

PLEASANT HILL  OUTDOOR CAMP

KINGDOM HIGHLIGHTS

A PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S REPORT



2024

BY: KENAI



THE WHY?

The job of a Program Director can be unique. I was recently talking to a friend who also has the same job at a nearby Christian Camp, we were joking in all seriousness that our job is like a chicken running around with its head cut off. In the morning you are waking up splashing water on your face and then screaming GOOD MORNING CAMPERS & GOOD MORNING GOD, then running to the activity field to set up all the activities from archery, bikes, rockwall, and zipline, then assigning staff to the positions they need to be at, then checking and scoring the cabins for Cabin clean up, and then leading staff meetings and encouraging staff, and running to the lake to fill up the water trampoline with a leaf blower, and then preparing the waterfront and organizing the lifeguards, and then to setting up the choose your activity area with the camp store, setting up the slip n Slide by blowing up the sides and turning on the hose, making sure hotspot and tablet gets to the camp store, checking that the bathrooms are presentable, then leading a meal and eating as fast as you can so the evening game can be ready when the campers arrive, filling up the water jugs for campers, making sure the CIT are in dishpit, and then jumping in front of kids for Chapel, and then having crucial conversations with staff, or confronting a homesick camper, and reading a Bible story to the campers. We talked about how running around like this makes it difficult to savor the moment.

There is this moment that sticks out to me when a staffer was talking to me and they shared that they felt like they weren't able to relish in the moment and felt cheated. I resonated with the sentiment but definitely not one I'm a stranger to at any length. In times like this, I am reminded of the verse, Psalm 90:12, which says to number your days. The poet is calling us to appreciate the days God has given us. If we are moving too fast we often forget to be thankful & can become blind to blessings right in our faces. When I am feeling this way, I usually question if this feeling good and true. More often than not it is not true, but something the enemy plants as a seed of discouragement. My response over the years that I have learned comes from Psalm 34:1, which says to bless the lord at all times sometimes gets summarized as count your blessings. Counting your blessings is an act of slowing down, reflecting, and showing gratitude. Whenever I feel rushed or feel like I am running- I take it as a reminder to slow down and thank God for all he has done. This highlight newsletter was created to slow down and spotlight some of the blessings that we had spotted throughout the summer. It is so good to know that no matter how rushed we feel, if we slow down there are probably hundreds of blessings right in front of our eyes. What a reminder that God provides and then some. What a mighty God we serve.

Medieval Day was celebrated on Wednesday- and it proved to be a favorite throughout the week. Campers and staff came and understood the assignment wearing their medieval garb



Our Medieval Tournament included Cabin Crest Making, Pool Noodle Jousting, and Capture the Spheres (similar to Capture the Flag). Campers even got to see their counselors compete in a jousting battle.



At the beginning of the summer, we needed a Health Officer. Kenai's 2 family members, Mamma Kenai and Giant Eagle were able to come and serve as our Health Officer. God provided while we were in need. What a miracle!



Rubix, an Alumni Staffer from Summer '19, '21, & '22 in the off-season went to go get trained as a Lifeguard Instructor & trained 5 of our staffers! Camp Nuhop helped and let us borrow their CPR manikans- which was a huge help.



We were lifeguard training in the lake and some of things became difficult in the lake- so we called Mohican Lodge asking if we could use their pool and it was a resounding yes, which was a huge help with wrapping up lifeguard training .



Our waterfront wasn't quite optimum for all parts of the training, so Kenai talked with the Program Director at Otyokwah, Evan, who allowed us to use their pond for some parts of the training. We are so grateful for our partnership in serving God together!





Campers enjoyed the new and improved beach area. They loved jumping on the water trampoline, using our new paddleboards, and playing in the sand donated by Carl Short and delivered by Steve Roberts. Thanks to Karl Reuther, Ashland County Community Foundation, & Samaritan Hospital Foundation for helping us improve this space!



On Thursdays, we have what we call Say So, where if campers decide to dedicate or rededicate their lives to Jesus- then they can say so. There were 78 decisions made for Christ this summer!!!

Thank you to Seren, a previous summer staffer, who came throughout the season to help in multiple areas rather in the kitchen, maintenance, or program. He was willing to jump in where he was needed. We are so thankful we have people like him on our team.



Morph and Wave came about a month earlier before staff and campers arrived and worked tirelessly to get camp ready by completing a million and one projects. We definitely could not have run camp without their dedication!



