

The Link *to a Place Apart*

 **Lutheridge**  **Lutherock**  **Luther Springs**  **Luther Ranch**



REMOVING THE BARRIERS

Camp has a way of breaking down barriers to make way for spiritual connection and fellowship among God's children. Kari Eller, a social worker in the Atlanta area who works with unaccompanied children, sees the barriers that exist for her clients daily.

Maria*, age 14, and her sister Rosa*, age 10, wanted nothing more than to attend summer camp for the first time – to swim in a lake and make s'mores over a campfire. Unfortunately for these sisters from Mexico, there were both language and access barriers. Unaccompanied children, or those seeking asylum in the US, have virtually no access to government programs that provide resources and support, including afterschool and summer youth programs. For the children that Kari works with, experiences like summer camp are often hard to come by because they can be expensive for families struggling to make ends meet in a new country.

To those of us who have spent time at camp – hiking trails while singing joyously, bonding with cabin mates, adding a strand of yarn to our wrists at week's end – we know the impact a week at camp can have on our lives and the value it brings.

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A MESSAGE

from the Intentional Interim CEO

Greetings from the mountaintop! As fall begins to beautify our four camp sites, we are full of thanks for all the friends of NovusWay

Our camps thrived this summer as we welcomed 20% more campers than in 2021! We have not fully reached pre-pandemic numbers, but this was a big step forward. Thanks to our Covid policies and procedures, we had a limited number of cases among campers and staff. We were blessed with a dedicated staff who worked hard throughout the summer and for select weeks as we needed additional help. Many of our leaders were in new positions this summer, and they served with distinction. We are thankful for our countless volunteers who lent a hand to make this summer a success! Many friends joined us for a week of camp or came by for a visit. I was privileged to hear stories about the deep connections to our camps across several generations. I was especially moved to meet a few of the first campers from the 1950's, one of whom excitedly told me "it felt like camp again!"

We received solid summer camper income coupled with growing hosted ministry and year-round program income. Unfortunately, due to inflation we saw a significant rise in operations and program costs, causing camp expenses to grow faster than our income, jumping from 26% to 80% over last year. As we work to rebuild our teams and hire more qualified, quality summer and year-round staff, costs for salaries have also increased. We awarded \$80,250 for summer camp scholarships this year, up from \$64,083 in 2021. This shows the increasing need for registration subsidies to alleviate some of the cost burden for parents. We never want to turn away a camper because of fees, transportation or other potential barriers. As you read these stories from our camp family, consider the word of God in Isaiah – "Build up, build up, prepare the way! Remove every obstruction from my people's way."

Now in this time of seasonal change, our sites continue to host retreat programs and hosted ministry groups of all ages from throughout our 7-state region. Our year-round staff is hard at work preparing for the 2023 summer season to provide an exciting roster of programs for all ages full of adventure with the common bond of faith-forming life in a vibrant Christian community. Be on the lookout for announcements of another great summer at Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs and Lutheranch as camper registration opens in November!

I am honored to continue the foundational work for the future of this ministry in my Intentional Interim CEO role through next summer. I hope to see you and your family at camp this fall, spring and in summer 2023!

Dick Peterson
Intentional Interim CEO



When I think about the idea of “removing barriers,” I’m reminded that was at the heart of the mission and ministry of Jesus. He removed barriers between God’s people and God, between “fringe folk” and the rest of their community, between rules that kept people enslaved and the freedom that a life of true discipleship represented. When I was invited to step into this new call as interim (and now permanent) Program Director at Lutherock, there were lots of barriers: moving across country to a camp I’d never heard of in a state I’d never set foot in; stepping into the unknown with a staff who had already been together for a few weeks, with no idea if they would trust me and be willing to keep serving this place and these people; digging deep into my ministry history to remember what full-time camp life looked like and putting that into daily practice; and being without my support system – my family and friends who have journeyed the last 30 years with me.

