



Menno Haven Musings

Spring & Summer 2023 in Review

So much has happened since we last talked! Hopefully you were able to participate in one of our events: Spring Work Day, Women's Retreat, Rally Day, Family Camp, Youth Summer Camps, or Grandcamp. Or maybe you came with your family to a family reunion, had a church retreat or came with a school or an organization. If not, here is a short (-ish) recap of the past few months.

Spring Work Day



These amazing people installed new doors and repaired screens in the cabins, trimmed trees along the main lane, cleaned the flower beds after a long winter's nap, cleaned windows and installed soap dispensers in the hotel buildings, cleared trails, worked on the ropes course, and split wood. [If you want to see what all was accomplished at the Spring Work Day, check out photos here.](#)

Thanks to all who attended this event!

Women's Retreat



On an April Friday afternoon, 21 women from a variety of areas across the state gathered for a refresher. We were refreshed physically by a pampering afternoon with spa activities, socially by gathering with other women of faith, emotionally with space for deep soul sighs, and spiritually listening to the testimonies of God's faithfulness in the lives of our speakers: Bekka, Kim and Ashley. It's hard to find words to really give justice to such a beautiful weekend so we'll let the women speak for themselves. They say it well.

"Selah! A much needed time to rest, renew, and refocus on Christ. The food is always delicious. The [spa] massage is always wonderful. The music selections always prepares my heart for the sermons. I like the free time to rest and reflect and slow down."

"I always come back for the women's retreat because I know I'll have the opportunity to renew in the ways my spirit is telling me - whether that is solitude, connection with other women, being alone in nature, exercise, or rest. My needs are different every year, but always met."

"Wonderful! My first retreat here. I hope to return next year."

Thanks again to Bekka, Kim, and Ashley for leading us. Thanks to Judy for the pampering! Save the dates for next year - April 26-28, 2024. More details to come but we hope you can plan to join us! [Check out the Women's Retreat page for photos from this event as well as details for next year.](#)

Our Summer Programs

Family Camp - The blending of returners and new family members was such a beautiful sight! The camp was truly such a beautiful beginning to our summer of HOPE. Our families worshipped, stacked crates, swam through hoops, sang songs over the campfire in-between s'mores bites, painted (and found) the alphabet, played Kiddie Pool Kickball, and best of all, had free time with their families to do their favorite activities. It was the perfect kickoff to summer. [Click here to check out pictures of this special weekend.](#)



Rally Day & 5k/2k - So many friends came to join us to dedicate this space and summer to the Lord. A special treat for brave souls was the chance to fly down the zipline! It was great seeing all of you enjoying the space and each other. We are so grateful for everyone who loves these grounds and came to celebrate the beginning of our summer ministry season. [Check out pictures of this fun time here.](#)



Youth Camps - All our campers secured a special place in our hearts this year. This summer was filled with laughter, kettle corn, cooking over a fire, visits from the Swamp Monster (who grades the campers' cabin cleanup skills 😊), swimming, boating, crafts, high/low ropes activities, chapels, and campfires. We had a special friend this summer come out of his shell - Tuck the Turtle was a cool buddy who hung out in Eagle Wing Activity Center for June-August. If we count by how many friendship bracelets were made, I'd say we had new friendships bloom and old friendships rekindled in wonderful amounts. The campers learned that storms will come (which we lived through some times over the summer), but no matter what happens we can have hope in life BECAUSE of Jesus. We hope they remember the lessons learned here this summer:

- God's Promises Bring Hope (*Hebrews 6: 13-15; Psalm 93: 4; Luke 3:21-22*)
- Jesus is our Lighthouse among the Rocks (*Hebrews 6:16; Matthew 14:22-33*)
- The Rope Connecting Us (*Hebrews 6: 17-18; Romans 5:5; Isaiah 43:2*)
- Jesus is the Anchor that secures us to Hope (*Hebrews 6:19-20; March 4:35-41*)
- Jesus is Calling Me (*John 20:19-21*)



Walking

away from this summer, we are just so hopeful for the years to come and can't wait to see what comes up next year!

