

# The Link to a Place Apart

 **Lutheridge**

 **Lutherock**

 **Luther Springs**

 **Luther ranch**



Suzanne as a Lutheridge counselor; pictured fourth from the left.

## FROM CAMPER TO COUNSELOR TO NATIONAL LEADER

NovusWay not only transforms the lives of campers through summer and year-round programs, but also through the employment of college-aged students who serve as summer camp counselors. These young adults help to create a week of Christian community for campers, while they themselves are afforded an opportunity to grow in their sense of vocation as people of faith.

Each year we receive messages from former summer staff who say how much camp has influenced their careers. They have discovered ministry callings within and outside of church, from deacons to pastors, nurses to physicians, teachers to social workers, attorneys to company presidents. Year after year, we see our summer staff alumni working to make the world a better place. One such person is Suzanne Unsicker McCormick.

Suzanne grew up in Wilmington, North Carolina, and her family was very active at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, which is where she learned about Lutheridge. She recalls the church sending two buses full of kids to camp every summer. The summer after 3rd grade, Suzanne got to join them. She had such a wonderful experience that the next summer she invited her best friend Cindy to join her. Together, they returned for at least one week each summer through the 12th grade. Suzanne spent one summer as a camp counselor at Lutheridge and Cindy three.



# A MESSAGE

## from the Intentional Interim CEO

Summer 2023 was another success for NovusWay! As I write this message, it's a quiet Monday morning after camp sessions have concluded at Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs and Lutheranch. Camp is not camp

without all the life and excitement campers bring to us! This summer **2,021** youth and **771** adults participated in our programs! We saw exciting growth in our adult programming, specifically Grandparents Camp and Family Camp. These programs expose children to all the wonderful sides of camp and is one of the best feeders for future youth campers. Our Lutheroad Day Camps also experienced significant growth this year! Lutheroad Day Camp served over 1,000 children this summer across 35 sites throughout the Southeast. During Lutheroad, summer staff partner with local congregations to bring camp to their communities, which inspires future on-site campers. Organized by Luther Springs, our new Disaster Response Mission Weeks in southwest Florida brought youth groups from throughout the United States to Sarasota and Fort Myers to help with the devastation caused by recent hurricanes. When we talk about our program sites this summer, we're talking about 36 other sites in addition to our four traditional camps! We're proud to report that our summer staff were able to reach numerous youth and adults through our many outdoor ministry programs.

THANK YOU to all the friends who helped make camp possible:

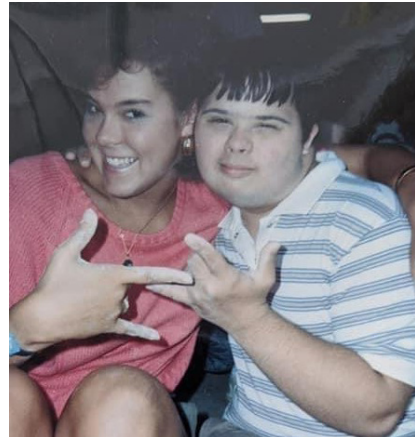
- For families who sent their campers to a special time at camp;
- For the congregations and synods who support these programs with ongoing gifts and prayers;
- For our summer and year-round staff who show God's love in all the many tasks that contribute to a successful summer camp season;
- For individuals and families who volunteer and then remember this ministry through heartfelt gifts;
- For all our donors who support our ministry with generous gifts that flow throughout the year; and,
- For God who created our beautiful sites and preserved them over the years, while sending the right leaders to keep the ministry alive and growing over the last 75 years!

We have seen the fire lit once again and we hope you'll join us as we ***fan the flame and keep the fire burning!*** You can support a specific camp or give where needed most online at [www.NovusWay.org](http://www.NovusWay.org) or by scanning the QR code. Your support of our outdoor ministry blesses and enriches the lives of all who experience the joy, fellowship, and nurturing that God provides in our places apart!

Dick Peterson  
Intentional Interim CEO



“Camp was truly transformative and lifechanging for me,” she says. “Some of my best memories are from camp. It was always this escape from the peer pressure that you experience in school or your neighborhood, which is even truer today with the influence of social media. I wish every child could have a summer camp experience. [For those of us in the field], we know that has the best youth development outcomes of any youth development program.” For Suzanne, the faith component of camp is the richest part because you’re immersed. “Every night you have Care or Vespers. Some of my best, deepest growth – developmentally and spiritually – happened then. It’s when you [get] to live your faith and be safe and vulnerable without judgment. Lutheridge is a place where you can be your authentic self.”



