



CELEBRATING



years & beyond

CAMP FOSTER

EST. 1912

YMCA

DEAR

Friends

A LETTER
FROM THE
DIRECTOR



It is an honor to be a part of the centennial of this magical place we know as Camp Foster. I find it humbling to be the director of such a place, following in the footsteps of many leaders since 1912.

It is no mystery that the success of an organization has much to do with its leadership. Camp Foster's leadership has come from many sources, including the first few that blazed a trail and set a solid foundation for a special place. Thanks to all of those from the cooks, nurses, administration, maintenance/caretakers, and those wild and crazy role models we call counselors, who have shaped camp into what it is today. At every level of this organization, it is the leadership of those who care that have made a difference.

As we find ourselves reflecting on 100 years past and considering what the future may bring, we focus on the three **C**'s:

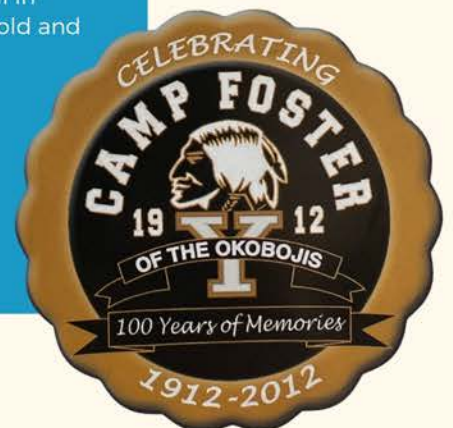
First, **C**onnecting with you, the alumni, the people that year after year make the magic and the memories. We want to hear your stories of yesteryear and about where your future may take you. We are also **C**elebrating the millions of smiles, memories, and moments that got us to this point today. For 100 years of strong and challenging summers, we still call this piece of beautiful ground near East Lake Okoboji our home and continue to circle the campfire each night to sing songs. And lastly, to **C**ontinue the quality camping experience into the future. Because somebody before us had the foresight to plant trees or construct buildings in the right places, camp's infrastructure has been a comfortable place for kids to be kids. Our goal is to continue to add quality programs, buildings, and staff for the future.

My dream would be to have alumni spanning a century to be able to share stories about "what we used to do" and "what we do today". Then, come to the conclusion that 100 years has seen many things change and many things stay the same, like the tradition of teaching Christian Principles through the talents and time of tremendous role models.

Please join us in celebrating, by looking through the records and visiting the place that started so many memories and traditions. Please soak it all in and keep the memories alive. It is not ours to keep, but it is ours to hold and to share with each other and the rest of the world.

On behalf of the Volunteers, Board of Directors, CEO, the staff of YMCA of the Okoboji's, all of those who've come before us, and myself... thank you!

Sincerely, Josh Carr



HISTORY

CAMP FOSTER IS ONE OF THE OLDEST CAMPS IN THE MIDWEST...



TWO HUNDRED-FOURTEEN

Acres

Camp Foster spans 214 beautiful acres on East Lake Okoboji in Spirit Lake, Iowa. It was the dream of Mr. Leonard Paulson, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) which started in Iowa Falls on the Iowa River in 1912 and moved to its current location in 1913.

In March of 1914, Thomas D. Foster, head of the Morrell Packing Company of Ottumwa, Iowa, purchased the original 47 acres for \$5,000. Mr. Foster gave \$1,000 of the \$5,000 as a gift for the purchase of the camp, while other donors gave the rest of the money.

Camp Foster became a model state camp for YMCA boys.

The camp motto was
"Each for all and all for each."

HISTORY

Camp Foster YMCA was formally dedicated on Sunday, June 14th, 1914. Dr. Howland Hanson, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Des Moines, gave the dedicatory address.

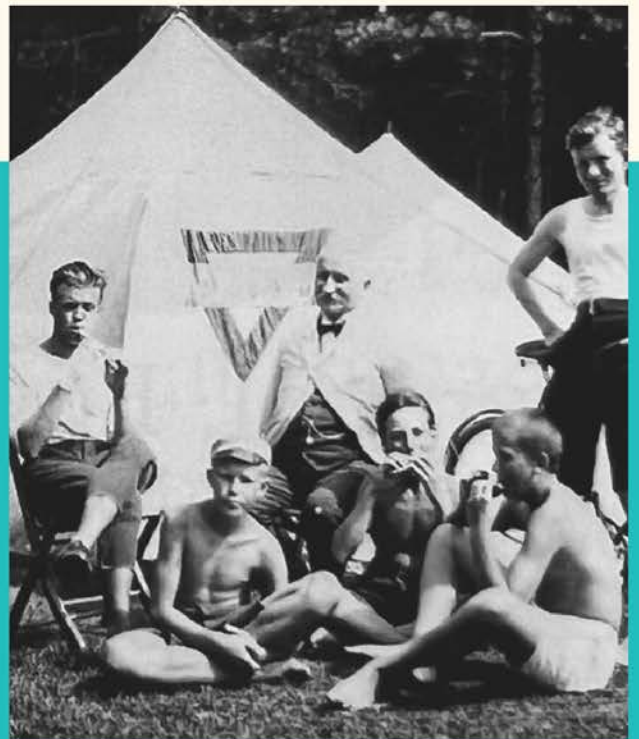
In the camps' early history, only boys were allowed to attend. By 1915, over 600 campers had visited Camp Foster.

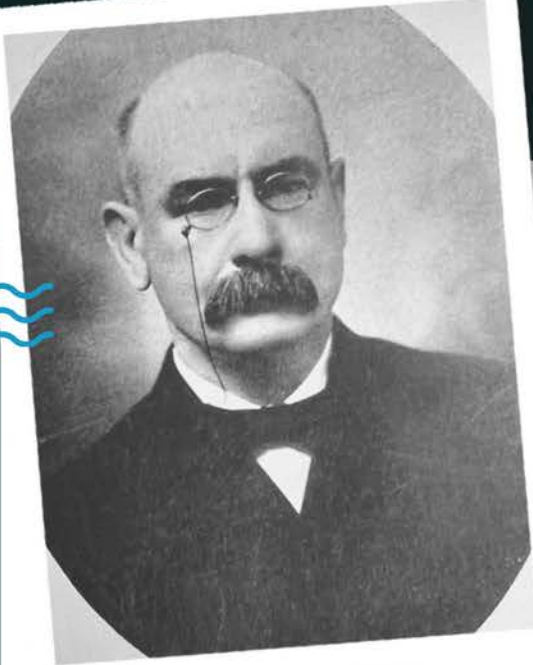


The first boys at the new site were from Buena Vista and O'Brien counties.

Following their stay, the State Boys' Camp opened, and over 125 boys from the state were in attendance. The program for the boys started in the mornings with class work and meetings, followed by the afternoon devoted to athletic sports, swimming, fishing, and boating.

The evenings focused on campfires, "sings," and speeches.





THOMAS DOVE

Foster

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Foster was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, November 25, 1847, son of William and Mary (Morrell) Foster. He attended schools in England and Ireland, but never graduated. In 1865, he was employed by the firm John Morrell & Company of Liverpool, England. He was transferred by the company in 1868 to New York and further advanced to become the firm's general manager. Mr. Foster became chairman of the company in 1893.

He moved to Ottumwa, Iowa, where he died on October 25th, 1915. Thomas was one of the first to enroll in the YMCA when it came to Iowa in the 1880s. Mr. Foster strongly believed in young men, as he had five sons of his own. Since he was a devout Christian, the YMCA had a large appeal to his convictions on stewardship.

When the state YMCA started looking for a location to start a boys' camp, Mr. Foster was consulted. He made one of the largest contributions in purchasing the land and helped decide on the site at East Lake Okoboji. When the state camp for boys opened, it was dedicated to Thomas Foster not just for his monetary donation, but because of his high Christian character and Godly life he lived.



LEONARD PAULSON

Camp Foster Director



BIOGRAPHY

Leonard Paulson was born on a small farm in Cherokee, Iowa, about 70 miles southwest of Okoboji. After graduating in 1908 from Ames College, he went to Washington, D.C. as the first secretary for high school boys in the world for the YMCA. He returned to Iowa as the State Boys' Work Secretary. He continued on to be the City Secretary for Boys' Work in St. Paul, MN. From there, He continued his profession as a Boys' Work Secretary in South America. He eventually returned to the states and died in 1928 at the age of 42.

Establishing a camp for boys' was Mr. Paulson's dream. Through his efforts, the camp became a reality in 1912. He was the director of Iowa's first YMCA camp for five years, named Camp Foster, in 1913.

The dining hall was constructed in 1929 and was dedicated in the honor of Mr. Paulson. The new lodge had a kitchen, a stone fireplace, a stage, and could seat 120 boys. The original lodge is still in use today and is now called the "old dining hall."









CAMP FOSTER DIRECTORS

LEONARD PAULSON, 1912 - 1915

HARRY GOODRICH, 1915 - 1922

CHASE FORD, 1923 - 1930

LOYAL THOMAS, 1930 - 1932

HARRY GLEIM, 1932 - 1937

G. R. PATTON, 1937 - 1942

VERN HARPER, 1942 - 1943

J. H. HOFF, 1943 - 1944

RAY NORMAN, 1944 - 1947

CARROLL LEWIS, 1948 - 1951

LEONARD WILKENING, 1952 - 1955

JEROLD NESETH, 1956 - 1960

HARL HOLT, 1961 - 1966

JOHN ADAMS, 1967 - 1977

KEN LOCKARD, 1978 - 1989

BRIAN PETERSEN, 1990 - 2006

TERESA GOEHRING, 2006 - 2008

JOSH CARR, 2008 - PRESENT



CAMP FOSTER'S *Early* HISTORY

Until the 1930s, the only way to get to camp was to come in by water on a paddleboat. Most campers had to take a train to Arnolds Park and then get on a paddleboat to get to camp. A road was made in the 1930s so automobiles could get to camp. In the first years of Foster, camp sessions were 10 days long, with three days between sessions to restock supplies. The first camp activities included swimming and diving in the lake, making archery bows by hand, shooting arrows, playing basketball, tennis, volleyball, hiking, leather crafts, fishing, weaving and wood carving.





13. TENT S. Y. M. C. A. CAMP East Okoboji, Ia. June 5-1935



14. REMAINE Y. M. C. A. CAMP East Okoboji, Ia. June 5-1935



DWIGHT N. LEWIS
MAYOR

REX RAMGAY
SECRETARY

City of Des Moines, Iowa
Department of Public Affairs
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

May 21, 1935

Mr. Harry Glein, General Secretary,
Young Men's Christian Association,
Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Dear Mr. Glein:

When Leonard Paulson suggested holding a State Y. M. C. A. Camp to me I favored the idea and he said he would start it on one condition, that I would help him put it through. The first year 1911 or 1912, I forget which, we held the Camp at a point near Iowa Falls on the Iowa River. This Camp was composed of high school boys exclusively and was so successful it was determined to carry on the work.

Mr. T. D. Foster of Ottumwa started out with the donation that secured the grounds. Mr. Will Whiting of Whiting, Iowa built Whiting Lodge. The dining hall was an old airdrome made of corrugated sheet iron and was built to accommodate a hydro airplane, I think owned by the Honorable Leslie M. Francis, and there were no other buildings for a time, the camp using tents with board floors for boys quarters. For several years we got out water at the spring inside the camp grounds but when we discovered this spring was not the best then plans were made for the water system, which is now in.

Later small cottages were built on the beach to accommodate the Camp Superintendent and other leaders, and cabins were built to take the place of the worn out tents. I contributed some to all of this but did not definitely pay for the erection of any particular cabins as I remember it. There was a group of men who made up a parade to build a cabin, at the extreme left of the cabin area, to be used as a directors cabin. I do not have the names of these men and the name of the gentleman who proposed it has slipped my mind at this time. I think Harry Goodrich could tell you more about the collection of money for building the cabins.

I did design the cabins except that in my design I provided for larger openings for windows. Mr. Ford thought the nights were too cool for so much open window space so he had the openings reduced to the present size. I still think I was right about it. Mr. Paulson was one of the finest men I have ever known and I was delighted when I could have a part in the erection of the building which bears his name. I wish it might be possible that Camp Foster could resume its place in the lives of the boys of Iowa. I am returning Mr. Ford's letter as requested.

Yours sincerely,

Dwight N. Lewis

+ This cabin did bear my name - don't know whether it does now or not.

CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

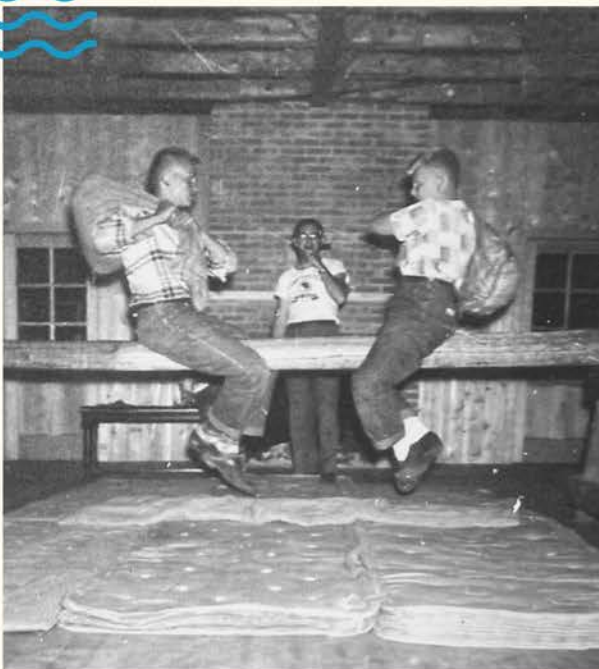
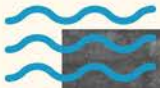
HONESTY

CARING

RESPECT

FAIRNESS

RESPONSIBILITY



WHITING LODGE

ONE OF CAMP FOSTER'S
FIRST BUILDINGS...



DONATED IN
1916

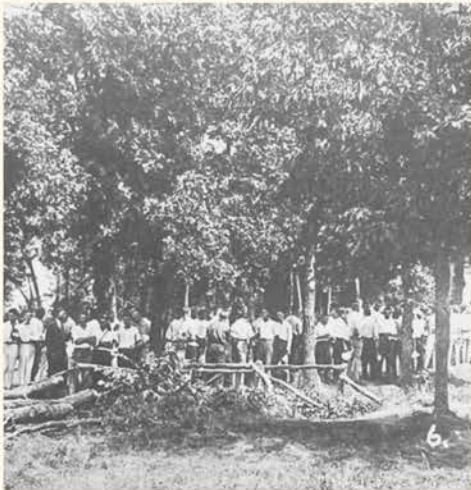


The Whiting Lodge was donated by Willard B. Whiting in Whiting, Iowa, in 1916. The original building was 28' by 60' with a large porch. The building was originally an airplane hangar before it was brought to the camp to be a social center.

