



Dear friends of Camp Shalom,

Shalom. It's both a greeting and farewell that means "peace to you." And in a deeper way, it's the presence of connectedness and well-being—exactly what Camp Shalom offers in its time and place apart. At camp, people connect to others and God's creation, experiencing the ingredients to grow and flourish.

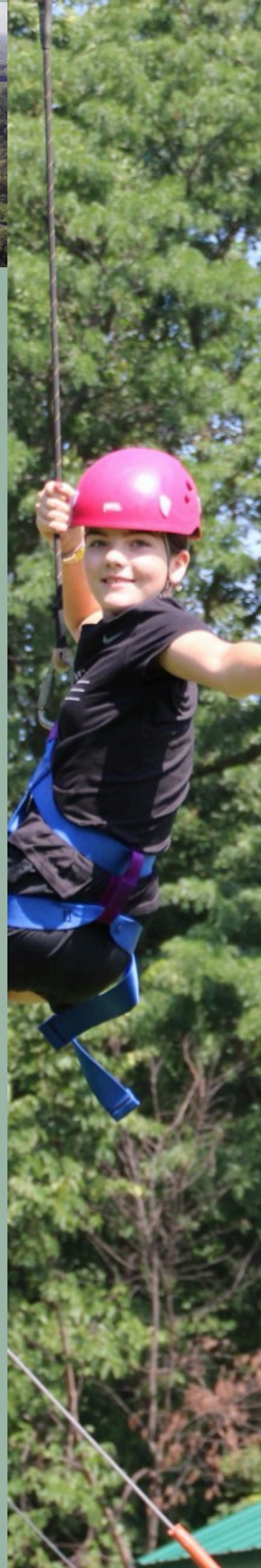
This year, like every summer since 1976, lives have been changed by Camp Shalom. Here are a few snapshots of those transformed lives. The first image: it's a Friday morning in July and the Near Campfire is packed full of campers and parents. A village camper stands in front, surrounded by his cabinmates. He opens his Bible, and with a hint of a lisp, reads the scripture. As he speaks God's word with boldness, no one would know that this kid is exceedingly shy, away from home for the first time, never before having courage to talk in front of others. He's just one of the hundreds of young people who **experience individual growth while learning to live in Christian community.**



"The staff does an amazing job of building a Christian community in which each camper feels safe, included, and valued no matter who they are or where they are from."

~ Camper Parent

At Camp Shalom, campers try new things outside their comfort zones; they build both independence and interdependence while growing their faith and life skills. Surrounded by a great, well-trained staff, younger campers work together to try to capture the flag during all-camp games and older campers rely on each other to complete the ropes course or get to the top of the climbing wall. In quieter moments, campers share in writing something positive about each of their cabinmates, learning to see the goodness in others and giving campers something to carry home that reminds them they are cared for by many.



Another image: a senior in high school, Chaz Nomura, smiles with joy and belonging as his forehead drips with water from the Maquoketa River. He's just been baptized at camp, surrounded by camp friends, church friends, school friends and family. Chaz did not grow up attending church. His experience at camp, and in particular a connection he made with a counselor, led him to explore a couple of different Christian faith traditions. The pastor who baptized him was from one of the churches he explored. Chaz chose Ben Carlson, a former camper and our recent Operations Director, as a baptismal sponsor. Chaz' baptism is a powerful example of how people come to know Jesus and begin a life of following him, because of Camp Shalom. It also shows how camp's partnership with local churches supports the growing faith of our youth.

Camp is a place for faith formation. The geography of Camp Shalom is simply beautiful. It invites you to connect with nature and, in doing so, connect with God's infinite beauty and goodness. Many of Jesus' stories and examples are nature based and relationship based, and camp provides the perfect setting for campers to have an encounter with Jesus—some for the first time. Led by a camp staff full of positive role models who openly express their faith, electronic devices left at home, the impact of nature and relationships on campers' faith formation is life-giving and life-changing.

"Without devices my brain can settle, and it helps me a lot. In Bible study we focused a lot and talked so calmly. It was so peaceful, and I knew God was with me."

~ Camper



And one last image: the staff of Camp Shalom stand with their arms around one another singing the *Song of Blessing* at closing worship. "The Spirit of God's love invade the circle of your friends, God's vision keep you changing day by day." That blessing names the promise that the Spirit moves us into lives we could never before have imagined. The staff of Camp Shalom go from serving our young people out into serving the world.