Suzanne with a Summershine Camper.

Suzanne credits her experience as a counselor for setting her on her career path by opening her eyes to service. She currently serves as President and CEO of Y-USA and is the first female in this role. She has an impressive 27 years of experience as a local and national executive leader in the nonprofit sector, most recently as U.S. President of United Way Worldwide and a member of its global management team.

When asked if her time as a counselor influenced her development of leadership skills, she didn’t hesitate to say, “Without question! The whole job of being a counselor is being a leader. You start as a leader of a group of campers. You have to be agile and flexible and creative. You have to be on all the time, and you have a high degree of responsibility. As counselors move up the ranks, they’re managing programs and could be managing a whole part of the camp experience. To get to do that as a young 20-year-old is phenomenal. It could take years in the for-profit world.”

Suzanne believes that being a camp counselor gives young adults foundational leadership and interpersonal skills. “You have to relate to parents about their kids’ experience when they come to pick up their kids at the end of the week. I think that being a camp counselor is a very underrated and underestimated leadership experience. It really does develop skills that are so applicable, more so than some internship experiences. Camp gives you a platform to be creative, where a lot of internships don’t offer that. As a counselor, you’re doing more than observing. You’re testing human interaction and communication,” she says. And we couldn’t agree more! We believe working as a summer staff at one of our camps provides life-enriching experiences, and we would like to provide these experiences for as many young people as possible.

Thanks to a grant from the North Carolina Synod, we are investing in our summer staff through new leadership recruitment and development efforts, which include creating a Campus Ambassador Program, providing ongoing leadership development training through our annual summer staff training and fall/winter summer staff reunion weekends, developing a leadership candidate marketing and recruitment staff campaign so we continue to cultivate the highest caliber of summer



# BUILDING FAITH WHILE REBUILDING A COMMUNITY

This summer Luther Springs welcomed **233** high school youth and their advisors from across the United States at our Disaster Response Mission Weeks. And what an exciting summer it has been!

Over the course of seven weeks, volunteers from Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, Minnesota, Montana, Texas, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Florida worked at 6 homes, 2 churches, 1 community farmyard and 3 food banks. They painted buildings and parking lots, removed rotted floorboards, hauled out flood damaged debris, trimmed trees, weeded, raked, and hauled away tons of yard debris as well as debris from neighboring homes and businesses. They unloaded food trucks, sorted food, created food boxes for families and food backpacks for children and youth – most of whom are still struggling with food scarcity as a result of the 2022 hurricanes. They heard powerful witness from Pastor Sharon Taylor as she shared her story and the story of St. Peter Lutheran Church in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. Pastor Sharon and her husband, Pastor Tim Taylor, were among those families impacted by both Hurricane Ian and Disaster Response Mission Weeks volunteers.



After a particular week of service, Pastor Tim shared some heartfelt words of thanksgiving with the team: “Pastor Sharon and I are almost beyond words to express our gratitude to you and your team from Luther Springs for the amazing work that they did here in Fort Myers. It has been 9 months since hurricane Ian destroyed much of this area, and displaced so many families, including us. We are so grateful that God continues to show up and show off. God dropped your amazing team here in Fort Myers at just the right time. From those who worked in the heat at St. Peter, to those who served one of our most vulnerable communities





at Gladiolus, to the team that helped Sharon and I get our new home cleared and painted – THANK YOU!!!!!! We know that God is good, all the time and we know that your team was truly a Godsend to us and this community. Blessings and Peace on you all and your ministry!”



In addition to volunteer work, participants also enjoyed fun in the sun! Each week included a 3-hour boat tour to see dolphins playing in the water and to enjoy some water play themselves on a sandbar off Siesta Key. Pastor Eric Olaf Olsen from our host church, Faith Lutheran in Sarasota, led a beautiful worship service with communion on the beach at sunset each Thursday evening.