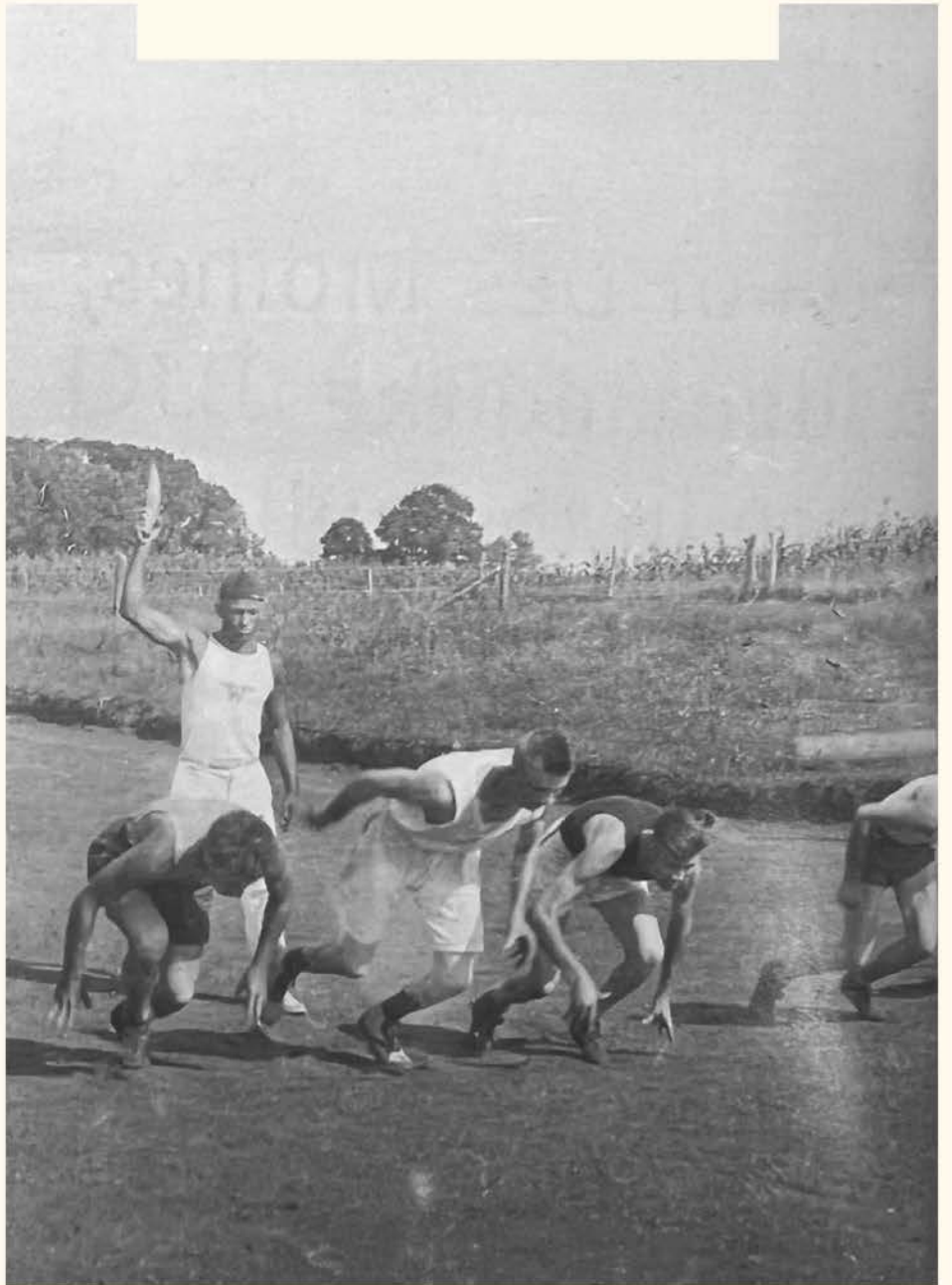


In 1949, the building collapsed because of a snowstorm. The new lodge was rebuilt in the same spot for \$12,00 in the spring of 1950.

The Whiting Rec Lodge is still used for the store, arts and crafts, pottery, and a gathering place.



1920 - 1929





In 1920, Camp Foster hosted the largest Boy Scout meeting ever in the history of Iowa. In 1923, the camp built the first authorized council ring in Iowa. That same year, the camp converted housing from tents to cabins. A total of 15 new cabins were erected in 1924. Each cabin had 10 beds and a reading table. The addition of running water came to the camp in 1925. The Leonard Paulson Dining Lodge was built in 1929 with electric lights.





1930 - 1939

In 1933 camp had 11 wood cabins, a director's cabin, a study, a cottage for staff, an outdoor chapel, an athletic field, volleyball court, a swimming dock, six rowboats, powerhouse, electricity in all buildings, a bath house with both hot and cold water, a tennis court, an ice house, and a refrigeration system.

The cost to come to camp was \$12.



Photography and riflery were added to the program list in 1939. A fully equipped darkroom was created for the new photography program. Dale Cole was the first to instruct Kodak's work and development. Wayne Miller supervised the construction of the rifle range and the boys to shoot firearms.

In the late '30s, the YMCA Pow Wow started coming to Camp Foster for their annual get-together. The Pow Wows were held for friendly Indian and Y-Pioneer Clubs of boys in the western district of the YMCA.



The three log cabins located along the lakefront, known today as the Lakefront Cabins, were built in 1940. W. C. Currell, president of the Emmet County State Bank, provided the money with others to build three of these cabins.

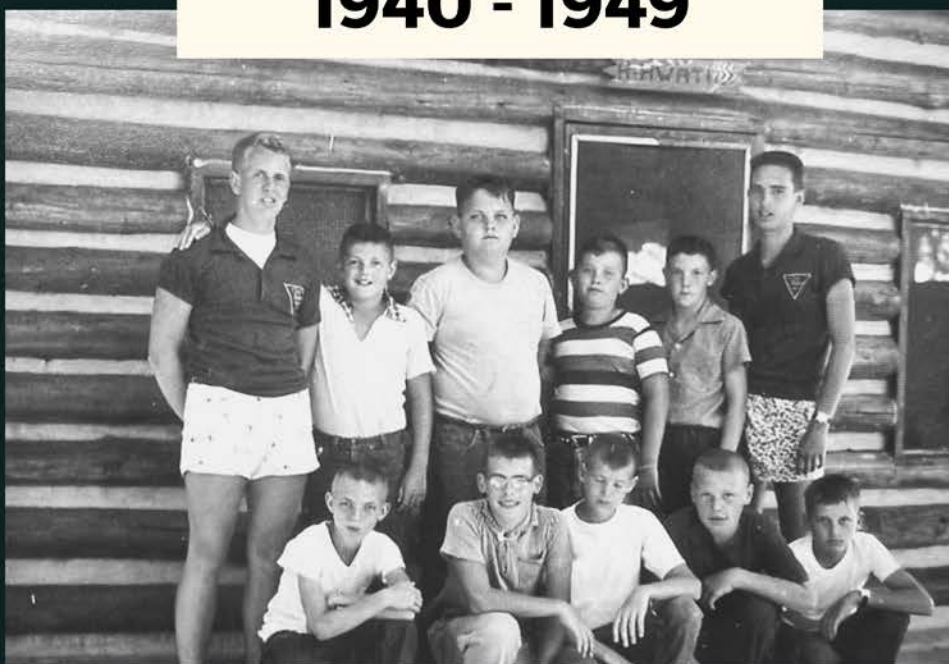
These cabins were 16 by 22 feet with closet and window space. By the 1940's, over 10,000 boys had been to Camp Foster.

New equipment was added to camp in 1945, including 8 new canoes, a new swimming, boating dock, and a new archery range.

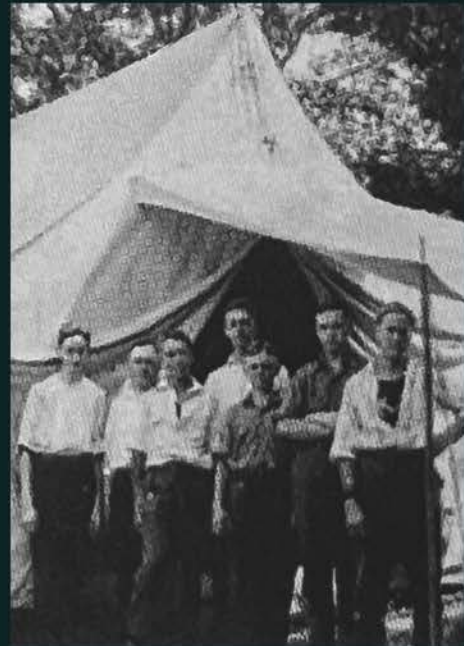
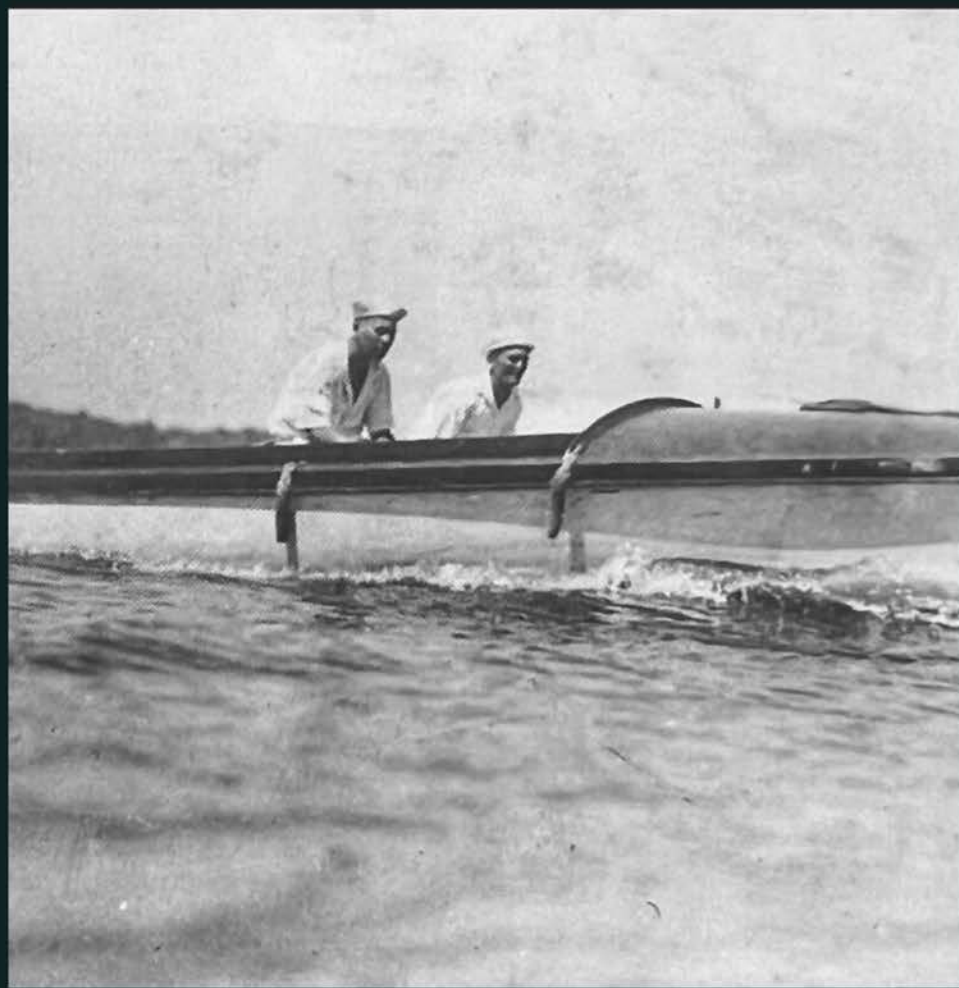
Other new programs offered in the '40s were canoe trips, overnight hikes, first aid, and various sports.