During the Summer, 3 of our staffers reignited their faith with God. Also, two staff decided that they wanted to be baptized to show a representation of an inward change.



We were able to offer approximately \$13,000 to families in need through our scholarship fund, which is funded by generous donors. The camp was able to reach and impact kids due to the generosity of others. Working with other organizations and churches 40% of our campers received the funds they needed to come to camp. Thanks to the churches a part of the Presbytery, Ohio Rise, and Advocates for Families.

Coming into the summer, we had no idea who was going to cook for us. We had volunteers come and help us out like Kia, Tabitha & Amber, and even both our Executive and Program Director, Mamma Carole and Kenai, spent time helping out in the kitchen. Also, So it was a blessing, when Catherine, a friend of Carole, decided to come all the way from Georgia and come cook for us.



**PLEASANT HILL
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Thank you to Heather Miller who brought to life the theme this year by creating our logo for this year's theme. She was a wonderful creative eye and heart. Thanks for all your hard work and intentionality.



80% of our Campers in Training were previous campers in our Leaders in Training Program. This shows the strength of our progression and retention programs at PHOC. We are so glad to call these previous campers a part of our camp family.



One day, the LIT activity looked like it was going to be rained out. Our Program Director was able to reach out to the Executive Director of the Buckeye Imagination Station Museum, who was willing to share his space with us. The LITs enjoyed playing 6-person air hockey, mini golf, skeeball, arcade games, grappling walls, and running through laser rooms. Thanks, Fred Boll who gave us this gift, because it was definitely a gift to our campers.

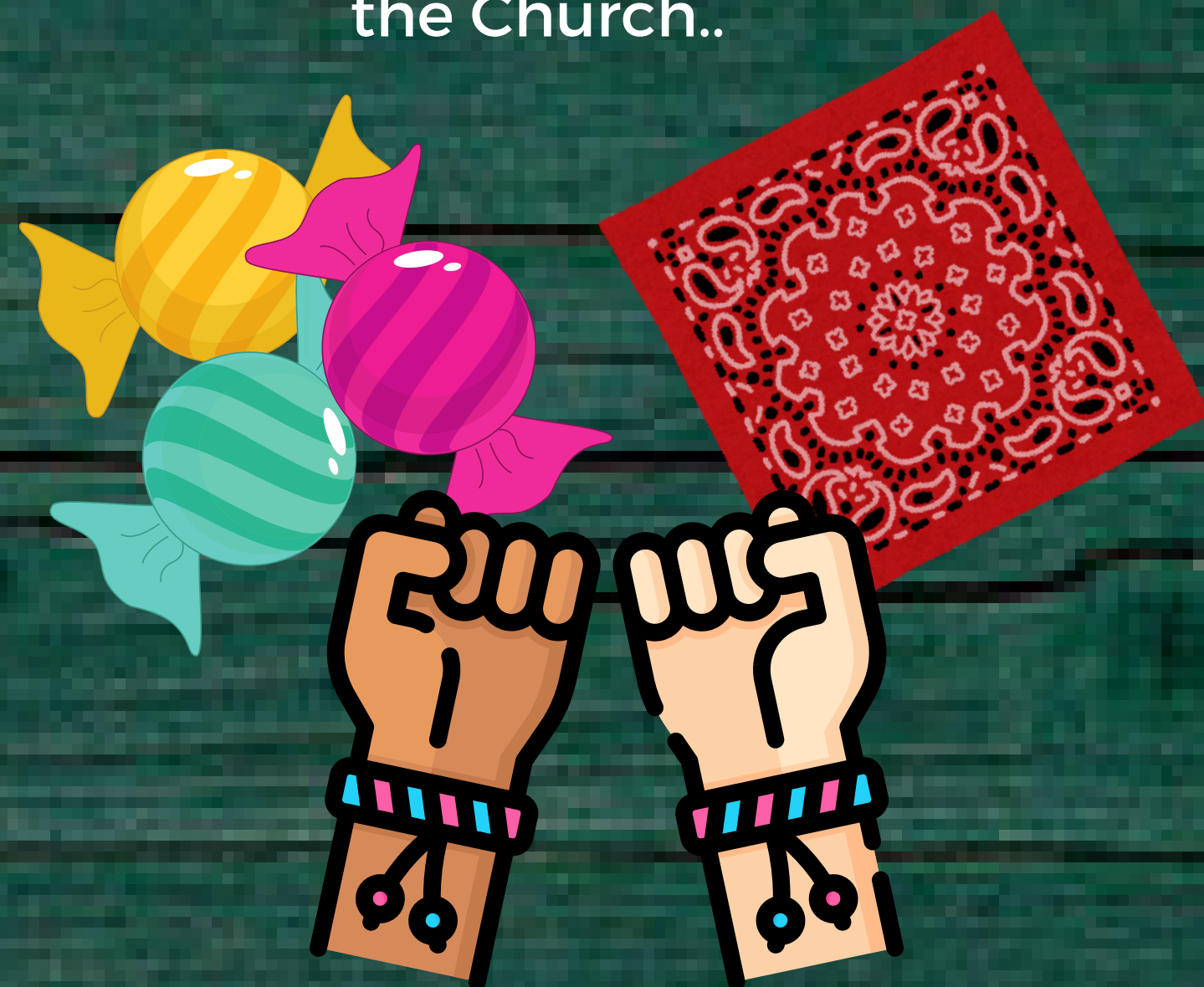
Thanks to Raber Tarp Shop, who came in February to professionally patch our Water Trampoline. The fixed water trampoline did increase campers getting in and soaked. This year's campers got a chance to take a swim test, which if passed they did not need to wear a life jacket- this excited campers to enjoy more of the lake.



