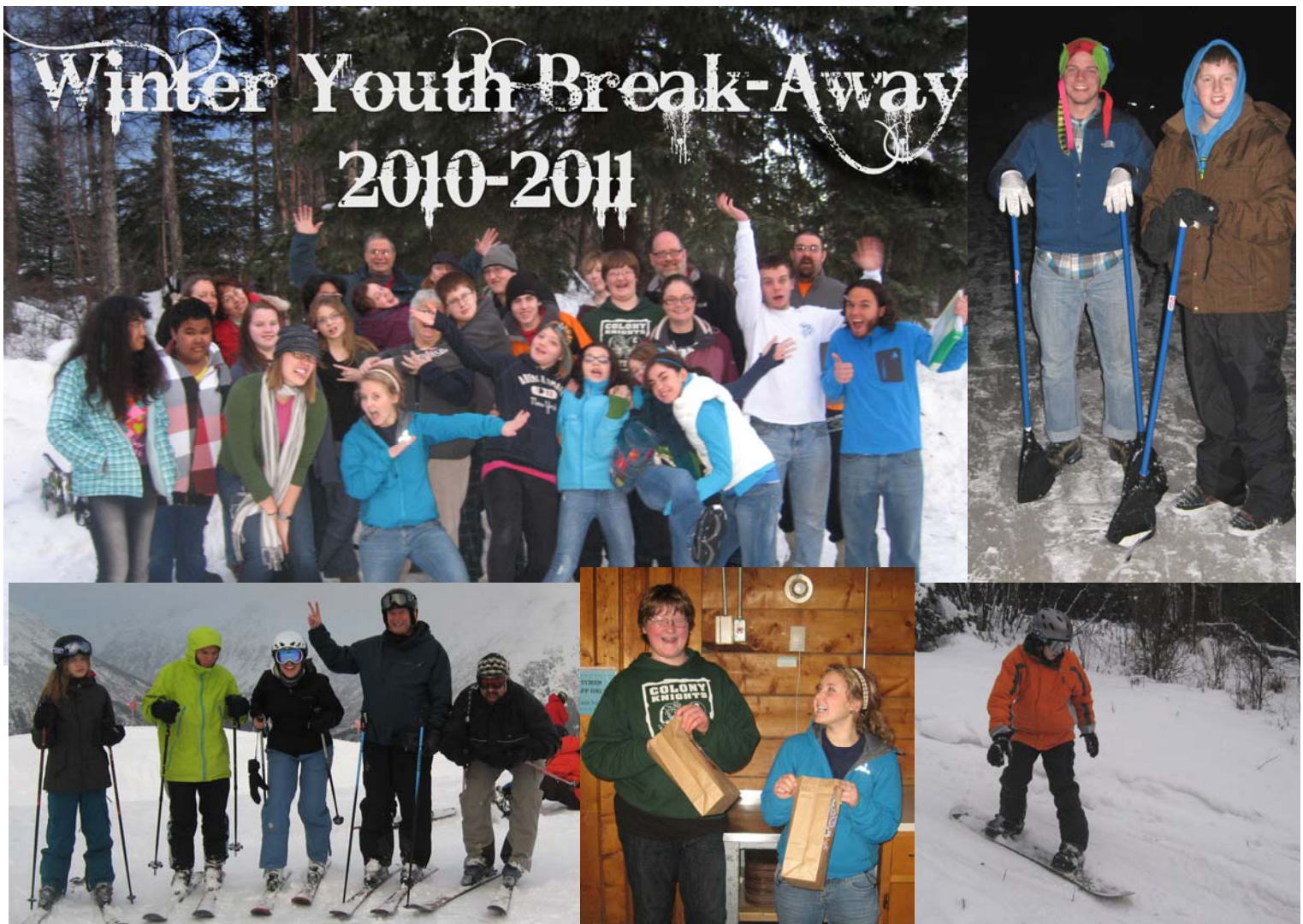
I am what you might call a “camp junkie.” Growing up in New Mexico, I attended summer camps at Sacramento Methodist Assembly as often as I could. I started going to camp in about 3rd grade, and I have a vivid memory of singing “pharaoh—pharaoh” and thinking it was just about the best song EVER! I remember another year sitting at their outdoor chapel (which is named “point of silence”) and the pastor asking us to “listen for God” and see if we could count 10 noises in nature while we were quiet. Surprisingly, our large group of 10 and 11 year olds was capable of this— I remember hearing birds, bugs and the wind in the pines that I’d not noticed before! To this day I still practice listening to the sounds of nature when I am out in God’s creation, a skill I learned at camp.