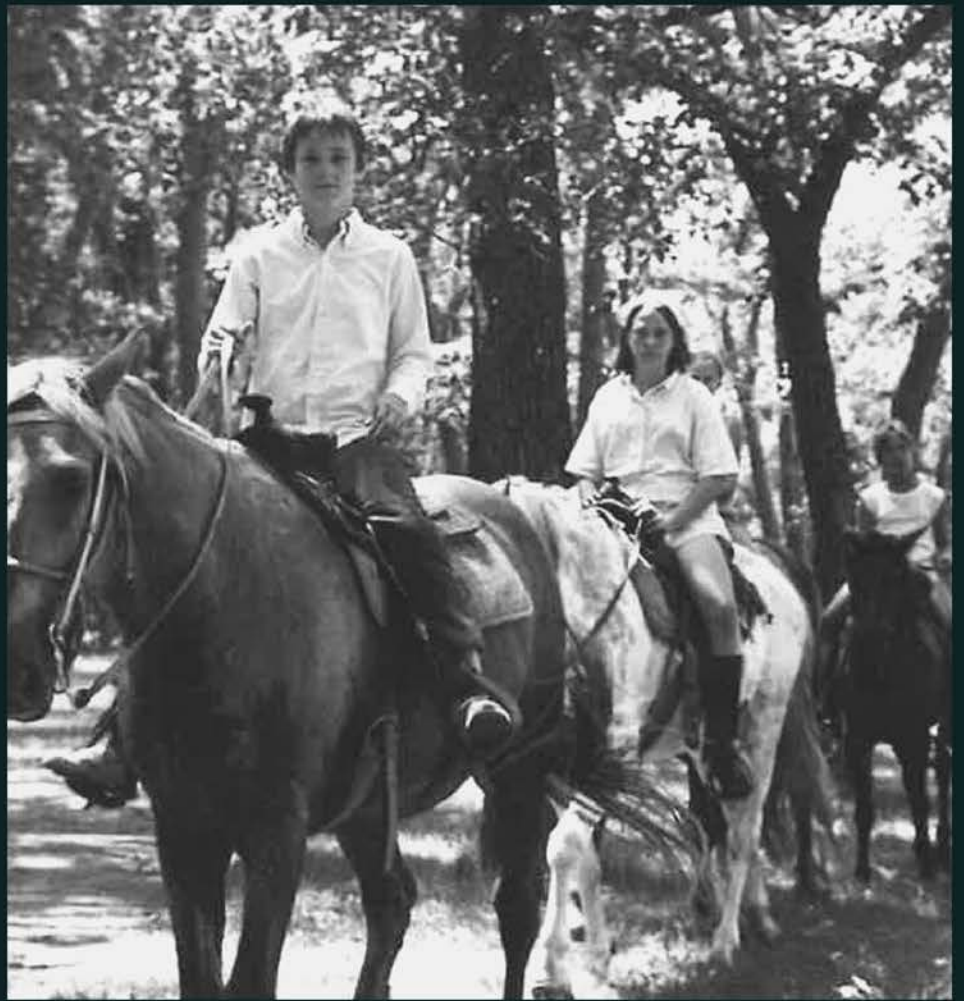


1940 - 1949







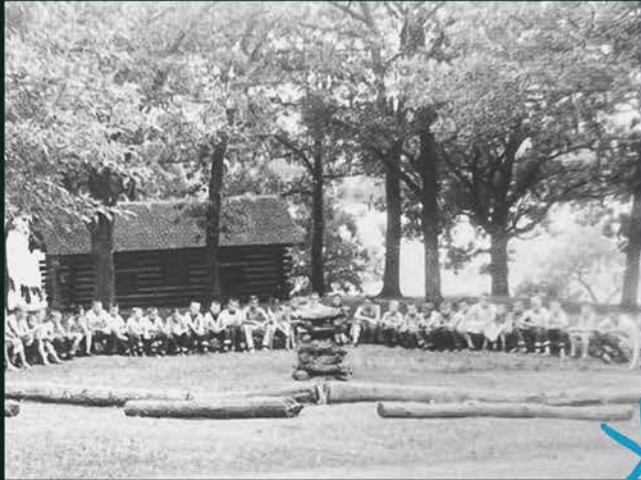


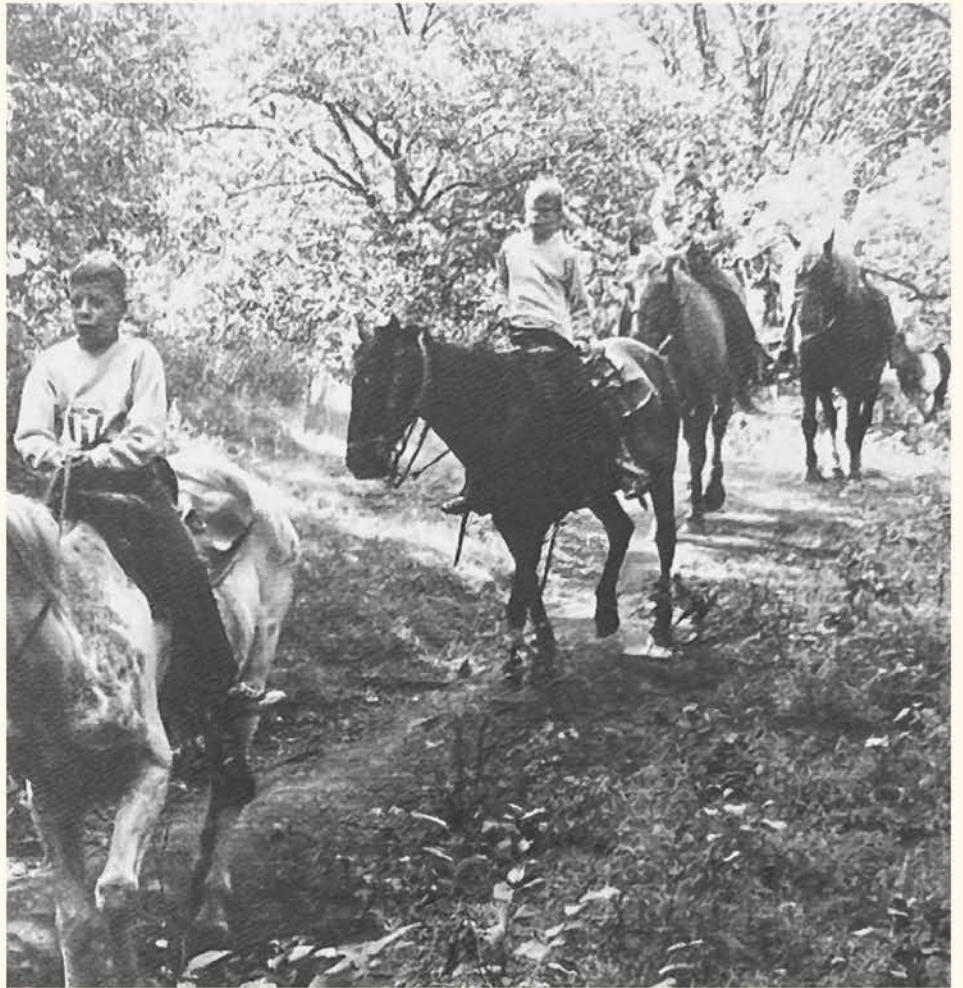


1950 - 1959

In the 1950s, the camp program was expanded to include camping periods for 4-H Club Girls and Boys. Heavy snow destroyed the Whiting Lodge in 1949, and it was replaced with a new recreation lodge before the beginning of the season in 1950.

The original Howard's Hall was built in 1952, which catalyzed many updates to Camp Foster's property. The camp began an improvement campaign in 1953 to pay for five double cabins, a health cabin for first aid, directors and program directors cabins and two staff cabins.







1960 - 1969



The 1961 summer marked the first record of the waterfront's swimming programs. At this time, the waterfront included four sailboats, 10 canoes, and a water-ski program.

Camp celebrated its 50th birthday in 1962. Buildings at this time included 14 cabins, a rec lodge, the dining hall, a horse ranch, a rifle range, the waterfront, and the staff cabins.



The 50th anniversary celebration was held on Sunday, July 8th. Approximately 150 people attended the celebration.

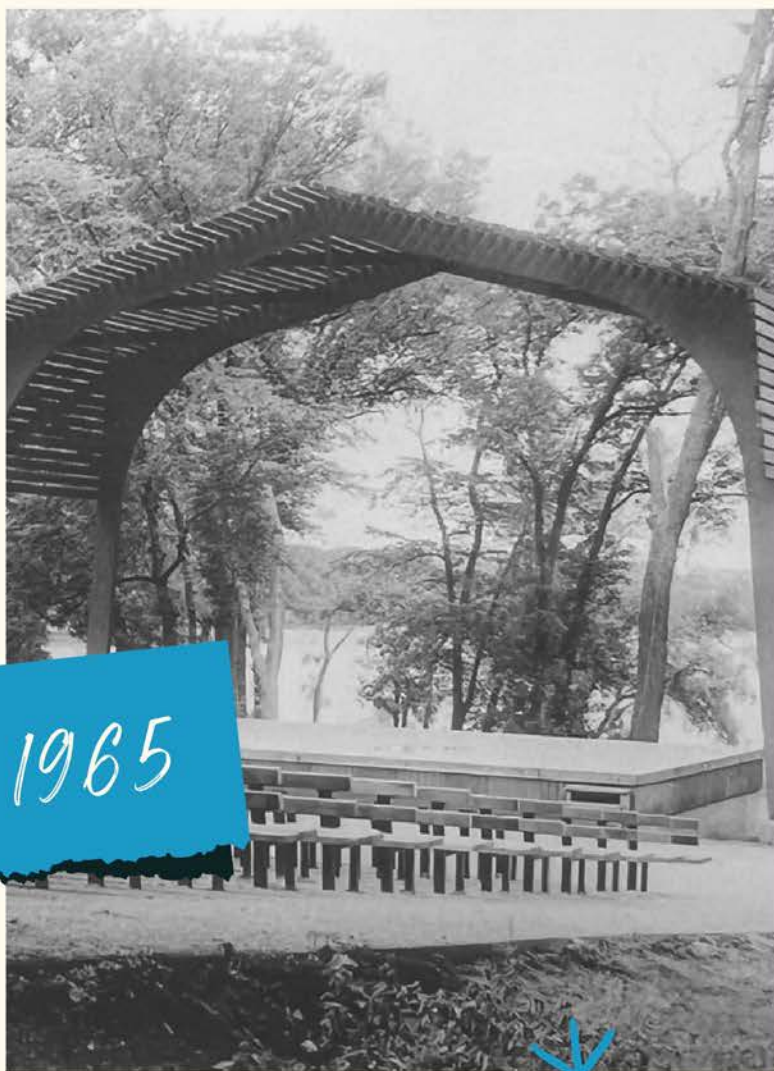
Camp Foster started singing "By Old Fosters" in 1962, which now is a tradition and is still sung today. Every campfire is ended by singing, "By old Foster's rippling waters, Where our campfires bright; Keep the flame of friendship burning, In our hearts tonight. Here we gather in the twilight. Loyal friends so true; Building in our hearts fond memories, Foster Camp of you!"



WILLIAM F. THOMPSON LEGACY

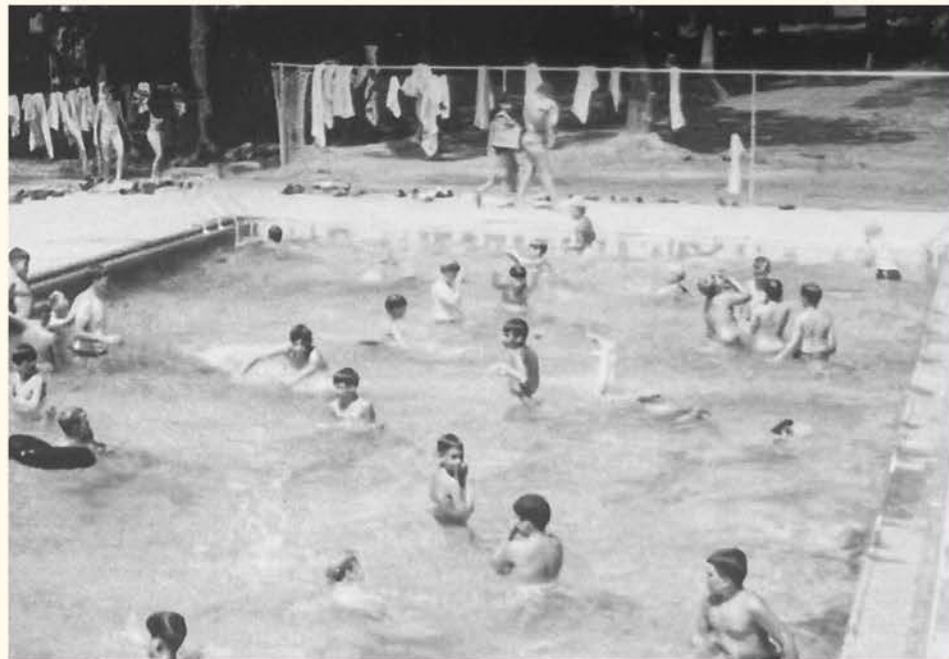
THOMPSON
CHAPEL

1965



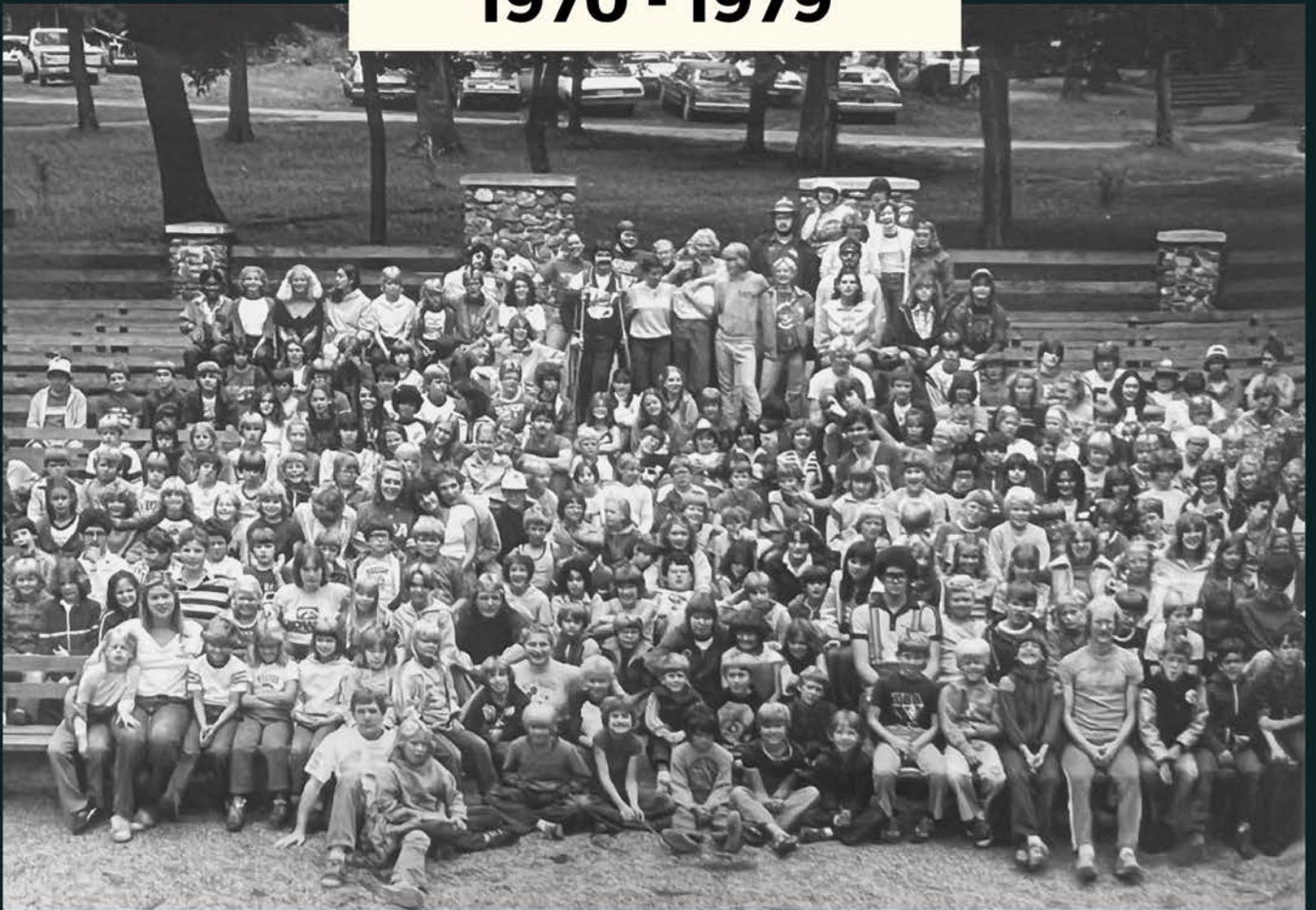
William F. Thompson was, by all accounts, a kind, decent, and generous man. Later in his life, he would serve on the Camp Foster board of directors. His funds helped the camp build the swimming pool, four double cabins, the outdoor chapel, and updates to several buildings. His gifts in 1965 were so crucial to the camp that the board of directors considered renaming the camp to Camp Foster-Thompson.

Being a humble man, it was believed he would not have wanted the name change, leading to the chapel's naming after Thompson. Renovations and updates to the Thompson Chapel were completed in the fall of 2011 to commemorate the 100th anniversary.





1970 - 1979





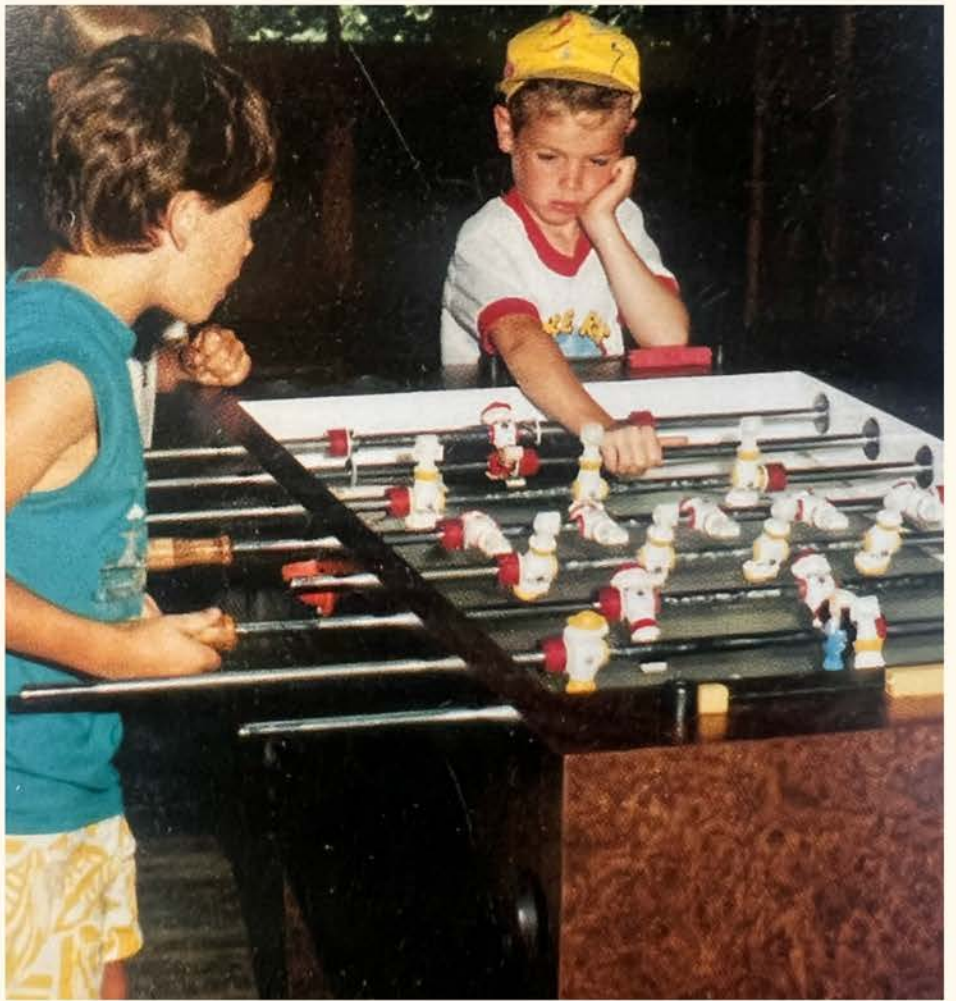
The first coed session was offered at Camp Foster in the summer of 1970. The idea for coed camping sessions came from parents wanting to send both their sons and daughters the same week so they could cut back on transportation.