55.5% of our Summer Staff hires this summer were BIPOC hires. At Pleasant Hill, we pride ourselves on being diverse. We are so glad that our camp reflects the image that Jesus draws of the Church..



In a year where we anticipated a decrease due to the departure of our former Executive Director, we actually saw an increase. Surpassing expectations, we had a total of 195 registered campers. We count this as a win because campers had the opportunity to encounter and embrace the wonderful love of Jesus.



Best Selling Item in the Camp store was Extreme Airheads, Bandannas, & Jesus LOVES You Bracelets.



Belle, one of our CITs, won the Chad Award. This award goes to the staffer who we believe embodied the mission of the camp. Despite being the youngest on staff, she had such a dedication to the work and campers that was contagious. She has such a heart for God and a desire to know him more. Thank you Belle for all you did this summer!

Our chapel is filled with a gospel-centered message. Our hope is campers walk away knowing there is a God who created everything, then sin entered the world, and He came to save it. Our theme this year was Kingdom. Campers followed the story of the King, Prince, & Knights. Through this story, they learned about the story of creation, fall, and redemption.



Chapel is filled with Christian songs from intentionally different traditions. We hope this teaches kids that worship can be different across the board. We hope this opens their eyes to the importance of worship and how it can be shown in hymnals, contemporary, dance, Christian pop, Christian hip hop, & so much more



In Chapel, there is even an opportunity for staffers to share their testimonies with campers. As the Bible says, we believe there's power in the testimonies of others. When Staffers would share their stories, it was a delight to see campers relate and resonate with the stories they heard. We had staffers tell us that even throughout the week campers were pulling them aside to ask them questions.



Thank you, Tabitha Williams (one of our board members), Doug, and Patty Shannon who sponsored our Leaders In Training float down the Black Fork Mohican River on inner tubes. Our campers enjoyed trying out something they had not tried before. This gift was not underappreciated!

We have been partnering with Equestrian Valley for years now. We are so thankful for them allowing us to go to their ranch and ride their horses. Our Horse Lovers' campers go on and on about how it is a highlight of their week. This program continually gets sold out and is our most popular, this year alone- there were 116 rides that we were able to supply.



Thanks to Carl, Fred, Gregg, Galen, & Steve for being our on-call Maintenance Team and helping out with items as they arose.

Our Kinder Camp, for ages 4-7, who come with an adult was a blast. We had the biggest Kinder Camp in recorded history with 34 campers. We hope this program gives them a taste of camp! They enjoyed their chapel time, going down the zipline, and up the rockwall.



Our LIT Program, which is a newer program is definitely thriving. We had 8 campers who were interested in becoming staffers one day. They learned about leadership throughout the week and went on adventures like floating down a river and doing other fun things. They also got to learn some behind-the-scenes things working in areas like kitchen, maintenance, program, and administrative.



New to this summer: We invited the teens up to the Recreation Barn to play a competitive & friendly game of Glow in the Dark Street Hockey.

New to this Summer: We went up to Barn after Say So and had a celebration to signify the party going on in Heaven. We played music, danced, and had black lights, glow sticks, and foam sticks.