I believe in camp experiences because camp shaped my life and who I am today. At camp, the friendships I had grew deeper— both with friends from my home church and new friends that I made and saw each year at camp. In high school I joined our Conference Council on Youth Ministry, which led two conference youth camps each year. As part of this leadership team I felt myself flourish and discover my abilities as a leader; I’m sure that it was the experiences of community and ministry at camp that drove me to study Religion at McMurry University and ultimately to seek a job in a ministry field. I seem to be drawn to the experience of camp— where all are welcome, where conversations are deeper, where we take time to slow down and listen for God, where we stop ourselves in the crazy pace of our lives and experience the love of God. I guess it’s not a surprise that my husband and I met while working at a camp during college, or that we moved to Alaska to work at Birchwood Camp.

I came to understand God’s love for me, in a completely personal and independent way, for the first time when I was at camp. I was 13 years old and was feeling the growing pains of becoming a teenager; though I had grown up in church, this was the moment for me when it “clicked.” I had just finished a long conversation with my small group leader about how God could possibly love me, despite my blaring imperfections. As I walked back to my cabin, the brilliant star-lit sky caught my gaze— there must have been more stars in the sky that night than I’ve ever seen in my life. I remember stopping in my tracks, and as John Wesley described it, I felt my heart strangely warmed. That experience shaped my whole understanding of the world from that point forward.

That’s why I’m honored to work at Birchwood Camp, leading the camp as we celebrate 50-years of ministry. I get to create safe, caring, genuine experiences of Christian community where children and youth can thrive and where people can discover who they are as children of God. I hope you’ll join me in celebrating camp this summer, either by attending one of our 50-year events, or by sending your kids to camp, or even by making a donation in honor of the 50th anniversary. Mostly, I hope you’ll share your stories with me of how camp has changed YOUR life.

— Marie Sweezey, Camp Director director@birchwoodcamp.org



Introducing our Newest Building: Fireweed Hall

Our new multi-purpose meeting cabin has been awaiting a proper name for a while now! This winter the Board of Directors agreed on "Fireweed Hall," keeping in the tradition of naming our buildings with an Alaskan theme. Fireweed is one of the abundant summer wildflowers in our area; it is a beautiful pink and fills the hillsides of Alaska during our warm months. If you've never been to Alaska in the summer to see Fireweed, I suggest doing a Google image search of "Fireweed" to see some great images like this one!



We are excited to dedicate Fireweed Hall during our 50-year celebration on Founder's Day (May 14), and we hope you'll join us for that. However, we still need to purchase and/or finish installing some important things like **tables, chairs, a projector & screen, light fixtures**, etc. While these may seem unimportant, they are in fact essential to having Fireweed Hall ready to use this summer. Please consider donating towards the building fund so that the upstairs will be completely ready for use this year!!

The Birchwood Camp 5K!

Birchwood Camp will be holding its first 5k trail race and fun run in conjunction with the 50-year Founders Day celebration on May 14. The course will start in the heart of camp and will follow the perimeter of our 160 acres, giving beautiful vistas of the mountains and Psalm Lake throughout. The course is designed for both avid trail runners as well as those who might just like to start their Saturday off with a nice walk! Whatever category you fall into, we hope you'll join us for this event!