In 1971, Camp Foster became Camp Foster YMCA, INC. working as an independent YMCA of its own. Camp Foster was purchased in 1971 by the Camp Foster YMCA Board of Directors for \$1.00. Water skiing was added to the program list in 1971 to help youngsters learn safety on the water and the fundamentals of waterskiing.

The Hadenfeldt Office and the Thompson Chapel were completed in 1972. A new day camp building and the program started in 1972 after the Earl Fisher family donated the building. It was offered to children ages 6, 7, and 8. Campers were picked up by bus in the morning, taken to camp for the day, and then returned home for the night. By the early '70s, over 50,000 boys and girls had come to Camp Foster.

The new dining hall was built in 1975, adding to the old one. This two-story addition created more space for eating upstairs, and the lower level created a storm shelter.

Beginning in the Fall of 1979, the camp began providing year-round facilities and programs for groups, retreats, and education, and expanding Foster's service to the community.



CAMP FOSTER

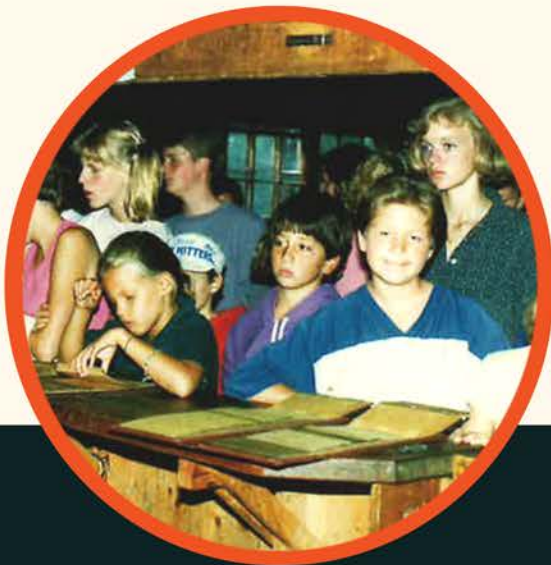
1980 - 1989

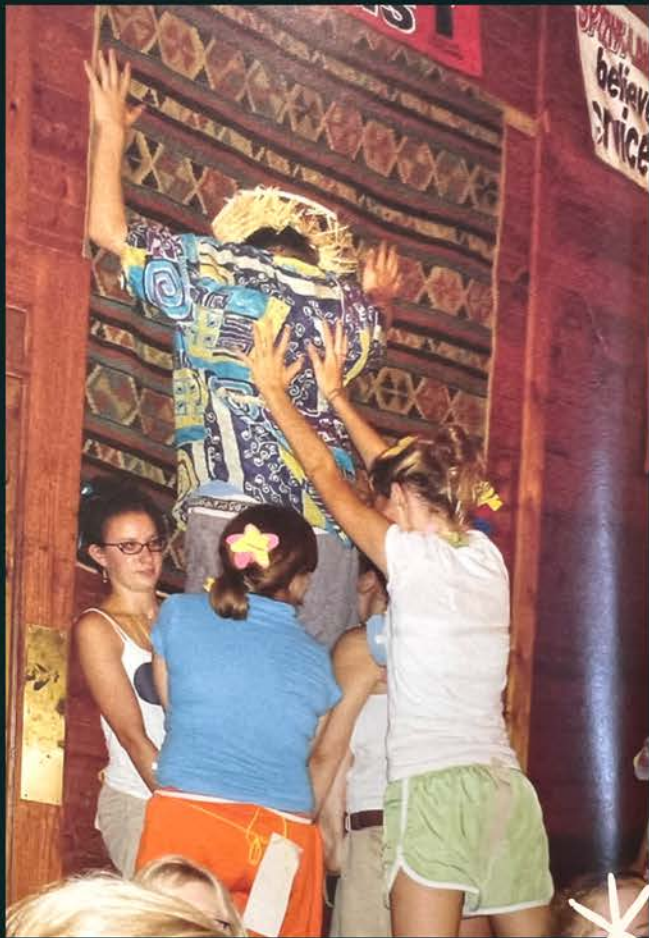
In 1980, Camp started offering non-denominational church services on Sundays at the outdoor chapel at Acorn Ridge Campground. Services were open to the public and led by Campus Crusade For Christ members.

The camp was given an anonymous check for \$25,000. The donors of the check instructed that the money should be used to establish an Endowment fund for any children who otherwise could not attend camp. In 1981, Kevin Godfredsen replaced Eric Wilkening as the camp's caretaker. Camp started Adventure Club in the Fall of 81', as well as holiday camps such as Mystery Madness.

In 1985, as Camp Foster moved into its 73rd season, the national YMCA celebrated in 100th anniversary of camping. A new Howard's Hall restroom facility was built and also received remodeling to the cabins, including insulation, energy-efficient doors and windows, new flooring, ceiling fans, new bunks, and heat in some cabins.

Camp Foster celebrated its 75th birthday in 1987.





Camp Foster's programs were on the rise. Several partnerships that still exist today were started, including Miracle Burn Camp and Asthma Camp.

The popular Twilight Zone week that began in 1989 flourished in the 90s and is still one of the camp's most successful sessions.

The lakefront cabins were also remodeled to remain consistent with the other cabins.

1990 - 1999

The 1990s were a foundation decade for Camp Foster. Despite having few fancy building additions, Camp Foster began laying the groundwork, fundraising efforts, and savings. Because of the directors' fiscal madness, they secured a large endowment and several savings accounts.



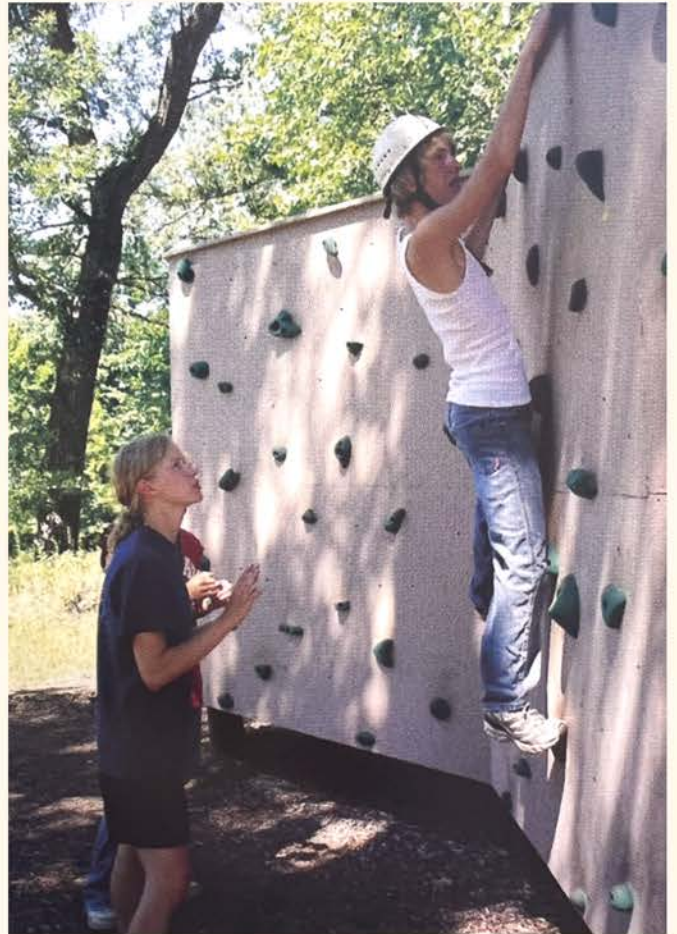
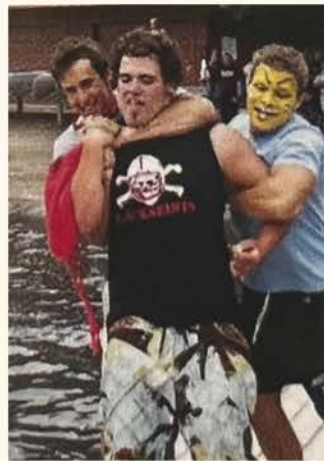


2000 - 2009

In 2000, Camp offered a physical and emotional therapy class held in the ranch riding arena for handicapped children. The Camp Foster YMCA, Handi Riders Program, was made possible through funding from Cindy Dather and DECAT.

In 2002, Camp began the process of fundraising to build a YMCA branch in town. The camp received \$300,000 from the University of Okoboji Foundation to further this cause. The Bedell Family YMCA opened in 2005.





WE WELCOME YOU TO OL' CAMP FOSTER

CAMP FOSTER
Today

Today, Camp Foster welcomes over 1,800 residents and 350-day campers throughout the summer. The staff consists of 70 college age counselors and five full-time staff members that live here year-round. The staff works to instill the values by which camp lives: respect, responsibility, caring, honesty, and fairness.



Camp provides multiple program areas including horseback riding, archery, riflery, arts and crafts, pottery, the dragon, low ropes, a climbing tower, a zipline, a pool, fishing, kayaking, sailing, gaga, and many others.

The facilities at Camp allow for year-round camping. The camp also hosts many group events, including church retreats, corporations, family reunions and youth retreats.

CAMP DEFINITIONS

EP

EP stands for the evening program. EP involves campers engaging in different nightly camp-wide games, including Mario World, Candyland and Harry Potter, with counselors actively participating in character creation and game implementation.

HAPPY CAMPER AWARD

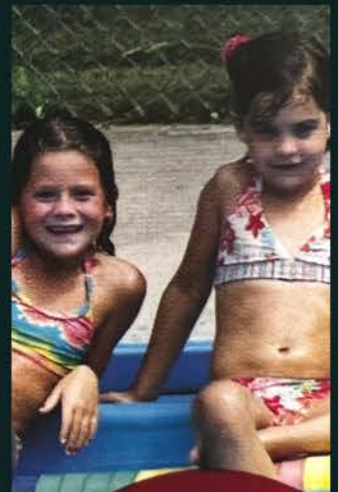
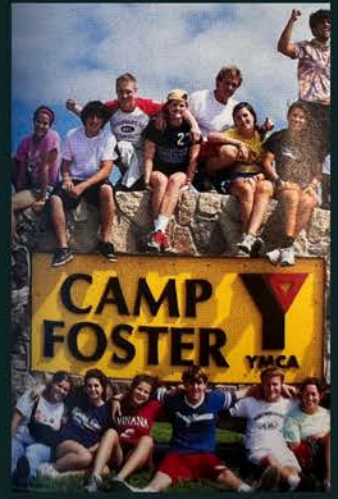
The Happy Camper award is a an award that goes to a Day-Camper that demonstrates all five values and has a contagious positive attitude for the week.

FOB

FOB can mean any of the following: feet on the bed, foster on break, or flat on the back. This is a mandatory hour rest period by the American Camp Association.

PG-13

PG-13 refers to the campers that are aged 13 or older. Once a PG-13'er, campers can participate in activities not available to younger campers, like surf sails, kayaks, skin diving, pottery, and trap shooting. Older campers also participate in after-campfire activities a few times a week.



CAMP DEFINITIONS CONT.

WARM FUZZIES

Camp believes in spreading positivity and building up other people. Warm fuzzies are a great way to do that by taking a slop of paper, writing a nice note to a friend, and then putting that note in the appropriate cabin box. They are popular amongst both campers and staff.

HEART OF THE FLAME

In 2009, camp introduced a new award called the "Heart of the Flame." It is awarded to one camper and one staff each week throughout the summer who embody the five values, have an outstanding attitude, and stand out to others. They are given a medal and their name on a plaque.

DEVOS

Every night after lights out, each cabin does devotions with their cabinmates and counselors. The cabin sits around a candle and uses the time to reflect upon the day. Devos is a sacred activity at camp.

BACKWARDS BRIDGE

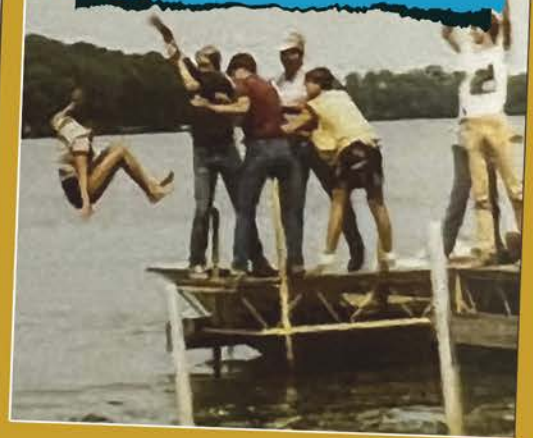
If you don't want the troll to steal your shoes, you must walk backward over the backward bridge is a long-standing tradition that has become ingrained in campers and staff. Even during the off-season, you will walk backward over the bridge without thinking about it.



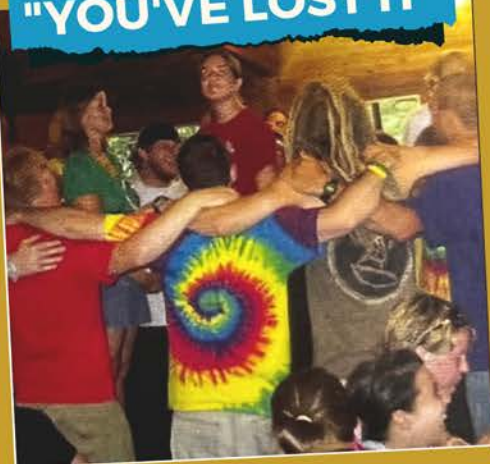
CAMP FOSTER TRADITIONS

Oftentimes, the counselors will find themselves being thrown into the lake. On Wednesdays, it tends to be those who attend school in Nebraska for "No Nebraska Wednesday" or any other schools with 'too much' school spirit that day. Villians in EP are also thrown into the lake to be defeated. The reasons for going "In the Lake!" range from looking much too dressed up for camp or just singing a song that is on the short side. Whatever the reason, each staff member is almost guaranteed to enter the lake once during the summer.

"IN THE LAKE!"