Deacon Sue Mendenhall, Luther Springs Co-Executive and Program Director, expressed her gratitude for those who helped make this program possible: “Many, many thanks to the support of the Florida-Bahamas Synod and Pastor Rob Rose, who assisted us with not only funding to make this great work happen but in making contacts with those we could help. A huge shout out to Faith Lutheran Church and Pastor Eric for hosting us during our seven weeks. And there would have been some hard floors to sleep on without the generous donations for air mattresses from St. Mark Lutheran Church in Dunedin, Florida, and St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Clearwater. Thank you to everyone who made this wonderful ministry a reality! We look forward to more Disaster Response Mission week in 2024!”

Your gifts to Luther Springs and those that helped to provide supplies and materials to support volunteers during these special ministry weeks continue to impact lives beyond camp. To support programs like this and others at Luther Springs, you can send a gift via mail to NovusWay Ministries, C/O Luther Springs, PO Box 830, Arden, NC 28704 or online at [www.NovusWay.org](http://www.NovusWay.org).

For more information on this program and how you can participate next year, please contact Deacon Sue at 828-209-6312 or [SMendenhall@NovusWay.org](mailto:SMendenhall@NovusWay.org).



# FINDING DWELLING ON THE ROCK



In addition to reconnecting with our Lutherock alumni and re-growing our camper base, one of the shared passions for the Rock staff during the non-summer camp season was establishing meaningful missional partnerships for the future. Anyplace we have extra, we want to pour out and share with others – from our staff resources to creative ideas and inspiration, to the beauty and vastness of our place apart. Two of the places where prayerful partnership is already providing fruit are The Dwelling in Winston Salem, North Carolina, and Avery County Schools down the road from our camp in Newland.

After a Spirit-led meeting between Deacon Missie Bonser, Lutherock Program Director, and The Dwelling's Mission Developer/Lead Pastor Emily Norris during our supporting synods' Fall Convocations, a sweet and intentional partnership began to bloom. These conversations led to staff visits, shared preaching and ultimately to Lutherock sharing three summer staff with their Spark'Dwell service learning program. Rock staff made a profound impact on the summer ministry team at The Dwelling, but an even more profound impact occurred within the hearts and minds of the Rock counselors that were deployed to serve.

Christa Behrmann, a second-year Lutherock counselor, shared these words: "Spark'Dwell gave me such a supportive and eye-opening space. I worked with people who were or have gone through the experience of homelessness. One of those people was Zay, who I now consider a friend. Through that I was able to support others and open their eyes to the reality of homelessness, while also going through the same experience. Working and serving with organizations like Samaritan Ministries and Tracy's Little Red Schoolhouse gave me a sense of purpose and community that I would have never expected and am so grateful for. It allowed me to help people and spaces grow, as well as myself. I will forever remember the experience Amber and Emily (from The Dwelling) welcomed me into."

We are hopeful to grow this partnership into additional shared weeks, where youth and young adults from across the country can visit for a part Rock/part Spark'Dwell week to experience the best of both programs – high adventure and missional immersion – while bearing witness to the Spirit at work in these spaces and in their own lives.

The second fruitful partnership emanated from Missie's connection to Avery County Schools through her husband, Howard, who is a teacher at Avery Middle School. His access and awareness of the significant need within the neighboring community birthed connections that will be seeds for the future. Thanks to many generous camper scholarship gifts, Lutherock offered full scholarships to any Avery County Middle School student with significant need who was also a good match for our summer program offerings as identified by their school counselors and teachers.





This summer, five students shared a week on the mountain with us! At the start of the 2023-2024 school year, all 6th grade students and teachers in Avery County spent the day on-site at Lutherock for team building and personal development as they prepared to dive into their middle school experience.

While it's easy to become overwhelmed by numbers and growth and finances (all the things we're bringing IN), we believe the heart of who we are as an outdoor ministry compels us to keep the ways and words of Jesus as the cornerstone to all we do. At Lutherock we want to continue seeking ways to send OUT and share the best of what we have. Through partnerships like these, among many others, Lutherock will continue to grow and flourish for generations to come!



We invite you to think about the role Lutherock has played in your life or the lives of your family and friends, then consider how you can continue to be a partner in our ministry.

Visit [Lutherock.org/rooted-in-65-years-of-ministry](https://lutherock.org/rooted-in-65-years-of-ministry) to view the Giving Tree and join us in celebrating Lutherock's 65 years of outdoor ministry or scan the QR code to give today!