Registration is \$25. Early registrations receive a discount, as do families and children. Registration forms and race information are available at our website. All proceeds from the Birchwood Camp 5k will go towards camp operations and building projects; **come out and support us!**

Two RVs Needed in July

We are excited to be starting a new intern program in 2011! Our interns will be serving with us through our summer camps, and some of them will be staying to support us during July, when we host a variety of camps from the community. This will provide much needed support to our programs and our permanent staff.

However, we need somewhere to house the interns for part of the summer. We are looking for someone to lend the camp two RVs (any style or size) from approximately July 6–25, 2011. RVs will be well taken care of, and will simply be parked at the camp as a living space. We need RVs that sleep a minimum of one or two people. Please contact us if you have an RV to lend. What a great opportunity to join us in the ministry of hospitality!

How You Can Support Birchwood Camp

At Birchwood Camp it is our mission to Build Community on Common Ground. You have the opportunity to make an investment that will strengthen the future of this special place by giving to the **building fund** or **general fund**. Please also consider making a commitment to the growth and development of our children and youth by giving to the **Bruce Roberts Memorial Scholarship Fund**. Last year approximately \$1340 was given from the Roberts Fund to campers who needed financial assistance. The fund has to be replenished each year, and this year is no different. The Roberts Fund is basically depleted and we are asking for your help so that we can continue to offer financial assistance to campers. We believe the experience provided to children and youth in camping ministries is *invaluable*; we hope you will help us make camp a reality for all children, even those who may not be able to afford camp. **NEW: You can now donate on our website via credit card!**

Birchwood is always seeking donations of specific **goods and/or services**. Currently we are in need of a **mini-fridge, specific craft supplies and board games, and canoe paddles**. Visit our website to see a complete "wish list" or call our camp office for more details.



You can contribute to Birchwood Camp through our United Methodist Advance Project number: **931068**. Visit our website for more info.

Consider making a **planned or estate gift** to Birchwood Camp. Contact us to find out how to create a faith-filled legacy.

Our Prayers & Praises

Praises:

- ◆ For the generous support and involvement in our ministry we receive from the community.
- ◆ For a successful and meaningful Winter Youth Break-away Camp this winter, and a praise for all the youth who attended.
- ◆ For the wonderful response to our new intern program, and for the energetic and dedicated group of interns that will be ministering to our campers this summer.

Prayers:

- ◆ For continuing gifts to our Bruce Roberts scholarship fund so that *all children* may be able to come to camp.
- ◆ For all campers who will be attending camp this summer— that they may experience genuine community, moments of self discovery, and God's love.
- ◆ For the many volunteers and staff who will be traveling to Alaska to serve at camp this summer— that their travels will be safe and their hearts may be open to ministry.

- ◆ For all those planning and preparing for our 50 years of camp celebration this year.
- ◆ For many blessings upon the new programs that we are offering during 2011; that they may be well attended and may offer new places for new people to experience the joys of Christian community.
- ◆ For someone to lend us two RVs during the month of July in order to house some of our summer staff.

Thank You to our dedicated Board of Directors

Benee Braden, Charles Brower, Von Cawvey, Becky Driscoll, Chris Huettmann, Joyce Hughes, Dan Lush, Fran Lynch, Adam Muhr, John Quinley, Diane Shellenbaum, LeeAnn Wohlgemuth, Nathan Woods. A special thanks to Deb Weesner, our outgoing board member, as she moves on to a new chapter of her life in Florida. Thanks Deb, for your dedication to Birchwood Camp.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO TO SUPPORT BIRCHWOOD CAMP!