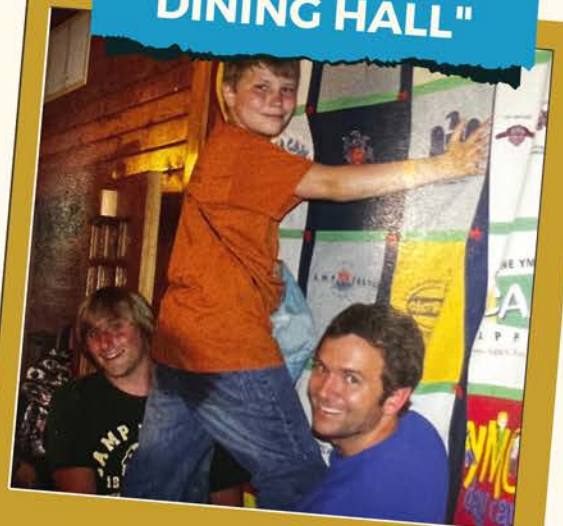


"MY BABY" & "YOU'VE LOST IT"



There are two songs that staff members sing to campers or each other during mealtimes. It could be because it is their birthday, they are graduating, or it could be a staff member's last week of the summer. The girls sing "My Baby," which is the song "Let's Hear It for the Boy," and the boys sing "You've lost it," which is the song "You've Lost that Loving Feeling".

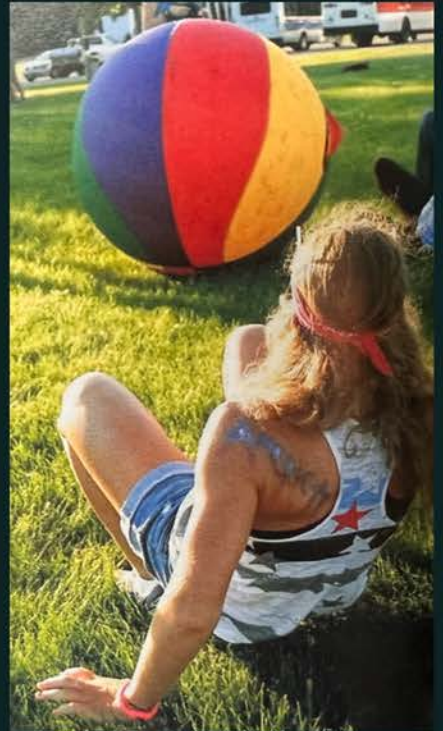
"HOLDING UP THE DINING HALL"



"Not after breakfast, not after lunch, but only after supper do we do a little something special called "Holding up the Dining Hall" because they made a mistake when this building was built in 1929. Due to the heat, the humidity, and the vernal equinox of the sun, it could collapse if we all left the building. That is why we need someone to "Hold Up the Dining Hall," so we put the names of all the campers and staff on the old 286 computer and ran it over and over and over again!

EVENING PROGRAM

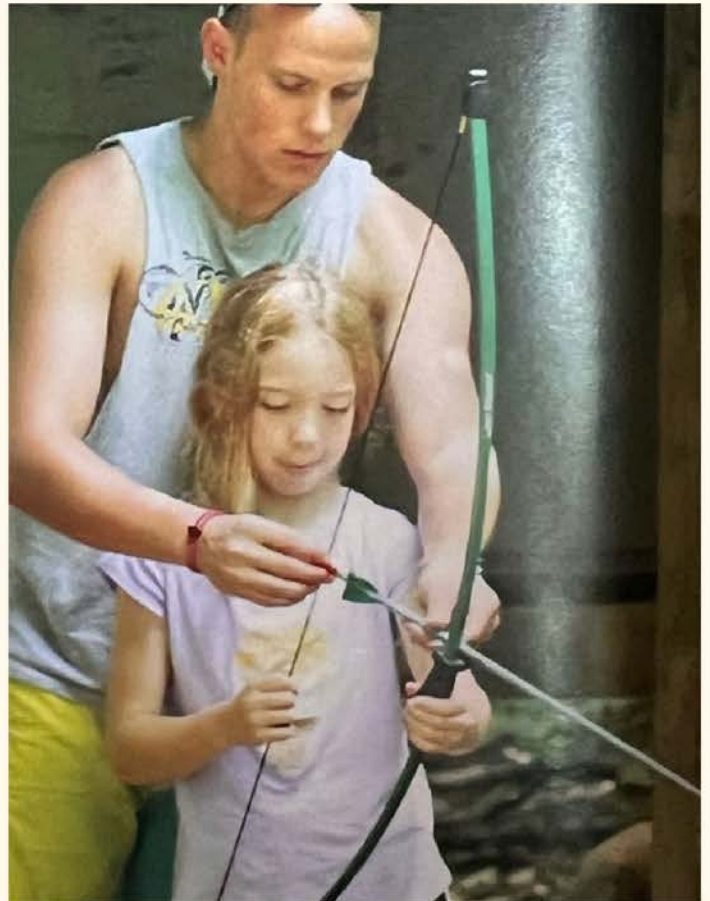
Ahhh





ARCHERY

Archery is a pastime favorite program area at camp. It is the home of the famous magical door and a great place to emphasize the camp's values. It is also a progressive program area that allows younger campers to use recurve bows, and as they grow older, they switch to compound bows.



RIFLERY

In the early days of camp, campers used to have to pay for their own bullet shells to use at riflery

Riflery helps campers foster the values of responsibility and respect. Campers must listen to the commands and act responsibly throughout their entire visit at riflery.

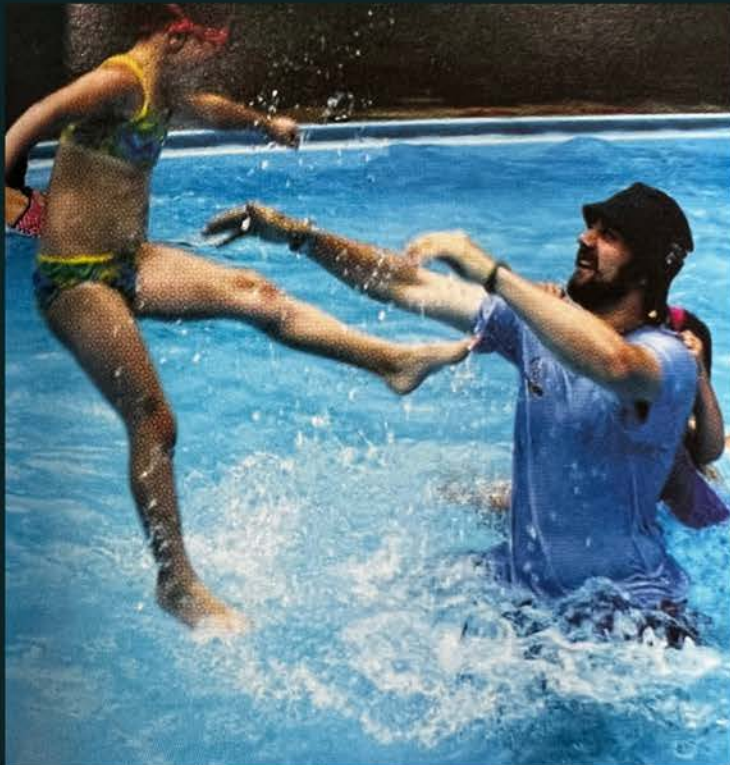


THE POOL





The pool that was built in 1967 is still in use today. There is a "shark tank" where Tim, Timmy, and Timothy live, and the campers should never go near the tank. The pool has all sorts of floaties and toys to play with and two waterslides, which are popular among campers and staff. At the pool, PG-13'ers can do skin diving (introductory to snorkeling). The pool is also home to 'penguin dipping', a club dating back to at least 1942, where campers wake up early and swim. PG-13 campers can come to penguin dipping, and if they swim 12 lengths every morning, they can participate in "Conquer the Lake," a swim across East Lake Okoboji.



THE Ranch



The ranch is one of the largest program areas at camp. Camp currently has 26 horses on the property. There are trail rides offered during rotationals, free time and cabin time. Campers also have the chance to help groom the horses in the morning.





BOOTS & SADDLES

Boots is a specialty camp offered at the ranch. It is for those campers wishing to learn more about grooming, saddling and riding technique. Each camper is assigned their own horse for the week, allowing them to form a special bond.



WATERFRONT



Camp Foster's waterfront is located on 2,100 feet of the east side of East Lake Okoboji shoreline, including the Winger Waterfront building and the kayak shack. The waterfront is one of the camp's progressive program areas. To all campers, it offers canoes, funyaks, paddleboards, water bikes, and sunfish sailboats. As campers get older, hunter and laser sailboats, kayaks, and surf sails are also offered.







POTTERY

Pottery is typically a PG-13 program area; however, a pottery specialty camp is available to any camper.

Campers learn basic techniques, including working with clay, recycling leftover clay, and making pots, plates, and bowls on the wheel. Staff are specially trained to teach pottery. They teach and guide campers in the proper techniques in creating pottery.



ARTS & CRAFTS



Arts & Crafts is a progressive program area in which younger campers make a variety of crafts such as friendship bracelets and melting beads. Campers can do more advanced crafts such as wood-burning, candle-making, and tie-dye as they get older.

Graduating campers can print their name on the walls in the Arts & Crafts room.

The Arts & Crafts room is in the Whiting Lodge, which overlooks the lake.

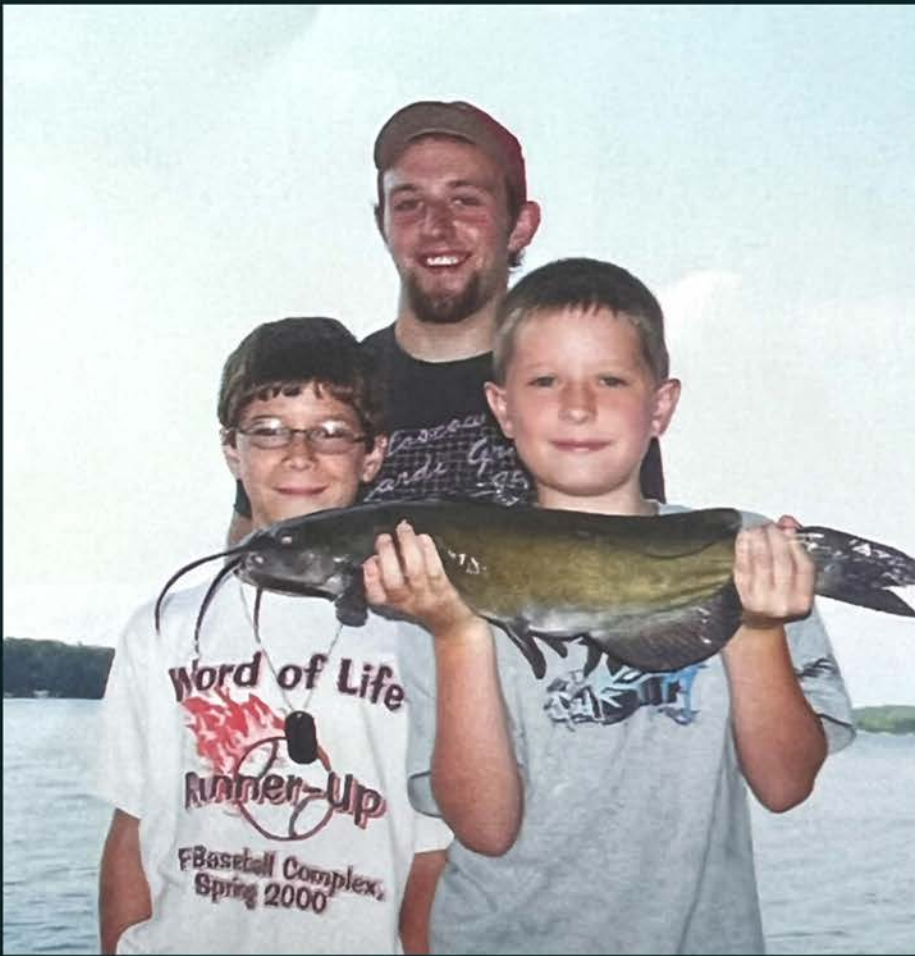




HIGH ROPES COURSE

Camp Foster offers multiple rope elements. These ropes courses are a progressive program area for older campers. These include The Tower, The Wall, The Vertical Playground, Giants Ladder, and The Zip Tree.





THE DRAGON

The Dragon is a low ropes obstacle course offered to all campers. The myth of The Dragon is that a sleeping dragon is underneath the obstacle course named Petunia. If campers touch the ground more than three times, rumor has it that Petunia wakes up and shows herself at the obstacle course, and that is why spotting is strongly emphasized at The Dragon.



9 SQUARE IN THE AIR

Just like four square, but with nine, and in the air. Kids enjoy this camp favorite because it keeps them on their toes and moving as participants enter and leave the game each set.





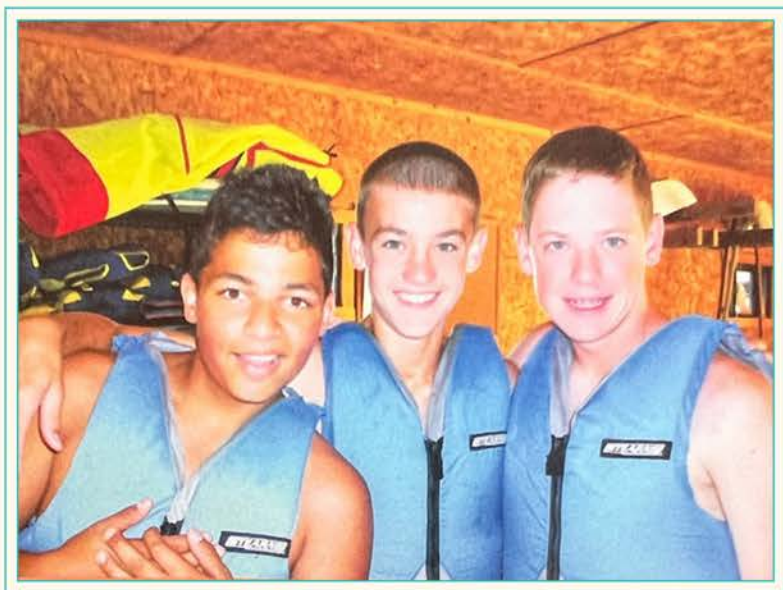
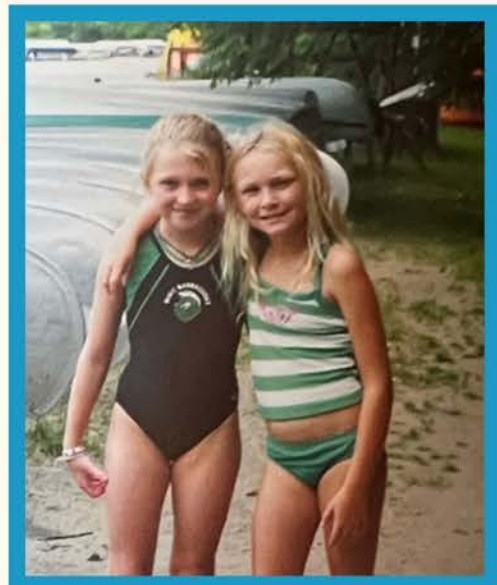
BOULDERING WALL, INTERMEDIATES, LOW ROPES & DOULES

The Bouldering Wall is an introduction to the climbing wall for younger campers. Instead of attempting to make it up the wall, campers must make it around the bouldering wall.

Intermediates are for campers ages 10-12. It is a chance for campers to experience an obstacle course that begins to test their comfort level in the tree.

Low ropes are an excellent way for the cabins or outside groups to team build by offering multiple challenging elements that can truly unite a group of people.