To learn more, contact Kristen Williams, [KWilliams@NovusWay.org](mailto:KWilliams@NovusWay.org) or (828) 209-6305. We hope you'll pay us a visit on the mountain to see firsthand the impact your life, legacy and gifts continue to make at Lutherock!



# FROM CAMPERS TO STAFF: WATCHING LUTHERANCH GROW



It was the summer of 2016 and we hadn't yet officially launched summer camp at Lutheranch. A group of youth from Shades Valley Lutheran Church in Birmingham, Alabama didn't let that stop them! They were ready to come to camp and gathered for the first unofficial confirmation camp at Holy Trinity House. The group was excited to experience all that camp had to offer – from campfires to making new friends to crafts and games. “My first memory of Lutheranch is doing vespers

on the dock and just listening to creation,” said Kaitlyn Hall, a member of Shades Valley who was a part of that first confirmation camp. “We'd do camp stuff with the counselors like hike and swim and then the curriculum stuff with our Pastor and youth leader. My dad drove the bus and cooked for us.”

Kaitlyn and fellow confirmation camper and church member, Mary Beth Schabacker, agreed that being a part of the camp's history and some of the first youth to stay at Lutheranch was memorable. Both Kaitlyn and Mary Beth were also part of the first official summer of camp at Lutheranch in 2017 as Confirmation Ranchers. “Being one of the first to experience a new camp felt special,” Mary Beth said. Kaitlyn agreed, saying: “Something very special was seeing the Shades Valley Stable named after our church, but also a camp in our synod! I remember a big reason we went was to see that stable. Also, just being one of the first groups felt special.”

Shades Valley Lutheran Church has continued to support Lutheranch both financially and by sending campers to summer camp each year. Last summer, they graciously loaned their church van to Lutheranch to help transport campers across the property. This summer, Shades Valley sent five campers and, now that they are young adults, both young women were able to serve on summer staff.







Kaitlyn served as a counselor and lifeguard and Mary Beth served as general duty staff, helping in the kitchen, at the waterfront and anywhere else needed. Debbie Lundell, a longtime supporter who served as a cook in 2017 and now serves as the crafts coordinator, remembers Mary Beth as one of her first campers. "It is a joy to see how much she has grown as a person and to work and communicate with her on an adult level," Debbie said.

Mary Beth enjoyed returning as staff member and commented on how the program has grown. "I don't remember much of my first time at Lutheranch, but my love of horses has me coming back. There are far more programs, such as mountain biking, which make the camping experience more diverse and fun. I enjoyed getting to know the campers, counselors and other staff members more personally. I also found that participating in the different activities and helping in the kitchen were very memorable," she said.

Kaitlyn enjoyed the smaller numbers and getting to know her campers and fellow counselors. "The best part of being on staff was building relationships with other counselors, but also the campers. Having smaller cabin groups allows a more intimate setting where you can really get to know the kids," she shared. For Kaitlyn, Lutheranch will always be a special place. "I keep coming back because the campus is absolutely beautiful. It's not one specific thing really, but more of a feeling. Lutheranch just feels like home to me. Even my phone's GPS thinks so!"

Camper to counselor transformations are anything but rare. Every year, youth and young adults create lasting memories at camp and experience God at work in their lives. These experiences lead many of them to return year after year as campers, then as counselors and eventually as adult leaders and/or family campers. The spiritual and financial gifts you share with our ministry have not only made camp possible at Lutheranch, along with our other three sites, but enable us to continue our work of providing experience for all people in God's creation that inspire faith, build relationships, and transform lives!



If you're interested in learning about camp program opportunities at Lutheranch or any of our other sites, please contact our Registration Office today at 828-209-6302 or email us at [Registration@NovusWay.org](mailto:Registration@NovusWay.org).

If you are interested in joining our summer staff at Lutheranch, please contact Program Director Gretchen Ahrens at [GAhrens@NovusWay.org](mailto:GAhrens@NovusWay.org).



staff at our camps, and developing a summer staff internship program so they can receive internship and course credit for their valuable work at camp. The leadership training we provide, coupled with the faith community which they build as a staff, creates an invaluable experience that impacts their vocational journey far beyond the summer.