ADVANCE SPECIAL, GROUP & INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT: DEC. 2, 2010– APR. 1, 2011:

Individual Support: Al and Judy Kline, Becky Driscoll, Benee Braden, Brent and Liz Hoffman, Bruce and Diane Shellenbaum, Cathy and Chris Barnes, Connie and John Quinley, Dan and Margaret Lush, Deb and Mike Weesner, Dennis and Susie Holway, Dick and Jane Smith, Donna and Ken Newkirk, Doug and Doris VonTish, Emma Maggard, Erin Campbell, Fran Lynch, James and Claudette Rodgers, Jay and Elizabeth Allison, Jeffrey and Cynthia Worrell, John and Barbara Dadd Shaffer, John Braden, Kate Robertson Bartel, Kimberly Kobersmith, Laura and Reed Lahrson, Lee Anne Hicks, Lucile Barton, Marie Renner, Nathan Worrell, Patricia and Edward Sweezey, Rachel Runyan, Robert and Jossie Turner, Ronnie and Lisa Darnell, Roy and Allie Forbes, Ruthann Austin, Sandra and Nathan Woods, Shane and Teri Inch, Sheryl Douglas, Shirley Kruse, Trish & Mike Redmond, Von and Jan Cawvey, W.L. and Laurretta Garrison

Organizations and Churches (Includes In-Kind Gifts): Alaska Conference of the United Methodist Church, Anchor Park UMW, ConocoPhillips Alaska, East Anchorage UMC, REI Anchorage, Reynoldsburg UMC, United Methodist Church of Chugiak, West Ohio Conference UMC, Wharton UMC.

WINTER AND SPRING VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF: THANK YOU!!

Adam Muhr, Becky Driscoll, Belicia Norris, Benee Braden, Berneita Norris, Betsy McGrew, Betty Burke, Brent Hoffman, Charlie Brower, Chris Huettmann, Connie Quinley, Dan Lush, Daniel Jost, Deb Weesner, Diane Shellenbaum, Drew Lemish, Fran Lynch, Jan Cawvey, Jo Ann Schaadt, Jaxon Huettman, Jenny Smith, Jeremy Sieg, John Quinley, Joyce Allegra del Rosario, Joyce Hughes, Kelli Williams, Ken Anderson, LeeAnn Wohlgemuth, Leif Lidin-Lamon, Liz Hoffman, Marie Sweezey, Megan Isenhower, Misty Gilland, Nathan Woods, Ron Bates, Ronnie Darnell, Sandra Woods, Sara Norris, Shane Inch, Shawn Gilland, Shawn McGrew, Sheri Huettmann, Stephen Sweezey, Suzanne Ishii-Regan, Teri Inch, Victoria Weindel, Von Cawvey, Walt Hays.

**Please contact us in case of error or omission from these sections.
We will make sure to publish it correctly in the next newsletter.*

Upcoming Events:

50 Years of Summer Camps Celebration:

Founders Day & New Building Dedication:

May 14, 2011 (Events throughout the day)

CIT Training:

May 20-21, 2011

For high school students who are first time Counselors in Training (CITs)

Family Volunteer Weekend:

May 20-22, 2011

For families & individuals: help get the camp ready for the summer and have some fun too!

Middle School Camp:

June 6-10, 2011

For students entering 7th and 8th grades

High School Camp:

June 6-10, 2011

For students entering 9th grade - just graduated

Faith Adventure Camp:

June 13-17, 2011

For students entering 4th-6th grades

God Seekers Camp:

June 20-22, 2011

For students entering 1st-3rd grades

Music and Drama Camp:

June 27- July 3, 2011

For students entering 5th-10th grades

Adventure Canoe Camp:

July 30—August 5, 2011

For high school students

Young Adult Community Camp:

October 21-23, 2011 (NEW DATE)

For young adults and their families and/or friends

Winter Youth Break Away:

Dec. 27 - 30, 2011

For students in 7th-12th grades



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Camp happenings.

Birchwood aBuzz is
published by
BIRCHWOOD CAMP
Building Community
On Common Ground



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Liz and Brent Hoffman, *Camp Hosts*

*If you wish to be removed from this mailing list
please contact the camp office.*