CAMP FOSTER ACTIVITIES



The camp offers a variety of program areas. Other activities available to all campers are fishing, disc golf, parachute games, tetherball, slip n' slide, sand volleyball, life-size chess, mud fights and mind games.

The Store is one of the most popular places at camp. Campers can buy items such as pillow pets, clothing, Gatorade, snacks, yo-yos, pennants, and flying monkeys (photo two).

The Foster Fling is a competition between two-person teams. It is a staged relay race around camp with several stations. The winners get to sign the legendary paddle (photo three).

Camp Foster's Gaga pit was built in 2009 and is now one of the most popular activities on camp.

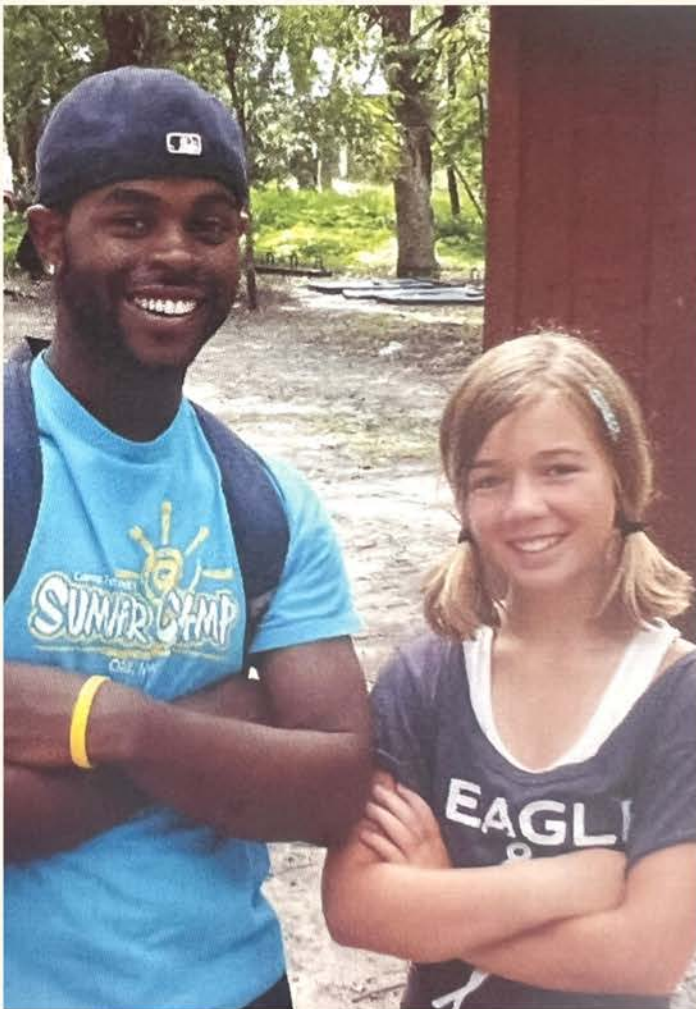
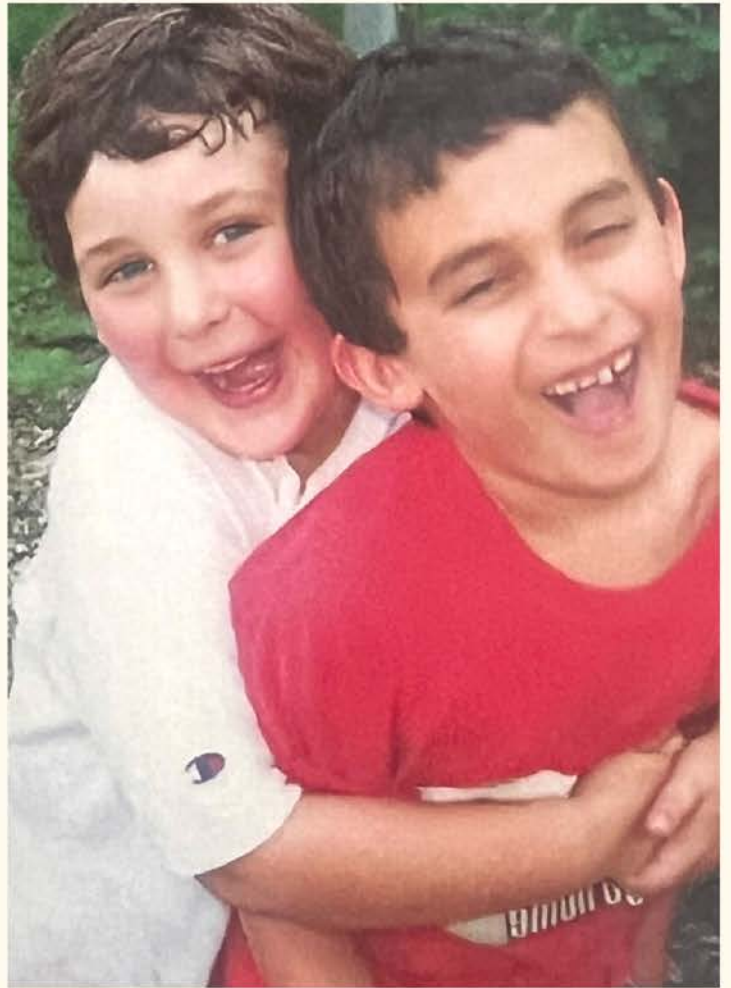


DAY CAMP

Sunshine, blue skies, warm temps, and no school can only mean one thing - Day Camp! Camp Foster is the premier day camp in the Iowa Great Lakes, with more than 350 campers per summer. We offer a safe and caring environment where kids have fun, learn new skills, get outdoors, make friends, and create memories.

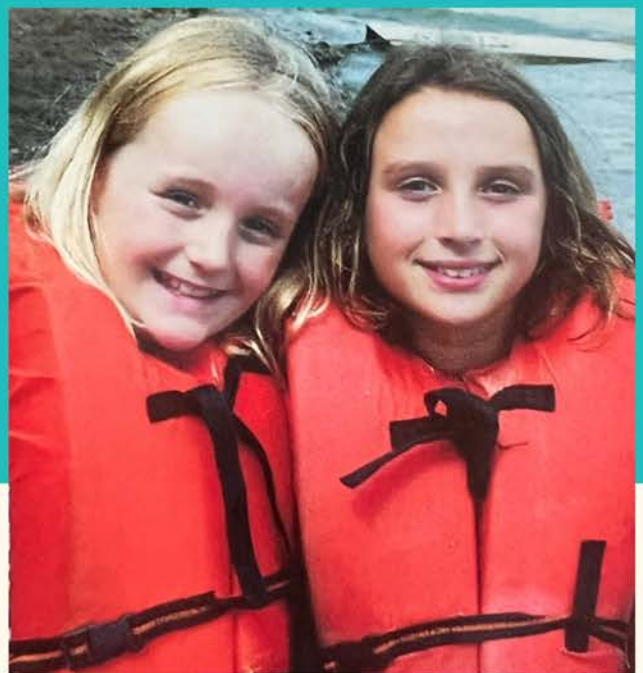
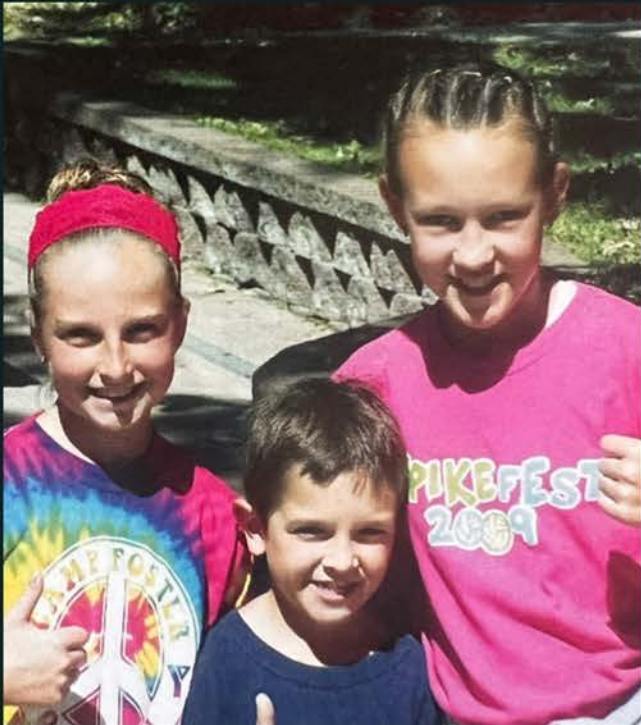


Specially designed for kids ages 4-12, Day Camp offers progressive programming and specialty camp options to keep each week new. Day Camp also makes an excellent transition for campers to continue their camping career and enroll in Resident Camp.





Day Camp has seen several additions to the program since the early 1970s. The addition of Earl Fisher Lodge in the late '70s, the updates done to the lodge in the '80s, program area updates in the '90s, and the playground in 2001 all lead up to the new day camp building in 2007. The NDC provided more indoor programming areas, including a store and additional bathrooms.



MIRACLE *Burn Camp*



The idea for Miracle Burn Camp began in Sioux City, Iowa, as a weekend event for pediatric burn survivors in 1995. The following year, the campers were brought to Camp Foster for a half week. In 1997, the campers were sponsored by St. Florian Fire and Burn Foundation and St. Luke's Regional Medical Center joined with survivors sent from the University of Iowa Burn Treatment Center.

1996 was the inaugural year for Miracle Burn Camp and the partnership has continued with Camp Foster ever since. The relationship these three organizations and Miracle Burn Camp with Camp Foster grows stronger each year.

Miracle Burn Camp is offered to pediatric burn survivors ages 8-18. The children have either suffered from a burn or another traumatic wound requiring skin grafting. Generous donations from various corporations, businesses, and private donations provide Miracle Burn Camp and the 'Foster Experience' for each camper on a full scholarship.

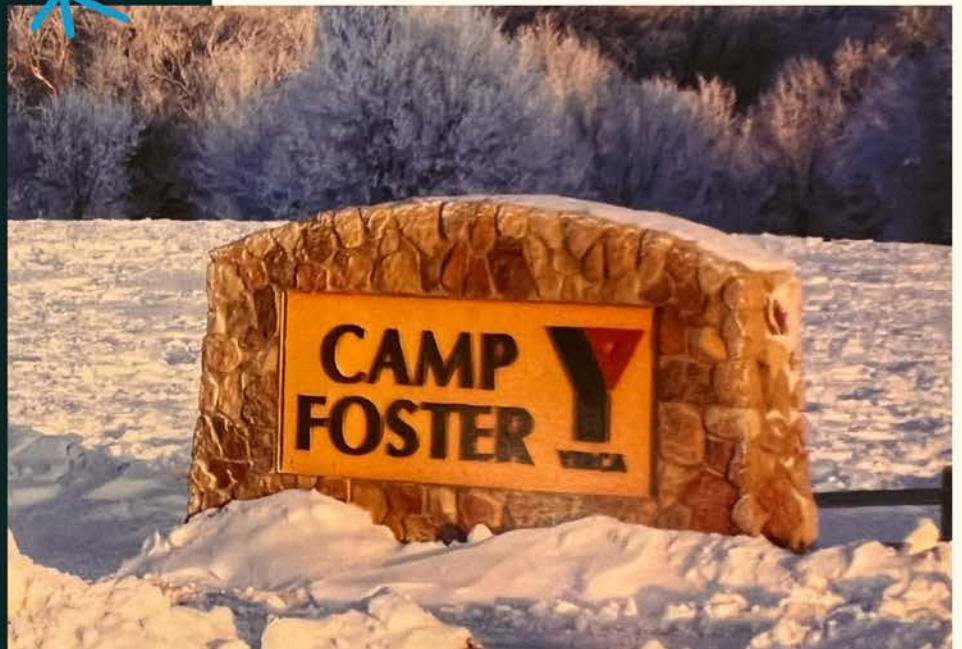
Miracle Burn Camp has graduated many of our survivors from the camp experience. Many have come back to assist as counselors, and others have continued to have positive influences in their home communities, but all of them have left Camp Foster richer than when they first drove past that yellow sign.

Miracle Burn Camp coordinates staffing with Camp Foster resident camp staff. Volunteers from the burn profession, the fire service, and adult survivors. These individuals also continue to share the Foster Flame in their communities, professions, and homes. Miracle Burn Camp looks forward to many more years of this beautiful partnership with Camp Foster.



WINTER FEST

Winterfest, formally known as Snofest, gives campers a chance to experience Camp Foster in the winter months. It is a 4-day session between Christmas and New Years that was added back to camp in 2020. Many of the summer staff take a break from their winter vacations to come be counselors for this snowy experience.



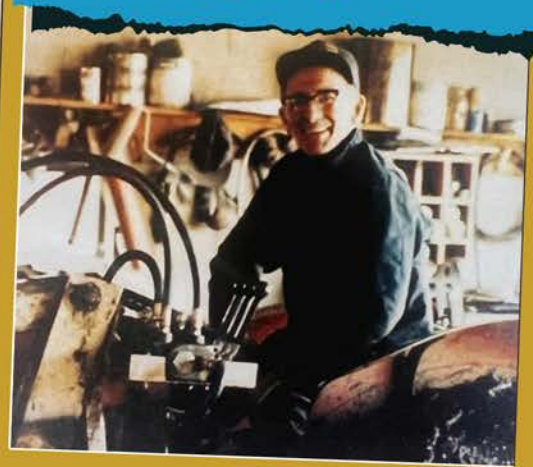


CELEBRATING YEARS OF SERVICE

Eric, "The Old Buzzard" Wilkening, came to camp from Missouri in 1950 to be the first full-time caretaker for Camp Foster. He served as the camp's custodian and caretaker until 1980. In 1975, Eric was honored for 25 years of service and was given a plaque from the YMCA Board President and a quilt embroidered with messages from past staff members. Eric's construction contributions to camp included the new dining hall, kitchen remodeling, new office building, infirmary known today as Zuni, cooks' cabin, four camper cabins, and many other remodeling jobs.

