Hanging Out at the ELCA Youth Gathering

Lutheran Outdoor Ministries was represented well at the ELCA Youth Gathering! We had a space in the Interactive Learning Center that we shared with ELCA Advocacy. We met literally thousands of kids who told us we were “preaching to the choir” when we talked to them about the value of participating in the outdoor ministry closest to them. We met lots more kids who love going to camp than those who don’t go to camp. LOM was really in a good spot to focus on talking with kids about working at an outdoor ministry in future summers.

Other conversations included talking with youth leaders about encouraging kids to work at summer camp and emphasizing “Journeys,” which to everyone was the best kept secret in the ELCA. “Journeys” is the web resource LOM provides with adventure trips, servant camps (and now adult travel opportunities) that are listed on the LOM Journeys page on our website.

Our network is grateful to Heather Lutz, former Baord member and interim executive director at Carline Furnace (VA). She gave up a week of her time and donated her airfare in order to staff our space during that whole time, as well as planning the design of our space and hand-making just about everything that was in our space. And we were so fortunate to have four summer staff “on loan” from Cross Roads Outdoor Ministries (NJ) who were the rock stars for our space. Thank you to Sam Peebles, Haley Bunting, Deborah Oravbiere, and Jonathan Sterling.
Register Now!
The LOM Conference Is Just Two Months Away

Exciting fellowship, engaging discussion, meaningful worship and much more await you at the 2018 LOM Conference. Join colleagues and friends of outdoor ministry at T Bar M Camp and Retreat Center in New Braunfels, Texas from Monday, November 5, to Friday, November 9, 2018.

Gather with outdoor ministry professionals, speakers and leaders to dive into the theme of **Good Works in Grace Spurred in Love**. Together we will explore our theme verse from Hebrews 10:24: “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.” Baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we have been redeemed and blessed with God’s gracious and eternal love. Everything we have and everything we are is because of God’s love for us and this love empowers us – it spurs us on in good works to a life of service for others. We gather as outdoor ministry professionals to celebrate the many gifts God has given and to challenge one another in the development of these gifts, to strive for excellence in our work, that the gifts given are fully utilized and through which all may experience God’s love.

The conference schedule allows for plenty of time for discussion with peers in ministry, as well as dynamic worship and fellowship. The annual conference is the perfect time to connect with old friends, meet new partners in ministry, share ideas and get excited about all the opportunities that our work in Lutheran Outdoor Ministries has to offer. Learn more about all the amazing projects taking place around LOM, spend time getting to know exhibitors and partners in ministry, bid on amazing items at the annual LOM auction and enjoy Texas.

Scholarships are available for first time attendees. A late fee of $100 goes into effect after October 10. Get more information, including about financial assistance, and register at https://www.lomnetwork.org/conference. See you in November!
Become an LOM Sustaining Member or Organization

Every outdoor ministry organization affiliated with the ELCA is, by definition, a member of LOM. LOM Sustaining Organizations are those which make annual financial contributions in excess of $500. We encourage you individually and your organization to consider such a contribution to assure the growing effectiveness and the delivery of services of LOM. Discern a contribution that reflects you or your organization’s ability to support LOM to the fullest. Below is a list of suggested levels of giving for the sustainable operation of LOM. You can make a contribution online at https://www.lomnetwork.org/donate/. Thank you for your support!

**Organization Giving Levels:**
- $25 – $499: Encouraging Circle
- $500 – $999: Educating Circle
- $1,000 – $1,999: Equipping Circle
- $2,000 – $3,499: Empowering Circle
- $3,500 – $4,999: Sustaining Circle
- $5,000+: Onward and Upward Circle

**Individual Giving Levels:**
- $25 – $99: LOM Advocates Group
- $100 – $299: Forward Progress Group
- $300 – $499: Capacity Builders Group
- $500 – $999: Visionary Group
- $1,000+: Bold and Faithful Leaders Group

**Leadership Training Event Set for November**

Learning Events give Lutheran Outdoor Ministry professionals the opportunity to learn new skills, enhance their understanding of administration and programming of camps, and network with others across the country in similar job positions.

