

Great Oaks News

Camping & Urban Youth Ministries

Apr-June 2019 Report

Camper sponsor:

Believe it or not, summer is right around the corner. This summer, Great Oaks will serve over 3,000 people, as well as give away over 200 free weeks of camp to at-risk youth from Peoria and the surrounding areas. At camp, our goal is simple: *to connect people to Jesus through life changing experiences*. Would you be willing to help us provide a life changing experience to an at-risk student from our community? While summer camp is free for our campers, it does come at quite a significant cost to us. At \$250 for a week, would you consider sponsoring a camper? A \$500 sponsorship will cover the cost of two campers for a week. However, maybe you have the ability to give more. With a \$1,250 donation, you would be sponsoring an entire cabin for a week of camp.



Summer Staff Sponsor:

Over the past few years, we have seen a shift in our summer staff, as we have begun to hire many of our former campers to become counselors. This has proven to be great idea and has certainly been a blessing to us, to them, and to the overall ministry at Great Oaks. However, it has come at a cost. Typically, the summer staff at Great Oaks raises support, from their friends and family, to supplement their income and to help offset some of our overall budget costs, allowing us to keep the cost of camper sponsorship low. However, now this system doesn't work as well because our Peoria youth are from low income communities, and often, they don't have the contacts or resources to make this successful. Therefore, we are looking for individuals to sponsor our summer staff members. Our summer staff ministry is an excellent discipleship opportunity and is a great way for Great Oaks to connect to the community through hiring former campers, youth from our Peoria programs, and even members of our retreat groups from different denominations, as well as those from different ethnic backgrounds. It is our desire that, throughout the summer, they can unite together to serve the Lord at Great Oaks, learning from each other and respecting each other's differences. With that said, would you be willing to sponsor a summer staff member for \$200.00 a week or \$1,600 for the entire summer?

In Memory of Bud Stocksiek

Last month, the Great Oaks family lost a dear friend, John “Bud” Stocksiek. Bud passed away on Wednesday, April 24, 2019. Bud Stocksiek was one of the original supporters of Great Oaks Camp. In fact, he toured the original camp property with our founder, Jerry Stafford, and contributed to the decision to purchase the land. Because of his contributions and significant role in the founding of Great Oaks Camp, Bud, along with his wife, Donna, received the *Lifetime of Service Award* at our banquet last year. This award was given to those who have dedicated their lives to serving the Lord at Great Oaks Camp.



In 2008, I became the *Executive Director* at Great Oaks Camp. In the years prior to that, camp had gone through many difficulties, and because of that, everyone had concerns about the stability and future of Great Oaks. Shortly after I became director, Bud approached me and shared with me his concerns. Although, I tried to reassure Bud that things were going to be fine, I, myself, shared those same concerns. Truthfully, given the circumstances we were in (and because of my age), I thought Great Oaks was crazy to ask me to be the *Executive Director*. I felt unqualified to lead any organization, especially an organization in such a



The Stocksiek family received a Lifetime Recognition of Service award from Great Oaks in 2018

difficult season of life. After that conversation with Bud, I thought we might lose him as a supporter, and honestly, if he walked away from camp, I felt he had good enough reasons to do so. Thankfully, that never came to pass. Despite having legitimate concerns, not only did Bud remain faithful to Great Oaks Camp during that difficult time of ministry, he remained faithful and committed until his passing. I am so pleased he was able to see Great Oaks push through and grow over the last ten years. In fact, he was able to express to me, on more than one occasion, how happy he was to see Great Oaks prospering. Often in our world today, when we experience difficult times, we abandon our commitments, afraid of what the future might hold. However, to me, Bud will always serve as a reminder to see our commitments through as he did for Great Oaks, as well as his church, Christ Bible Church in Creve Coeur.