ERIC WILKENING

1950 - 1980



KEVIN GODFREDSEN

1981 - 2022



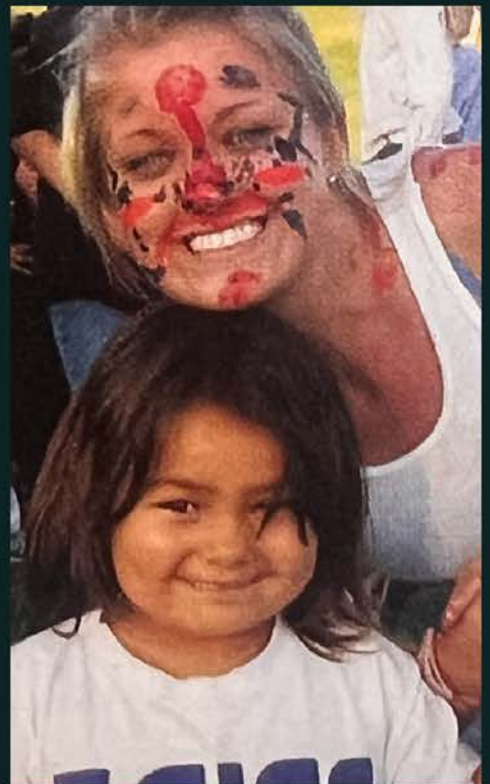
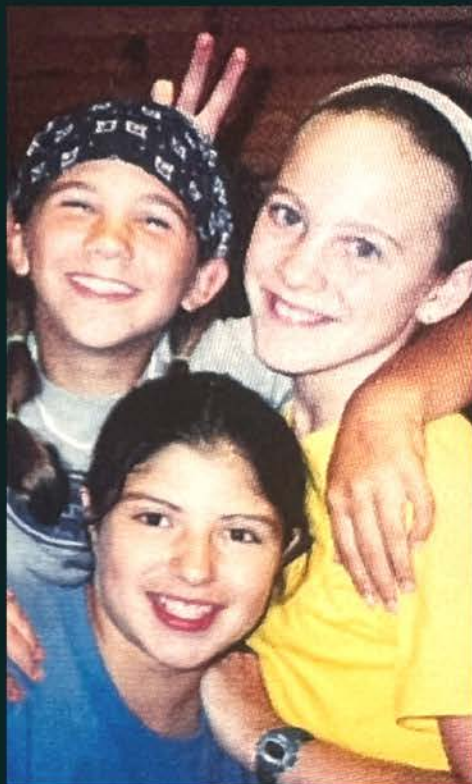
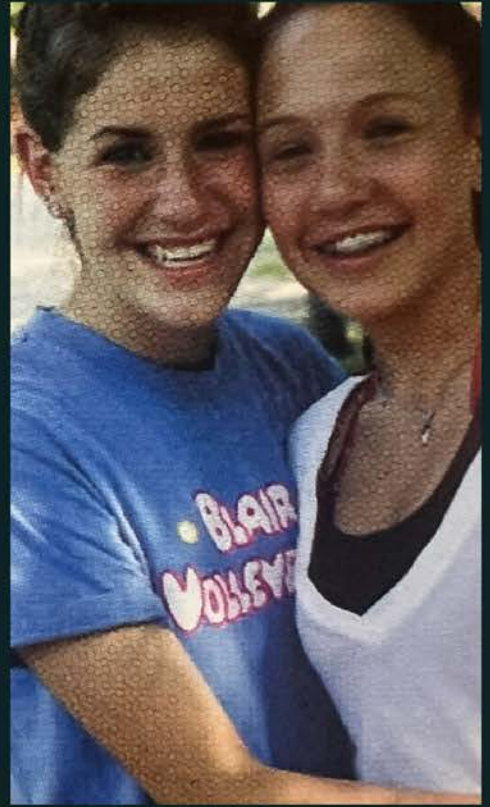
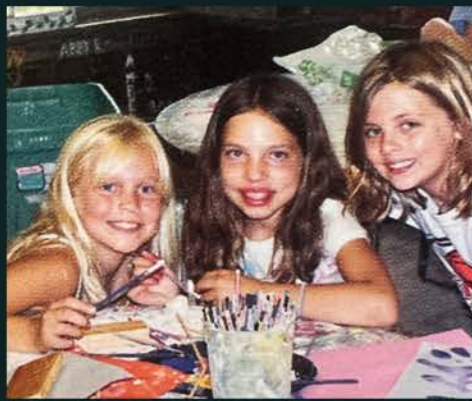
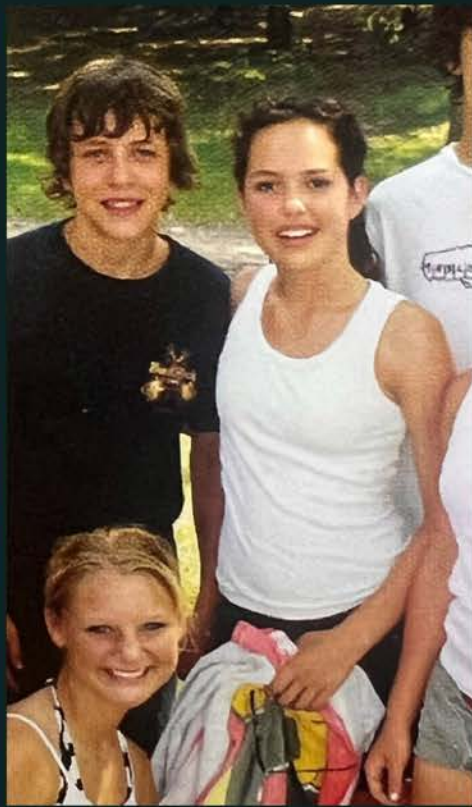
Kevin Godfredsen's impact through his years of service as a Property Manager has been countless. Several traditions are directly related to him, with the big yellow sign being the first of hundreds of projects, including the current rock sign. The backward bridge was an "embargo" suggested by a staff member against running on the old, narrow, wooden bridge that needed a replacement. Adapting to the backward bridge gained a few more years of service from the wooden bridge until Kevin replaced it with a broader steel bridge in the 1990s. Godfredsen was involved in the Spirit Lake Boy Scouts since he was 8, attained his Eagle Scout Award, and served as a Scout Master for Troup 167.

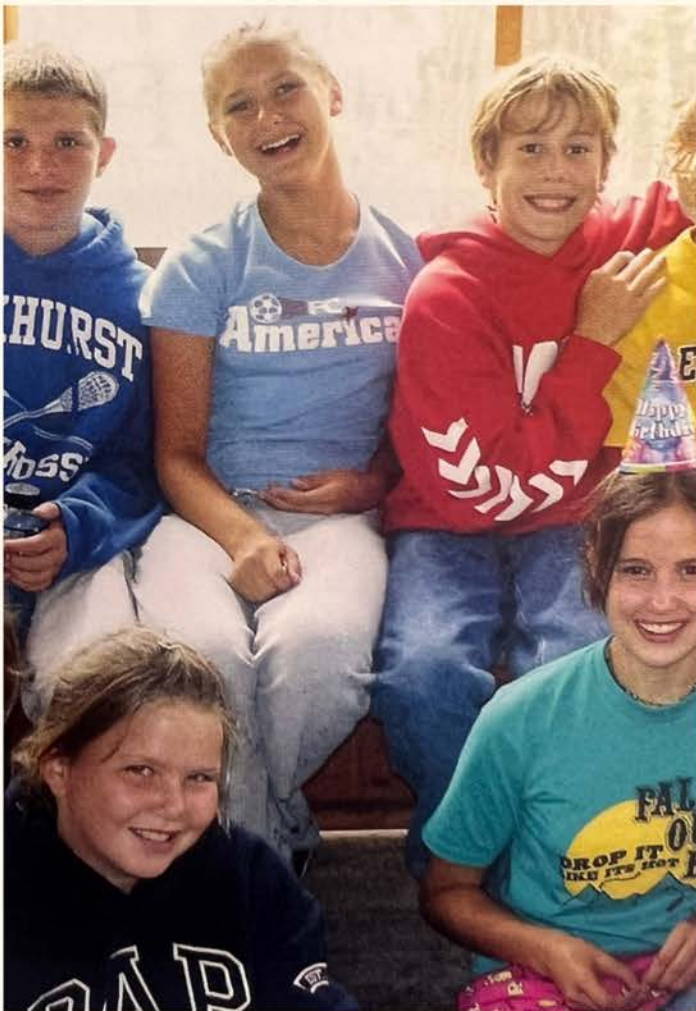
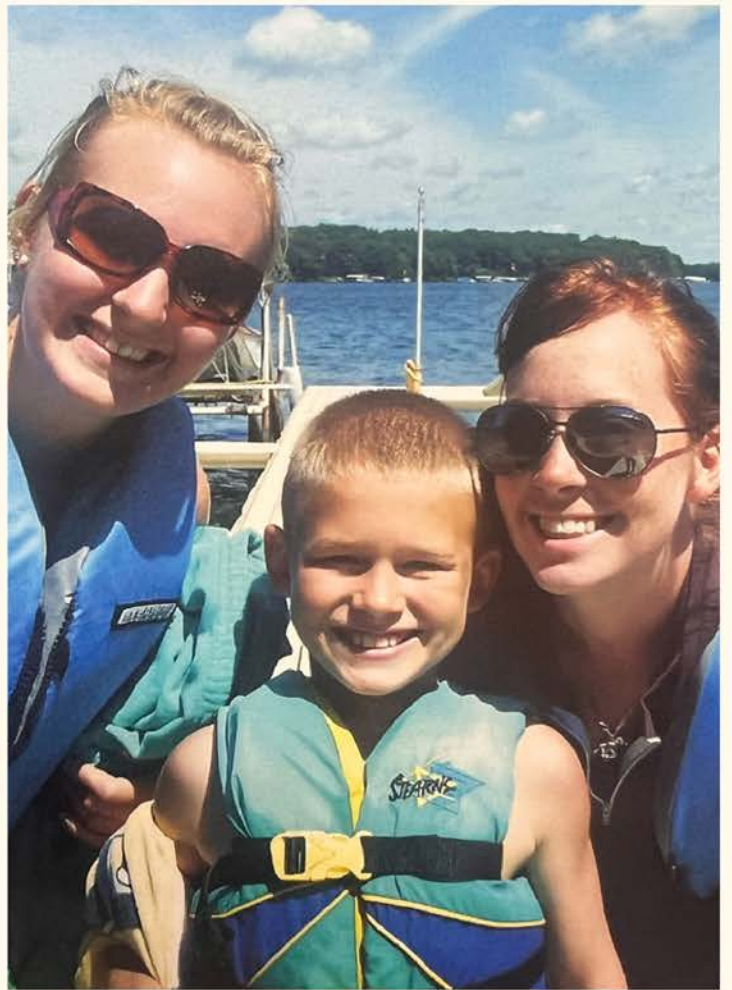
BRIAN PETERSEN

1977 - 1985, 1989 - 2006



Brian Petersen began his career at Camp Foster in 1977 as a cabin counselor and eventually served as the waterfront director in the summers of '78 and '79. Brian served in Colorado as the Youth Conservation Corps Director until the fall of 1980, when he became a full-time director at Camp Foster, serving as the newly created Community Program Director. In this position, he coordinated all external programs outside Camp Foster. Brian left Camp Foster in 1986 and became the Camp Director at Camp NaNaBoSho in Wisconsin, but returned to Foster in 1989 when offered the Associate Executive Director Position. One year later, Brian became the Executive Director until 2006, making him the longest-tenured Executive Director. Brian oversaw the creation of the Bedell Family YMCA branch which opened in 2005.







Annual Fundraising

Strong Kids Campaign:

The YMCA and its programs have touched many lives throughout the years, but many community members still cannot afford our programs. The Strong Kids Campaign is designed to help struggling families participate in the excellent programs offered at Camp Foster YMCA and the Bedell Family YMCA.



Pro-AM Golf Tournament:

The Pro-AM Golf Tournament was started by Barb Thomas. Klausner of Iowa eventually took over the lead sponsorship. Funding from this tournament has helped build the Leadership Lodge, the riding arena, and the day camp building. Emerald Hills Golf Course is currently home to the tournament, which is now sponsored by Northwest Bank.



BEDELL FAMILY YMCA

Knowing the community's needs, Camper Foster began fundraising in the late 1990s to build a YMCA in town. After the "Deliver the Dream" campaign was finished, a new brand of Camp Foster YMCA, the Bedell Family YMCA, was built in 2003 and opened in 2005.



FORTY-TWO
THOUSAND *Sq. Ft.*

The YMCA is located on 15 acres along a bike trail and includes an indoor pool, two gyms, Character Center, drop-in childcare, aerobics rooms, community room, walking/running track, strength training area, outdoor skate park, outdoor soccer fields, and administrative areas. The YMCA is designed to provide quality programs for people of all ages to promote youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.

Since its opening in 2005, the Bedell Family YMCA membership has grown to over 5,000. A YMCA membership is not required for children to attend camp. Today, Camp Foster and the Bedell YMCA are the two branches of the YMCA of the Okoboji's Association.

THE SIEVERS FAMILY



Camp Foster buys Sievers' farm

Camp Foster YMCA announced today the Carl H. Sievers farm, which encompasses the 107-acre property, the original site of the Sievers family homestead, and the site of the original Camp Foster building. The property was purchased for \$1,000,000. The acquisition of the property is a major milestone for the camp, as it allows for the expansion of the camp's facilities and the preservation of the natural habitat. The property is currently being developed into a 750-acre camp, making it the oldest organized camp of any kind in the state of Iowa and one of the oldest YMCA camps in the country. One of the key reasons for acquiring the 107-acre property is to help assure that youngsters, adults and families who attend Camp Foster for the next 75 years, will have the opportunity to experience and explore life in the outdoors in an undisturbed natural setting. An important segment of Iowa history that is located on the property is the actual foundation of the Howe Cabin. In conjunction with the original Camp Foster property, the additional property will remain a natural habitat and sanctuary for a vast array of Iowa birds, animals and vegetation.

The eventual acquisition of the Sievers' property has been paramount in the minds of Camp Foster YMCA Board and staff members for decades. It has remained an unaccomplished goal in at least three formerly developed long-range plans for Camp Foster YMCA. When the property did come up for sale in January 1986, the YMCA Board of Directors agreed that acquisition of the property was extremely important but because of the current heavy involvement in the ongoing Capital Funds Campaign were not in a position at the time to purchase the property. This led to the initial contact of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for their possible support. After several meetings between Camp Foster YMCA and the Foundation, a formal request for short term financial support was submitted by Camp Foster in July, 1986. On August 20, 1986, Camp Foster YMCA was notified that the Board of Trustees of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation had voted unanimously to financially support the property acquisition project. Camp Foster YMCA is currently entering into its 75th year of operation, making it the oldest organized camp of any kind in the state of Iowa and one of the oldest YMCA camps in the country. One of the key reasons for acquiring the 107-acre property is to help assure that youngsters, adults and families who attend Camp Foster for the next 75 years, will have the opportunity to experience and explore life in the outdoors in an undisturbed natural setting. An important segment of Iowa history that is located on the property is the actual foundation of the Howe Cabin. In conjunction with the original Camp Foster property, the additional property will remain a natural habitat and sanctuary for a vast array of Iowa birds, animals and vegetation.



CAMP FOSTER YMCA and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation purchased 107 acres of land from Carl Sievers in the offices of Blaine Helen Healey on Monday. From left are Betsy Holshauer, Helen Healey office manager and board member of Camp Foster; Ken Lockard, Executive Director of Camp Foster; Bud Getman, president of the Board of Directors; Mark Healey, Director Iowa Natural Heritage; and Carl Sievers, Carl's son; Blaine Healey for the Sievers; and Carl Sievers.

TWO HUNDRED-FOURTEEN Acres

The Carl Sievers family became the camp's neighbors in 1935. In 1935, the camp's original 47 acres were nearly surrounded by either the Sievers or the camp. When the camp decided to buy horses and add them as a regular program, Mr. Sievers sold the camp 60 acres we now use as the horse pastures and pine tree trail.

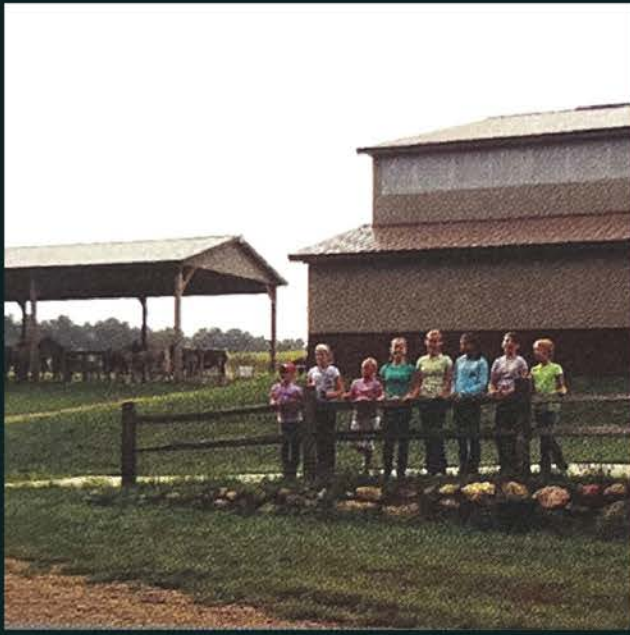
To prevent the development of the wooded property around the Sievers farm, Camp Foster purchased 18 acres known as Crows Nest Campground. He operated the campground until 1983 when the property was sold.