2018 Leadership Training Event (LTE) Program Track will take place at T Bar M Conference Center, New Braunfels, Texas, from Thursday, November 1, to Monday, November 5, 2018.

Cost is $525 for double occupancy with a late fee of $100 in effect after October 10. Shuttle service of $15 to and from the San Antonio Airport is also available. Get more information, including about financial assistance, and to register, go to https://www.lomnetwork.org/lte/
THE AUCTION: A FUN WAY TO MAKE A GREAT LOM DONATION!
The LOM Auction is coming! There are two easy ways both you and your organization can be involved. Consider putting a trip package together that your organization can provide as part of the auction. This could be a week at a beach front cabin, a backpacking trip, a canoe trip, something that your organization specializes in - you get the idea. Be creative and let’s add some new adventures for people to snare. OR you could provide items for the silent auction that will take place at the same time as the live auction. These items can really reflect your camp or the area that you come from. Anything from locally crafted beers to coffee to custom pottery, and jams and jellies. Again, be creative! We would love to offer a wide variety of items for the silent auction. Please contact Dave Jarvis at auction@lomnetwork.org for more details and to get a form to register your auction items. Let’s make this the best auction ever! The LOM Auction catalog will start being filled as items come in. Keep checking for updates. See you in Texas!!

GREAT GATHERING IN 2019
Have You Seen the 2019 Great Gathering Website? We are getting our first glimpses of the Outdoor Ministries Connection’s Great Gathering that will be held in Lake Junaluska, NC, in November 2019. RelationSHIFT is the theme for this joint conference that will bring together camp and retreat leaders from denominations across the continent. You can check out the website by going to www.omcgreatgathering.org.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAM AWARD DEADLINE
The Innovative Program Award will be presented at the Conference awards ceremony on Thursday, November 8. The deadline for submitting an application for your outdoor ministry to be considered for this award is October 1. Submitting an application will not only get the acknowledgement of your LOM colleagues, but it also has the potential of bringing attention of your ministry to a national audience. For instance, did you see the article on page 32 of the July issue of Living Lutheran? There’s a great article there about "Reach 100" at Agape-Kure Beach Ministries, the winner of the 2017 Innovative Program Award. More information at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/awards/innovative-program-award/

DIVERSITY GRANT DEADLINE
A new initiative for this year is the possibility for your outdoor ministry organization to receive the Diversity Grant, also to be presented at the Conference awards ceremony on November 8. LOM will award a $2,000 grant for an outdoor ministry organization to complete a project that promotes diversity within the ministry and the community. The application deadline is October 1. More information at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/diversity-grant/

A NEW ADDITION FOR JOURNEYS
Journeys has long been a resource for congregations, especially their youth groups to find camps throughout the ELCA that can do an expert job of hosting adventure camp trips and servant events. Now, we are making it possible for LOM member organizations to list programs that they can host for adult and senior adult groups. That way, a congregation or another camp can have an easy way of finding destinations for their adult bus trips and similar programs. Now is the time to list your adventure camp trips, servant events, and programs that you can host for adults and senior adults. http://journeys.lomnetwork.org/about/
Registration Open for Compass Points

Now is the time to make plans to attend the two Compass Points certificate programs in October. Non-Profit Business Management will be offered on October 14-17 and the Articulating Our Mission, Role, and Value course is scheduled for October 17-20. Co-instructor for the October 17-20 event is LOM’s own Randy Younquist-Thurow. You can take one or both of these classes which will be hosted by Kavanaugh Conference and Retreat Center (Crestwood, KY). Please go to www.compasspointsprogram.org to learn more about these courses (and register).

Words from Don

I’m pretty sure that summer camp season has now concluded for all of our LOM camps. Many of our LOM members are breathing a sigh of relief and deservedly so. It’s very impressive what you have accomplished when you consider that throughout LOM, the estimate is that 175,000 children and youth have participated in summer camp experiences and around 3,500 persons, mostly young adults, have served as summer camp staff members. And this doesn’t even include all the kids who have participated in the traveling day camps that so many of our organizations provide for their constituencies. Your ministry is sooooo important!!!