Our summer staff at Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs and Lutheranch alike learn valuable life lessons. Suzanne shared several that have stuck with her throughout her life and career:

- The importance of faith and the power of that in your life. Part of what makes camp so special, especially at Lutheridge, is that it connects us to our Christian values.
- How important it is to accept people for who they are and to be nonjudgmental. It's not always easy to get along with kids that are different than you and to love and accept everyone. At camp, we love everybody and we're radically inclusive. Learning belonging and inclusion was a big life lesson for me.
- INDEPENDENCE. Camp provides opportunities to get out of your comfort zone, which helps build confidence.
- The power of humor and fun and joy! I remember skits at night and the things we did as counselors. When I think back about what I felt when I was there, those are top of mind for me.



Suzanne at YMCA Gathering Pines in Lakeville, MN

Suzanne's story is a testimony to the lasting, profound impact of camp, which is made possible by your generosity! To make a donation or to learn more about ways you can give to camp, including support for our summer staff, please contact our Development team at [Give@NovusWay.org](mailto:Give@NovusWay.org) or visit our website at [www.NovusWay.org/ways-to-give](http://www.NovusWay.org/ways-to-give).



Staff Alumni Reunion

All former summer staff and their families are invited to join us for this exciting weekend. Come gather around the campfire and reminisce about summers past, and connect with old and new friends. Even if you can't come for the entire weekend, we hope you will join us for the day on Saturday.

To learn more about the reunion and to register, scan the QR code. We look forward to seeing you!



During the pandemic, you helped us to **LIGHT THE FIRE. Now, Join us to FAN THE FLAME** and keep the fire burning.

Covid is finally waning, but we have been faced with another obstacle - rising inflation. Our operations costs continue to increase, and although summer camper numbers were higher this year, we had to get creative to increase wages and fill all our summer staff positions.

What are we doing about it? We're focusing our efforts on redeveloping our summer and year-round programming, staff recruitment and leadership development, and improving our facilities on campus. We will continue to uphold our commitment to support every participant in need of scholarships due to financial constraints **BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

What's the best way to show your love of and passion for camp?! Make a financial gift today that will impact the lives of campers tomorrow! If you'd like to help sustain the future of our outdoor ministry for years to come, please consider a monthly gift to NovusWay. It's like having a monthly subscription that changes lives! Visit [www.NovusWay.org](http://www.NovusWay.org) or scan the QR code to give. Under "Type of Donation," select whether you'd like to make a One Time Donation or Monthly Donation (which will auto draft on the same day each month).



To learn more, email [Give@NovusWay.org](mailto:Give@NovusWay.org). Your gift changes everything!

## Our Development Team

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](mailto:Give@NovusWay.org) or visit [www.NovusWay.org/Ways-To-Give](http://www.NovusWay.org/Ways-To-Give).



Kristen Williams  
Financial  
Development  
Executive Director



The Rev. Dr.  
Jan Setzler  
Sr. Development  
Officer



Rev. Nathan Gragg  
Development  
Officer



Mary Osen  
Donor Relations  
Specialist



NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
ASHEVILLE NC  
PERMIT #575

# NovusWay Ministries

PO Box 830  
Arden, NC 28704  
ph 828-684-2361  
[www.NovusWay.org](http://www.NovusWay.org)

Change Service Requested

In an effort to be good stewards, we ask for your help maintaining accurate records to minimize unnecessary postage.

**Make corrections on the label. Mail it back to us or send an image to [give@novusway.org](mailto:give@novusway.org).**

- ☐ Name Change  
☐ I receive more than one copy  
☐ Address Change  
☐ I'd like to receive this publication by email  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Please remove me from the mailing list

## Your Gift Makes a Difference!



We were blessed to have had a wonderful summer season at all our camps! Your support has sustained us and helped us to grow into an incredible four-site outdoor ministry serving God's children of all ages.

During the pandemic, you helped us to LIGHT THE FIRE. Now, join us to FAN THE FLAME and keep the fire burning! Support of one or more of our NovusWay sites by making an impactful gift today. We hope that our camps continue to inspire and transform your life and walk with Jesus. After all, YOU make camp possible!



Give today at [www.NovusWay.org](http://www.NovusWay.org)

THANK YOU!