Camp Shalom consistently forms leaders in our churches and communities. The statistics related to the availability of clergy and other church leaders is sobering. Thankfully, camps continue to play an important role in developing our future leaders. Many members of the clergy discerned their calls to ministry at camp, including at Camp Shalom. Staff members develop a love and passion for teaching about Jesus. They are role models for being a servant—paying attention, noticing and responding with care; putting others first and acting for the good of others when it doesn't benefit them. While growing in their faith, they also develop leadership skills as they work with others, preparing them to go out and lead in the world.

Our camp staff is full of young people who are inspired to serve and they go on to do so in all kinds of ways, including ministry, education, healthcare and social work. This past summer was no exception. Natalie Scheers served her first summer as our Program Director. After wrapping up her summer on staff, Ellie Lindmark started as the youth director at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Davenport. A recent graduate in nursing, Ellie Scranton volunteered as a healthcare coordinator and then started her career at a children's hospital. All three of these young adults started as campers and progressed to summer staff. Your support of camp helps shape these young people who connect their leadership and service to their faith.

Coming in 2025? More of this goodness, plus more options! To minister to children and youth, we need them at camp. Camp is full of fun and fellowship, and kids have an experience that can't be found elsewhere. Campers have opportunities to play outdoors and be silly, find joy in singing and worshipping around a campfire, and laugh at funny nicknames for things like the bus and the pool— all while being with young adults who care about them and live faith in an authentic way.

At the end of the summer, we did a full program review to understand how we can provide an even better experience for our campers and their families. We identified areas where we need to invest in our program, ways to reshape our daily schedules to allow for more camper choice, and changes to the weekly schedule to further support today's families. We are excited to "launch" (for example, rocket-building is coming to camp) more options for connecting, adventure, and faith formation next summer. We also have wonderful partnerships with community organizations that allow us to offer programs for individuals with special needs and to collaborate with other non-profits like Big Brothers Big Sisters, Cancer Support Community/Gilda's Club, Tapestry Farms and Boys and Girls Clubs. We look forward to creating more connections and bringing more people to camp, including through the multi-purpose Shalom Lodge that is currently under construction.

Running a camp takes a lot of resources. In order to continue the high quality of Camp Shalom, we will need to increase the price of camp next summer. After holding the price the same for the past two summers, the price for a week of camp will increase to \$575 next summer. It is the generosity of camp supporters, like you, that allows us to offer camp at this price. We all know how food prices (and the prices of everything) have increased over the last few years. Camp Shalom is not immune to these cost increases, nor are we immune to unexpected expenses like this year's tornado damage, as well as regrading and adding 200 tons of gravel to our miles of road.



We want to make sure that any kid who wants to experience the goodness of Camp Shalom can come to camp. For some campers, it is the only week of the summer they will have three meals per day offered to them, and a place of safety and belonging. **We want to increase the camperships (scholarships to help kids be able to go to camp) available and keep the cost of attending camp down. This can only be possible with the support and generosity of people like you, who know about the ways Camp Shalom changes lives.**


We know firsthand the difference your support makes. While Tom has been Executive Director of Camp Shalom for the past twelve years, he became a supporter of camp twenty-plus years earlier when his kids were campers. Tom still goes to find their names on the walls of the Craft Barn, where they wrote them as campers. Becky's son, Owen, just finished his 22nd summer connected to camp. While he didn't have a choice when he was a 10-month-old family camper, he later chose to keep returning to camp and, after wrapping up another summer on staff, is now back to the classrooms this fall—both working as a paraeducator and working toward a degree in elementary education. None of the images described in this letter could have happened without our shared commitment to creating and sustaining that sacred place up on the shores of the Maquoketa River.

How can you help? Please **pray** that all who come to camp—whether summer campers or others who come as part of family camps, retreats or events hosted for community organizations—will experience the peace, connectedness and well-being of shalom. Your **financial support** will help us continue to offer a time and place apart that encourages deeper faith, rich community and connection with nature. We cannot do the ministry we do with camp fees alone; we depend on the generosity of people like you, who have experienced why Camp Shalom matters. Using the information below, please consider making a personally significant financial gift. As we work to grow Camp Shalom, please also consider how you can encourage family, friends and neighbors to **register children and youth** for camp next summer.

Thank you for being a member of our community. Together we'll grow Camp Shalom and keep it affordable to all, ensuring more summers where campers and staff are able to flourish in this time and place apart.

Shalom,


Tom Bley
Executive Director


Becky Schmidt
President, Board of Directors

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Sara Sieren

Camp Shalom ● 2018 Grant St. ● Bettendorf, IA 52722



563.323.2790



www.campshalomia.org



campshalom@gmail.com