Due to the longtime friendship between the Sievers family and Camp Foster, the camp was offered the remaining 107 acres of the farm in 1986. Knowing camp would not develop the land, Carl and Vera Sievers knew the land would remain wooded. The 107 acres of Sievers property was secured with the help of the Iowa F. Thompson estate. The land transfer was made, and Camp Foster secured the entire property, bringing the land acreage total to its current size of 214 acres.

Don Sievers, one of the Sievers' sons raised on the farm, shared how his parents always enjoyed the campers and staff playing in the woods during the summer, bringing life into the area. The farm's livestock would keep the Sievers' property trimmed and mowed, making the camp's property the natural wilderness. After the camp season ended, Carl would have his livestock graze the camps' grounds to prevent overgrowth before the following camp season.

Today, Sievers is ingrained into our camp program, housing our rope courses, nature center, horse trails, etc. Several EP games and PG-13 activities also take place in the woods of Sievers, helping the magic of camp become reality.

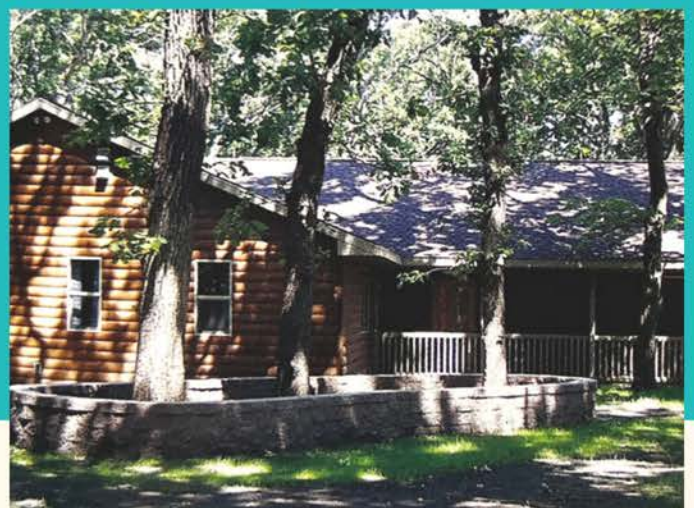




Riding Arena: Ground was broken on the Riding Arena in the Fall of 2009. Tom Reeves of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, donated the actual structure of the arena. The arena is great for Boots and Saddles, even on rainy days. The arena also has a new tack shed, and the line for trail rides has a canopy to provide shade for horses and ranch staff.

Leadership Lodge & Riding Arena

Leadership Lodge: in 2005, construction was started on the Leadership Lodge. It includes two cabins: Winnebago and Nez Perce. Each cabin sleeps 18 people and has a center room known as "The Grill." It is often used for groups and conferences during camps off-season. The Leadership Lodge construction was made possible by many donors.



CAMP FIRE TRADITIONS



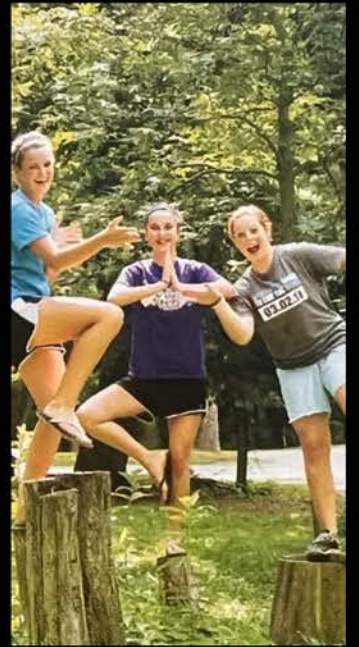
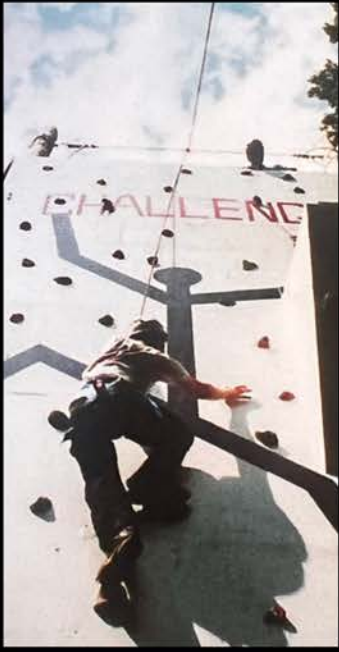
Campfire is one of the most sacred times at camp. The Council Ring has been located in the same spot since Camp Foster was moved to Spirit Lake in 1914. Foster's Council Ring was the first official campfire location in Iowa.

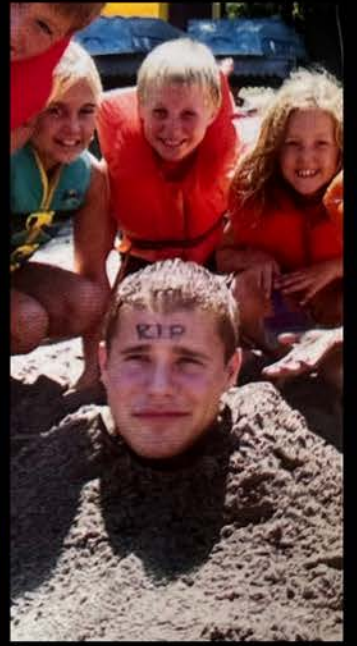
At the campfire, campers, and staff always enter through the values poles that stand at the entrance of the Council Ring to avoid having their hair turn green and falling out. Campfire is a time for campers and staff to reflect on the day's happenings. The location right along the lake is perfect for just that.

Before the start of a campfire, each cabin gives its own roll call. Roll call is followed up with four or five songs led by the MCs. After the songs, a staff member always gives a Taps Talk.

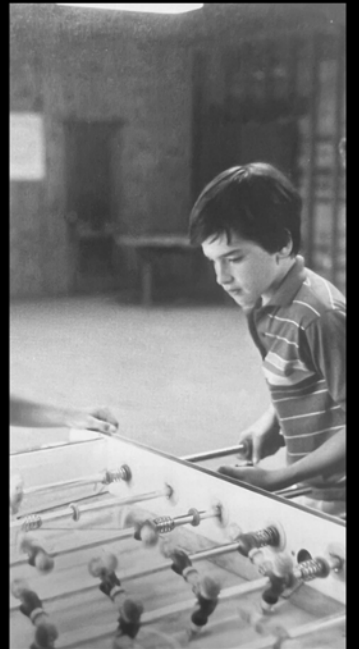
A Taps Talk is something meaningful to that staff member they would like to share with others, and oftentimes, it is a story of inspiration, personal growth, or about camp and what it means to them. Every night, TAPS is followed by the song "By 'Ol Fosters." Afterward, most stick around to share hugs, high-fives, and handshakes.

Each Friday night has its own set of traditions. Every Friday, the 16-year-old campers "graduate" from Camp Foster. The staff also gives a gift to all of the campers. They circle around the Council Ring and sing "I Want to Linger", "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?," and "Pass It on."











HEART OF THE FLAME AWARD

This award is designed to spotlight one camper and counselor every week that exhibits and embodies the 5 Camp Foster values and the mission of Camp Foster and understands the meaning of the Foster Flame. Both campers and staff nominate the awardees.

The logo of Camp Foster is our focal point for the front of the medal. The Indian head displays our proud heritage of being a prairie state and our connection to our rich past. This symbol also reminds us to be good stewards of the land of Camp Foster and Lake Okoboji. Our founding year of 1912 is also noted on the logo.

Surrounding the Indian head, the 5 Camp Foster Values are displayed, separated by triangles, which remind us of the Body, Mind, and Spirit. Combining the triangles and the 5 values defines Foster and gives us our vision for the future. Below the logo is the name of the award, which signifies how everything spreads outward no matter far from the center. The values and name of the award are separated by two stars which are Native American symbols. These stars represent the importance of being a star and shining in the 'real' world. Encompassing the award are three circles representing God, Earth, and Man.

The pattern in between the first and second circles is a Native American pattern representing growth. The back of the award displays the campfire, which is how Camp Foster opens and closes every camp session. To the left of the campfire, two interlocking paddle boards are seen, representing our connection to the lake. To the right, the PX is displayed, representing the first two letters of Christ in Greek. Below is the verse John 17:21, which explains the importance of Christ in our lives.



 **CAMP
FOSTER
STAFF**

1955 - 2011





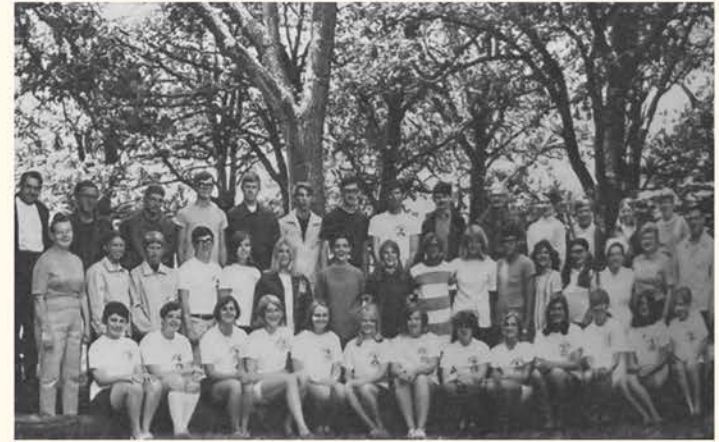
BOYS STAFF 1955



GIRLS STAFF 1955



BOYS STAFF 1957



GIRLS STAFF 1957



BOYS STAFF 1963



GIRLS STAFF 1963



BOYS STAFF 1964



GIRLS STAFF 1964



GIRLS STAFF 1965



BOYS STAFF 1966



GIRLS STAFF 1966



BOYS STAFF 1967



1968



1969



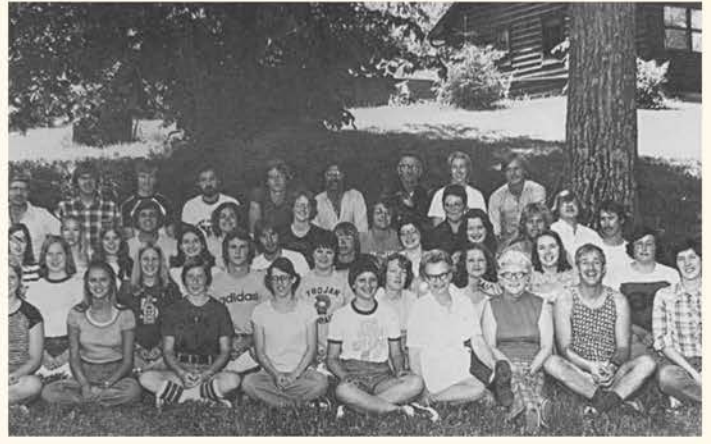
1970



1972



1975



1976



1977



1979



1980



1981



1982



1983



1984



1985



1986



1987



1988



1989



1990



1991



1992



1993



1994



1995



1996



1997



1998



1999



2000



2001



2002



2003



2004



2005



2006



2007



2008



2009



2010



2011

... AND IN THAT TAPESTRY OF MY LIFE,
FOSTER'S THREADS ARE WHAT HOLDS ME
TOGETHER. IT GIVES ME THAT SHINY, GOLDEN
THREAD OF FRIENDS; MORE THAN FRIENDS, A
FAMILY THAT UNDERSTANDS, LOVES, AND
ACCEPTS ME. FOSTER IS LOVE IN ITS PUREST,
MOST BEAUTIFUL FORM AND IT TOUCHES
EVERY CAMPER AND COUNSELOR.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**THANKS TO THOSE WHO HELPED
MAKE THIS BOOK POSSIBLE:**

JOSH CARR
PATRICK "PATIO" RICE
KEVIN GODFREDSSEN
CATHY GLENN
KATE HEISINGER
CALLIE BORDER
DON SIEVERS
SONJA HAMM
MEGAN SLYMAN
CHUCK & GLORIA DITSWORTH
MEMORY BOOK COMPANY STAFF
JORDI GERKING
BONFIRE MARKETING

**A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO DONATED
PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES THAT CONTRIBUTED
TO THE RICH HISTORY FOUND IN THIS BOOK.
WE HOPE WE TOLD YOUR STORY WELL.**



THIS PROJECT WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A HISTORY TO ALL WHO HAVE HAD CONNECTIONS TO CAMP FOSTER YMCA. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME PICTURES AND STORIES MAY NOT BE IN THE CORRECT CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.

ELMER J. SHENEBERGER CHARACTER CENTER



On April 16, 2013, Camp Foster YMCA dedicated the Elmer J. Sheneberger Character Center with a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. Carl Petersen, representing the Sheneberger Trust, shared Elmer's heart for Camp Foster and his desire to see children thrive. The Sheneberger Character Center gift is an incredible legacy that benefits the youth of Northwest Iowa and beyond.



AIRNASIUM

IGNITING A HEALTHY
LEGACY CAMPAIGN
ADDITION



The Airnasium is a versatile structure with open side walls. It has a basketball court, play space and restrooms.

Special thanks to:
Heerde Family Foundation
Okoboji Foundation



The Airnasium is a check-in point for resident overnight and day camp. The Airnasium provides a space for additional programming, not only in summer, but year-round during inclement weather days as well.

DINING HALL ADDITION

IGNITING A HEALTHY
LEGACY CAMPAIGN
ADDITION



Special thanks to these named sponsors for making this project possible:

Richard Brooke Foundation

Pat and Gary Ray

Peterson Family Foundation

The expansion of Paulson Lodge Dining Hall increased capacity by 50 additional seats to help us serve more campers. Additionally, we upgraded our food service to meet the needs of campers, no matter their dietary restrictions. The new wing provides additional space for storm shelters, restrooms and the ability to host groups year-round.

HOWARDS REMODEL



2020

REC LODGE REMODEL



2020

RED GAZELLE



**Maker
Space**

GARDENING



**In partnership
with ISU**

HATCHET THROWING



SLINGSHOTS



OMAHA & CHOCTAW



2016

ADOPT A CABIN RENOVATION PROGRAM



Through the generous donations of of Camp Foster supporters, we've been able to remodel seven of the older, traditional cabins - some of which are original structures from the 1930s.

This is on ongoing effort. To support these projects please visit campfosterymca.com/adopt-a-cabin/.

TENT CITY CABINS



2018

YURT



2018

PAVILION

2020



Camp Foster 2020 The Covid-19 Pandemic Year

Since 1912, Camp Foster has hosted a summer camp each summer, including during both world wars.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, in the interest of public safety, we opted to cancel overnight camp for the first time.

Camp Foster did offer day camp and a variety of public offerings under the mitigation advice from public health authorities. Among those offerings were trail rides, kayaking, challenge courses, and some family rentals. Camp Foster also assisted in food distribution and production for those in need.