Here’s what our God does though, friends: for God’s plans and purposes, God goes out ahead to be made known (a pillar of cloud and fire guiding the

Israelites in Exodus), God provides what we need in our moments of desperation (the ram in thicket to spare Isaac’s life), God gives provision (manna) and protection (caves to hide in and stones to topple giants), God offers forgiveness and redemption (Jesus 101). We’re facing barriers as we move into a new season of ministry at NovusWay. We’re facing barriers as the church and as followers of Jesus in this world. But God is still that same God and I’m confident in what God’s up to next – in my life, in your life, and in what God’s stirring up at Lutherock and in all of NovusWay!

Your prayers and partnership are a huge piece of God’s plan in “removing barriers” for the next season of ministry. We’re dreaming big resurrection-themed dreams over here! We want to reach SO many new friends and invite them to this place, to meet this God who calls us and captivates us and sends us forth courageously to do the work of the kingdom in this world. Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me and prayed over my journey to be among you.

72 YEARS & COUNTING

“It is absolutely my happy place,” she said. And no wonder! It’s been a “Rhyne thing” for 72 years now. Anneliese Rhyne Lichtenstein’s thank you note in late July connected her children’s 2022 camper experience to a line of family campers 72 years long. “My children just finished Week 5,” she wrote Lutheridge Executive Director Van Van Horne. “My son, Max Lichtenstein, was in Night Owls (7th year) and daughter, Sophie Lichtenstein (2nd year) was in PA. They had a phenomenal time. The Camp Grandma was so extremely helpful and kept me up to date with our daughter as she gets homesick and I worry.”

Max and Sophie are the latest in their branch of the Rhyne family to be Lutheridge campers. Mother, Anneliese, got her 10-year camper patch in 1996. Her brother Kristian Rhyne got his 10-year camper patch in 1992. Their father, William (Billy Ray) Rhyne was in the first group of Lutheridge Summer campers in 1951 and so listed in Lutheridge’s pictorial history. “Daddy spent nine summers at Lutheridge,” Anneliese recalls. “His biggest regret in life was that he didn’t get his 10-year badge as he chose to go to basketball camp his senior year of high school. Well, the three of us attended Lutheridge’s 65th Anniversary Weekend in 2011 and the ministry was kind enough to present my Dad with his 10-year badge in front of everyone behind Efird Hall on the last night of the Anniversary weekend. He was overjoyed!”

“The reason for my email,” she wrote Van Horne, “is to tell you just how much that gesture meant to me. We lost Daddy December 8, 2020 to Covid and little did I realize how much that night and having this badge would mean NOW. Last year was the first year of my life I entered Lutheridge without Daddy by my side, and my children’s first year being dropped off without him there.”





"The Rhyne's, Anneliese points out, "have been involved in Lutheridge since the 1940's when The Rev. S. White Rhyne assisted in the business acquisition of Lutheridge." The Gastonia, NC area was her family home, and Anneliese grew up at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Gastonia under Pastor Peter Setzer. Her family ran a bus line, America Charters Ltd., but Billy Ray was there every year to take his children to Lutheridge.

"Our parents were good to us," she recalls, "so there were several years we could go to Lutheridge twice in one summer." The tradition of taking campers continued with his grandson, Max, until Billy Ray's death in 2020. Our Covid-shortened Summer Camp 2021 was the first year for the family to come without Billy Ray Rhyne.

And still they come. Why? "Lutheridge is the only place I can pull up to and experience complete calm," Anneliese confesses. "I have this special routine every year. I have to walk through PA and PB and up the hill. I have to do that for me." Part of this yearly ritual is to play a "Where am I?" game, taking "selfies" to send to brother, Kristian. He's never in doubt where she is! "This is a tradition I am blessed to pass on to my children and someday their children," she wrote Van Horne. "The memories have helped me through many bad days as I lost my best friend that day who loved Lutheridge even more than I do. I can't say enough what this place means to me," Anneliese admits. With tongue-in-cheek she says, "My life's goal is to retire and be the Camp Grandmother." And maybe she just will.

Nearly 2100 children and youth had the opportunity through Summer Camp 2022 to experience God's abundant love in the ministries of NovusWay's four very special sites, Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs and Lutheranch. Annual fund giving helps defray the cost of every program registration, provides summer staff salaries and so much more. Thank you for your gifts that make these ministry sites blessings for people like Anneliese and her family!