40% increase of Angel Tree Campers, an organization that pays for children of incarcerated parents to come to camp for free. We believe every kid needs camp and we love that we partner with this organization to make this happen. We are glad we were able to give camp to not only these kids but all the kids and families we were able to serve!





This activity called "The Game" is a long-held tradition. This year was medieval-themed, with princes, kings, archers, jesters, knights, and dragons. Campers look for play pit balls worth points and interact with characters in this fantasy world who may help or hurt their quest.



Thanks to the Ashland County Community Foundation for the grant & we were able to get new archery equipment like new targets, arrows, and bows- along with new bike equipment.





This summer we challenged staff to be the Kingdom. We started in staff training learning that God revealed himself in the Old Testament in two main ways the Tabernacle and the temple. These two structures were how the Israelites were able to meet with the presence of God. Both of these structures were elaborate and were of intricate designs. As a Program Director, I find it quite profound that the place God decides to dwell in the Old Testament is a tent (tabernacle).

With the arrival of Jesus on Earth, things changed. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 (CSB) we find “Don’t you yourselves know that you are God’s temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” There’s a shift here from the Old Testament to the New Testament. See in the Tabernacle, there was the ark of the covenant, which held the 10 commandments. The 10 commandments and being obedient to them were essential to being an Israelite. Jeremiah 31:33 says that the Lord put his teachings within the Israelites and wrote them on their hearts. Now jump forward to 2 Corinthians 6:16b, “For we are the temple of the living God, as God said: I will dwell and walk among them, and I will be their God and they will be my people. FULL STOP. See the difference- the temple is NOW US. Christ's followers are how people get to experience God’s presence.

This is why 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20 questions, “Don’t you know your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God with your body.” We are God’s dwelling place, God of all the universe, decides that we are worthy enough for his presence to dwell within us. This of course is not by our own doing- the price we were bought with was Jesus, God, dying on the cross for us. When Jesus dies on the cross, the veil of the temple is torn, which signifies that there is no separation between God and us (Matthew 27:51). God no longer dwells in the temple but in those who accept Jesus into their heart. So if you ever have a doubt in your mind about whether you are worthy or good enough, know that God says you are.

"WE ARE GOD’S DWELLING PLACE, GOD OF ALL THE UNIVERSE, DECIDES THAT WE ARE WORTHY ENOUGH FOR HIS PRESENCE TO DWELL WITHIN US."

Now the question begs, what does it mean to be the temple of God? The temple is where the sacrifice was bought and offered to God, usually a lamb was sacrificed to forgive sins. This is why I love God’s word so much!! His temple is not only where God dwells, but it is a place of sacrifice and worship. This is why Romans 12:1 says to present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.



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Being the Temple of God means sacrifice and worship. This sacrifice is laying down what you want for what God wants. It is putting down the flesh to follow God. Jesus puts it this way in Mark 8:34 & Luke 9:23- he asked his disciples to pick up their cross & walk. This is a challenge to not only them but to us- to commit their lives to God. It is a challenge of selflessness and submission to God. Paul says that he dies daily, meaning he picks up his cross and sacrifices every day. This act of being the temple is not a decision but a lifestyle. It is something we choose EVERYDAY.

This worship and sacrifice look like trying our best to be obedient to God and his commandments because they're written on our hearts. In the New Testament, Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus responds "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus was asked to give the greatest commandment, but instead of giving one, he gave two commandments intentionally. This verse is reminiscent of the SHEMA, which was a prayer in the Israelite culture that they lived by. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 declares, "Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. 9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates." God is commanding a type of dedication and obedience to loving Him, he says let it be on your forehead (for everyone to see).

Now bringing both of these ideas together, God is calling us to be his temple and how people experience him: we do this by loving God and our neighbors. "By this, EVERYONE will know that you are my disciples, if you LOVE one another (John 13:35 CSB)." We charged our staff and our campers this summer with this. The way people experience and embrace the amazing love of Jesus is through Christ-followers. Being Kingdom means loving God and others, with all your heart, soul, and mind. We are called to the temple/kingdom, wherever we go. Rather that is back into our own homes, schools, neighborhoods, or jobs- we are called to help others experience God's love. Of course, this isn't a charge just to our staff and campers- but to all those who claim to follow Jesus, we should ask daily, "How am I being Kingdom today?"

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