I hope you are getting some time to rest, refresh and recharge. And I hope you are including opportunities that we all provide for each other through LOM to do just that. This first post-summer issue of the LOM Newsletter is chuck full of information about a fall season full of so many great opportunities – the LOM Annual Conference, the Leadership Training Event (LTE) Program Track, LOM Territory Gatherings, Compass Points, etc, etc.

I know that I’m sure looking forward to seeing you at one time or another during the next few months because that’s where I get my energy – from your enthusiasm and dedication to the way you respond to God’s call to proclaim the Gospel. For that matter, that’s where the energy of LOM comes from – from you! I can’t wait to see you this Fall!

A colleague looking for help with a project he’s undertaking that has the potential of being a valuable resource for all of us. Paul Little serves as the Food Service and Hospitality Manager at Good Earth Village (MN). He’s working on a hospitality/customer service study for LOM that encompasses all aspects of our retreat centers and camps. He notes that just about every LOM organization he knows about subscribes to the ideal that providing extraordinary hospitality is an incredibly important part of what we do. In fact, for most of us, it’s one of the core values of our organization. Paul has also noted that as much as we talk about it, that’s about as far as it goes; there’s very little elaboration on what it actually means, boots on the ground, to provide hospitality to our guests and campers. So he wants to do something about it. Here’s what Paul is looking for:
1. Any written info as to what camps offer in the line of customer service and hospitality to see what we do best, where we overlap, where we need to improve, how OM hospitality is perceived.

2. Any written policies and procedures dealing with how we train our teams to host and provide customer service and hospitality

3. Any information we send guest who may be coming to use our facilities that set expectations for their experience (Contract or policy sheets).

I feel that from this info we can come to a starting point to proceed with any surveys or interviews and start to put together a comprehensive OM hospitality plan that, if camps choose to use, can lead to a branding of our hospitality that is one of the best in the field and offers a "Wow!" experience to our guests. You can contact Paul: paul@goodearthvillage.org

Recent LOM Collaboration

• Thank you, Andrea Scofield, executive director of Lutherwood (OR) for representing LOM at the LuMin (our counterpart network of Lutheran campus ministries) Conference in Portland, OR, during the last week of June.

• Also in June, I had the opportunity, arranged by Laurie Wilkinson, interim executive director of Crossways (WI), to meet with Mark Wilhelm, Executive Director of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities. Because the meeting was at Lutherdale (WI), we had the added benefit of the Lutherdale executive director, Jeff Bluhm, joining us in our exploratory conversation. The focus of our meeting was the potential of building a win/win program for both camps and colleges related to gap year experiences. In the process, we have confidence that such a program can also develop better pathways for undergrads to serve as summer camp staff. Mark is hopeful that he will find a willing, and perhaps even enthusiastic, response from some of our ELCA colleges. We are starting with a broad and open definition of gap year programming: a year before college, during college, or after college. The basic concept is that colleges will identify young adults who could benefit from a gap year and that the year would occur in residence at an LOM camp or retreat center. Our goal is to convene a one-day meeting of college personnel and outdoor ministry personnel to establish a work plan for developing a gap year program. The meeting will occur in late November or December 2018, most likely at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, and funded by the ELCA. Scheduling the meeting will occur in late August. If you are interested in being part of such a planning meeting, please contact me, Don Johnson: director@lomnetwork.org

• And the winners are...! Augsburg University has done the drawing for the first three of the winners from those who responded to the survey of outdoor ministry organizations they are currently conducting. The winners are CJ Clark, Living Water (MI); Kelly Preboski, soon to begin at Luther Heights (ID); and Art Weiss, Kuriakos (Alberta, Canada). Each of them won a $200 discount at the time they register for the LOM Conference!

Enjoy your rest and slower paced season of Fall!

Don Johnson, LOM Executive Director
Also For Your Calendar

December 3-5, 2018: East Midwest Territory Gathering, at the Ridge Resort in Lake Geneva, WI.

