

CAMP ECCO

Camp ECCO finds itself in an interesting position as we prepare for the 2015 camping season. Everything looks bright and shiny, but there is a subtle underground shadow lurking.

We are close to being able to add a caretaker to our wonderful leadership team. Verbal agreements have been made, but since we are a volunteer organization whose leaders all have full time jobs, things usually take longer to finalize than they would in the business world. Maybe by conference time, I will be able to elaborate. This person would be an addition to our present staff. No one's jobs would change, we would just be adding another strong person.

We also have a commitment from Aaron Wilson to give us solid legal advice. Aaron grew up in our Cottage Grove EC Church and spent many summers at our camp. Aaron will be working with our CPA Vance Adams to help us get all of our legal and corporate papers and constitutions in order. These two men are gifts from God. Their work is invaluable to our present and our future.

Our Property Committee is heavily involved in a major project relative to our boys' dorm. After the contractors got involved and prices were considered, a new floor plan was drawn up and work is in progress. We will do everything possible to have this building completed by the start of the camping season. This will give us newly renovated boys' and girls' dorms with more modern shower facilities. We were also able to include a storage shed/storm shelter under the new addition to the boys' dorm. Camp deans have often asked what they should do if they faced a serious weather condition. We will now have a solid and safe answer.

All of our volunteer staff continue to donate their time and talents at a very high level. Jeff Sitz heads a property team of Dick Parr, Jim Dotson, Dave Woodhall, Tom Baldt and a variety of helpers from among their friends and church members. We want to thank our Youngstown Wedgewood Park church for their great work on new benches last year. This year our Southington Delightful EC Church raised about \$1600 toward the purchase of new bunks and beds for our dorms. These kinds of workers and donations make a huge difference. We thank all of you for your help. Julie Beltz heads a larger team of volunteer workers who promote the camp, man the snack bar and t-shirt sales, check campers in and out of the camp, clean and prepare the camp for camping weeks, and do so much more. Julie is also available to make presentations regarding Camp ECCO in any local church.

Rev. Joshua Reinders leads our camping committee. This committee is headed by our summer camping deans (Bob McGinnis, Andrew Carr, Jen Compston, & Julie Beltz), our secretary and former dean, Jessica Jones, Ron Monday, our camp registrar, and various other volunteers, many of whom also serve as counselors during the summer months. Jessica Jones also initiated a movement among high school campers who have now formed a camper advisory board led by Paige Huffman who help our committees stay relevant in a culture-changing world. Their input has proven invaluable.

Bob McGinnis leads our personnel committee and is busy with our new hires and ironing out the flow of information and decision making. Vance Adams, Don Voegeli, and Deborah Hill comprise a tremendous financial team. We have all gifts to camp sent to Akron First EC Church whose Stewards count the money. Then Don Voegeli deposits the money. Deborah Hill writes the checks, and Vance Adams verifies everything and advises us how to use the money wisely. He also keeps us correct regarding our tax responsibilities. We share this so that everyone knows we take every precaution to use money wisely and keep Camp ECCO out of financial difficulties.

The natural gas and oil money has begun arriving. While the drop in gasoline prices makes all of us as drivers happy, the checks have been somewhat smaller because of the drop in prices. Right now we are averaging around \$25,000 a month.

And therein grows the shadows. As word of the coming natural gas and oil money spread, church and individual gifts to Camp ECCO began decreasing. We now operate the camp on a budget that pays the regular bills for the camp, but includes nothing for ongoing maintenance and property upkeep and improvements. A real budget shows about a \$20,000 a year short-fall. In the past half dozen years, we have paid off our loan to the National Conference for a new maintenance building, repaid an unpaid tax responsibility this administration inherited, bought a new tractor, added a new roof to the main building, redone the girls' dorm and added a new area to the back of it, added a nurses' station, made significant improvements to the caretaker's home, built new bunks and added new beds, painted, cleaned, and improved almost every area of the camp. Now we are working on the new addition to the boys' dorm. We still need to improve the lake and the lakefront, finish what we started in the caretaker's house, and decide what to do with the small cabins on the hillside. We are committed to maintaining what we have and making about \$10,000 a year in maintenance and property improvements. If we continue to lose \$20,000 there will come a day when we can no longer maintain what we have.

Underlying all of this is that our churches are sending less campers to camp. We can hold 130 or so for each week of camp. Our senior camp runs around 100, but our other two camps average around 50 to 60 kids. We believe this reflects the attendance of young people in our core churches as well as the reluctance of parents to send younger children away for a week of camp. If we added the other 100 or so campers we can hold, we would cut that deficit in half. Our other alternative is to rent the camp to more outside groups. This was not the original mission of Camp ECCO, but may become necessary. One or two more weeks of camping would make up this entire deficit. Maybe some of your churches might want to contact us about what is available. We hardly rent the camp in the months of August, September, and October when camp is beautiful.

Facing this deficit, Vance Adams is helping us construct a top-notch investment team that will help us use this gas and oil money wisely. We do not know how much we will end up receiving, but it makes no financial sense to spend money that raises a budget that we cannot presently meet. So we will invest this money, hope and pray for more rentals as our

improvements make our camp even more competitive in the camping world, and refuse to be financially irresponsible. Pray for us as we, like the rest of the EC world face a cloudy future.

To help our churches and our conference, we officially move that conference stop receiving any camp assessment fees for the purpose of the support of Camp ECCO effective July 1, 2015. We will continue to operate wisely without this assessment.

Please feel free to contact me, Rev. Scott Carr, with any questions you have. God bless.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Scott Carr