GrandCamps - This year was very special. GrandCamp board member John Sosnowski and his wife Patti taught us what it was to anchor our HOPE in the Lord and His teachers. After we anchored our ship by Lakeview Lodge to begin, we began memorizing scripture and singing wonderful worship music led by Phil, Pam, & Aaron Kauffman. We played Captain on Deck, Hungry Hungry Hippos in large scale, built wooden boats and cardboard boats, made ocean waves, made kettle corn AND got an Arabian carriage ride with a lakeview. All of this week was a beautiful blessing memory with our grandparents and grandkids.

Here is a what a few participants said:

"This was a great opportunity to bond with grandchildren in a beautiful setting - no meals to cook or activities to plan!" Grandma E

"GrandCamp is awesome! This is the best experience of my life!!" Grandkid L

"It's worth your while. Try it!!" Grandpa & Grandma B



[Check out a recap video and pictures of this grand week.](#)



Summer Staff

We could not have such a beautiful summer without the ministry of our Summer Staffers. We had 11 Summer Staff serving campers as counselors, maintenance assistants, nature enthusiast, digital media assistant, kitchen assistant and program assistant as well as jumping in to care for each other. We also had 2 [IVEP](#)ers come and serve - Judith from Nicaragua and Maren from Brazil What a blessing! We are so thankful for all these young people choosing to spend their summer with

us!! Thank you Cora Botts, Malachi Cornelius, Ana Fleming, Judith Hernandez, Emily Huff, Lydia Johnson, Maren Pauls, Cameron Steelberg, Graham Steelberg, Keeley Vermeire, and Micah Yoder - you're the best!



Speaking of summer staff, as we prepare to open our applications for next summer, be thinking of who may be a great team member to join us next year. You are our best referral source. Email Ashley at program@mennohaven.com for any questions.

Guest Ministry

We had a summer filled with guests who reconnected with their biological and spiritual families, made new memories with their church families, experienced the amazingness of a weekend or week in nature with their youth camps, grew as a class and individuals on the Adventure Education Course, rekindled the fire of their relationship with Jesus with their youth group as well as boating, hiking, singing, eating, climbing, and relaxing. It was wonderful watching and facilitating guests experiencing God's World and Christ's Kingdom as they worshiped, fellowshiped and recreated on this sacred ground of Menno Haven. We heard reports of spiritual growth and renewal. If you were one of these folks who spent time here this summer, we are so glad we could host you. We can't wait to see you all again!



many thanks to our volunteers

SOOP Volunteers - Bob King & Enos and Carolyn Tice

Menno Haven was blessed to have 1 SOOP (Service Opportunities with Our Partners) volunteer, Bob King, come for the month of April and 2 SOOP volunteers, Enos and Carolyn Tice, here for the month of August. Bob is a retired arborist and he used his skills extensively over the 4 weeks he was here assessing and pruning trees around the main campus. Thank you for beautifying Menno Haven!! Thank you to all the volunteers who worked alongside him to clean up all the resulting debris! Enos and Carolyn are the parents of a past summer staffer, Isaac Tice. They are making their way around the US serving at different SOOP locations throughout this calendar year and stopped in at Menno Haven for the month of August. We were so blessed to have them help in program, maintenance, and kitchen areas. [You can read more about their time here.](#)



This summer would not have been a success without the help of all of our amazing volunteers. You all did so many things - big and small - to make running the programs, caring for the facilities, and hosting the guest groups, etc run more smoothly. You are appreciated more than you know. [Check out pictures of our many volunteers and their projects here.](#)