Your generosity makes a difference! To make a donation or to learn more about ways you can give to camp, please contact our Development team at give@novusway.org or visit www.novusway.org/ways-to-give.



Scan this QR code to view the 2021 Annual Report and rejoice with us as we celebrate another year of ministry!

We can't imagine not having those experiences, but for some, it's an inaccessible privilege. Thanks to NovusWay's camper scholarship program and the generosity of supporters who contributed this year, both girls were able to experience summer camp for the first time.

Kari assisted with transportation for Maria and Rosa to and from camp along with their mother. Driving them from Atlanta to remote Tallapoosa, one of the sisters commented how it felt like another world – "it's so peaceful here." Maria and Rosa speak Spanish and are just beginning to learn English. They were nervous about not being able to understand their cabin mates or counselor. At drop off, Kari translated for Rosa and another camper to help them find common ground. Rosa learned the other girl was also nervous and, like Rosa, enjoyed drawing. Kari recalls the difference in the girls during their ride home after their week at camp. "Their mother and I listened to the girls sing camp songs for two hours. They loved getting to sleep under the stars. They were each assigned a horse to ride throughout the week and, in true sister fashion, argued about whose horse was better. The girls even remembered all the barn rules! " Kari could tell they made friends and connections they'll remember forever. Maria told Kari that she can't wait to go back next year because she knows her friends will be going back to camp, too. "I want to practice my English so when I come next time, I can tell them everything I want." She even wants to become a counselor in training one day.

The girls recalled an activity where they were told to hold their breath and pretend to whisper a secret, letting it go like a balloon. That allowed them to let go of their worries and things that might be holding them back. "Therapy and counseling aren't accessible to everyone, so creative alternatives can have a huge impact. In this way, a horse can become a therapist. There are lots of ways to provide support and create those mind body spirit connections. It's amazing what a little love and TLC can do," Kari says. She saw that the girls were loved and taken care of, which she knows was because of the wonderful summer staff. "The care they received was an expression of God's love to them. To be able to give a child the experience of camp, especially these sisters, is a gift. This was a unique experience for them."

This was the first time Inspiritus partnered with Lutheranch to send kids in their care to camp. Gretchen Ahrens, Lutheranch Program Director, hopes it won't be the last. "It was incredible to watch the counselors learn and grow throughout the week by tackling the language barrier so the girls could have the best camp experience possible. They found similarities with each other – one of the counselors had the same name as one of the sisters – and used Google translate to communicate. Our wrangler took the time to write out the barn rules in Spanish so the girls would feel welcome and safe. God was at work in a really cool way!"

Gretchen and her staff are making plans to provide this opportunity to other unaccompanied and refugee children in the Atlanta area next summer. "In this way, we are living out NovusWay's mission and vision. We say we're welcome to all, but if you can't afford it you can't experience it. For these two girls, we removed that barrier."

Camp is here and welcome to all, even two Spanish speaking sisters from Mexico.

**Names were changed to protect the privacy of the campers.*





Thank you for being partners in “removing barriers” for the next season – for sending your kids, bringing your retreat group, encouraging the next amazing staff person, being generous in financial support and dreaming new dreams with us!

A barrier is only a barrier when we let it be. When we remember that we are children of the God who removes barriers like it’s His full-time job, then barriers just become a step on our way to living out His call.

Missie Bonser
Lutherock Program Director



DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS WITH LUTHER SPRINGS

Our NovusWay ministry sites do more than help form faith in God’s people of all ages. They equip and enable God’s people to live that faith in this world through acts of service. Luther Springs will partner with Faith Lutheran Church, Sarasota to send mission teams each week next summer to support Southwest Florida disaster relief efforts.



While camp has many needs, there are others whose needs are far greater, and we offer our hands in faithful service to our brothers and sisters who are suffering from the devastation of Hurricane Ian. We hope you’ll join us!

For more information, contact Deacon Sue Mendenhall at smendenhall@novusway.org.



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