Many thanks to: Brooklyn Aberle, Don Anderson, Jay Bachman, Tim Beyer, Cora Botts, Augie Calsyn, Susan Cater, Steve Capes, Dave Colter, Eric Davis, Chrissy Ensley, Allison Ensley, George Ensley, Bob Erck, Aaron Fleming, Ana Fleming, Marietta Fowler, Asa Gartin, Jada Gartin, Martha Gartin, Norm Gross, Donna Grove, Joe Grove, Hal Gustafson, Doug Goertzen, Wesley Hershberger, Caleb Johnson, Lydia Johnson, Ed Johnson, Rebecca Kauffman, Phil Kaufmann, Pam Kaufmann, Aaron Kaufmann, Bob King, Kate Kortemeier, Ryan Leander, Dan Litwiller, Susette Litwiller, Kevin Litwiller, Lisa Litwiller, Cameron Litwiller, Ashley Litwiller, Andy Lucas, Sheila Lucas, Duane Maust, Kim McGlaughlin, Mack McGlaughlin, Jim Parrot, Nathan Perrin, The People Church Men's Group, Kyle Piper, Denise Plevendoski, Evan Richards, Mona Richards, Linea Richards, Jerry Roeschley, Donna Roth, Deb Rowland, Jim Schrock, Linda Schrock, Izzy Simmering, Lexi Simmering, Tracy Sondag, Mackenzie Sondag, Alaina Sondag, Cameron Steelberg, Lydell Steiner, Ron Sutter, Lori Tibbits, Harry Tibbits, Hayden Tibbits, Savannah Tibbits, Jon Tumblin, Tiffany Tumblin, Jude Ulrich, Ken Wolf, Micah Yoder, Paul Yoder, CJ Yoder, Spencer Yoder, Simon Zehr

upcoming programs

Work Day - October 28th

Come join us for Fall Work Day! This is a family friendly way to volunteer and to experience camp. We will have outside and inside tasks available. See flyer above for details or check out the website for the most up-to-date information. If there are those you know who would like to participate in Work Day but are unable to come or help physically, we invite persons to take time on October 28th to pray for Menno Haven and the ministry that happens here.

We will be *gathering at Eagle Wing Activity Center* for a light continental breakfast and a devotional at 8:00 am. Projects will take place throughout the morning and afternoon with a break mid-day for lunch. Work Day will finish around 4:00 pm. Feel free to come for all or part of the day.

Sign up to attend this event by going to mennohaven.com/work-day and clicking on the sign up link. You can always email Sheena at sheena@mennohaven.com or call the office at 815-255-4649 as well. Having persons sign up ahead of time helps us to plan tasks and lunch needs.



Christmas Family Getaway - December 15-17

What are you doing December 15-17? We want to invite you and your family (whether it's by blood family or chosen family) to join us for a weekend at camp getting your hearts and mind ready for the Christmas season! This Christmas adventure includes all your meals for a whole weekend, lodging, activities and use of all our grounds for 3 days of memory building for your people. [You can register here](#) to join us for this weekend OR for a Winter Getaway February 23-25.



Save the dates for:

[High School Winter Retreat](#) - January 12 - 14

[Junior High Winter Retreat](#) - January 19 - 21

[Winter Family Getaway](#) - February 23 - 25

[Women's Retreat](#) - April 26-28

[Family Camp](#) - May 24-27

[Rally Day](#) - May 27

[For more 2024 dates check out our 2024 Program Calendar](#)



ways to be involved

- **October is Pastor Appreciation Month.** Encourage your pastor to take advantage of Menno Haven's offer for free lodging and day use for a pastoral personal retreat. Pastors can come alone or bring their spouse or family as well. October is the perfect opportunity to take advantage of this! Lodging is based upon availability. Contact Bekka at info@mennohaven.com for more information.
- **Guest Host** - Help host weekend or weekday groups and learn more about our retreat ministry. Contact Sheena @sheena@mennohaven.com for more information. Available dates are:
 - September 29 - October 1
 - October 27 - 29
 - November 2 - 5
 - November 9 - 12
 - December 1 - 2
 - December 15 - 17
 - December 26-29
 - January 2 - 6
- **Amazon Wish List** - If you'd like a simple way to give to camp, we have items of all price ranges. Amazon can ship directly to us to replenish our inventory to share with and serve our guests.

- **Can't come on October 28 for our Fall Work Day?** No problem. Pick a day that works for you and us, bring your family / your youth group / your Sunday School group / come on your own, and have fun. Contact Sheena at sheena@mennohaven.com for more information.
- **Interact with us on social media:** [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#). We love to connect with you!
- **Give a financial gift.** Your financial gift today will make a big difference in the ministry of Menno Haven. You can [donate here](#) or mail a gift to 9301 1575 East St, Tiskilwa, IL 61368.

Menno Haven Camp & Retreat Center



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www.mennohaven.com