Our keynote speaker will be Andy Jolivette, who is currently doing research for Augsburg University about youth leadership programs in the ELCA as it relates to programs at Augsburg for people who feel led to church (or camp) leadership. Here is a summary of Andy’s presentations: The three sessions are intended to help people reflect on their identity, passion, and purpose, both in relation to their role/work at camp but also (and especially!) in their lives away from camp. My hope would be that everyone who attends your gathering feel a greater sense of clarity and confidence about 1) what is most important to them, 2) who they feel called to be and 3) how they can bring their life, work and values into better alignment. The three individual topics are Being You: values, Being You: vocation, and Being You: wellness. For a brochure, click here: https://tinyurl.com/yclawumc.

May 13-17, 2019: Interim Executive Director Training Event, Briarwood, TX.

This is an event under the auspices of the Outdoor Ministry Connection (OMC) spearheaded by LOM.

For strength and persistence for Koinonia (NY) as they struggle with the need for virtually all their buildings to be treated for mold remediation. This will be a very expensive and time consuming endeavor for this site which has already experienced so much hardship from storms, fire, and other calamities during the last several months.

Of consolation for Camp Vermilion (MN), part of the Voyageurs organization, upon the fire that destroyed their beloved sauna. They have announced their resolve to rebuild.

Of congratulations for Jason Gerdes who has been named the successor to Dave Coker as executive director of Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries. Dave is retiring at the end of the year. Jason has been serving admirably at NLOM as their development director.

Of encouragement for Chris Dahl who will begin serving as executive director at Riverside (IA) on September 6. Chris is the successor to Dave McDermott who is retiring soon. Congratulations to Chris, who has been served as associate program coordinator at Riverside 2008-2013, and to Dave as he begins this next chapter.

Of congratulations to Stephen Flynn, newly appointed to the position of executive director at Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Indiana-Kentucky ((LOMIK). Stephen is succeeding Mark Radloff who is retiring after many years as executive director of LOMIK.

Of sympathy to the family of Marlys Lefever and everyone at Outlaw Ranch (SD) and indeed the whole organization of Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota. For over 20 years, Marlys was the cook at Outlaw Ranch. She passed away earlier this summer. May God comfort all those who mourn.

Of congratulations for Idalia Negron, recently elected bishop of the Caribbean Synod. Idalia has been the lead contact person for Camp Roig (Puerto Rico), an especially demanding task during these days of recovery from Hurricane Maria. Camp Roig is currently serving as the staging facility for recovery work of Lutheran Disaster Response. The new contact person for Camp Roig is Rev. David Guadalupe, Director of Lutheran Disaster Response-Puerto Rico. David is making plans to be at the LOM Conference in November.

Celebration for Badlands Ministries (ND) upon the recent celebration of their 90th Anniversary. That’s 90 years for Badlands, not Brent Seaks, executive director!

And celebration for Mount Cross (CA,) celebrating 70 years of ministry on September 28-29.
The ELCA Youth Gathering

This past June, 30,000+ youth, adult leaders, and volunteers gathered in Houston for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering, where we focused on the theme of This Changes Everything. It was hot, it was humid, and it was a transformative experience.

Carly, from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Bismark, N.D., felt inspired by the presence of so many other Lutheran peers. “I felt like I belonged, I didn’t feel out of place at all,” she said. ‘We discussed scripture to open the conversations on what changes everything. We talked about God’s call to Moses, Jesus meeting the woman at the well, Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch, and the resurrected Christ joining his disciples on the road to Emmaus. These were reminders of the daily themes: God’s call, God’s love, God’s grace, and God’s hope changes everything. Our last day together, Bishop Eaton closed her sermon with that even the midst of the cynical laughter of the world, “Here is the wonderful news: where it looks impossible, remember most of all that Jesus has changed everything.”

Carsyn, a member of St. John Lutheran Church in Salsbury, NC. reflected, “The energy in the stadium has been amazing. I am ready to live for God and for everyone.”

We were honored to share the theme of “This Changes Everything” with our partners in outdoor ministry, and we would love to hear how your camps experienced it! Share your stories, and join in on the conversations on social media by using #ELCAYG2018. To discover more ways that our young people engaged in the theme at the Gathering, look through the pictures on our Facebook, read our blogs and watch our Mass Gatherings and Bible studies on Youtube. Be sure to save the date for our 2021 Gathering. We’ll be in Minneapolis, June 30-July 3rd!
Outdoor ministries are different. “Different than what?” you might ask.

Outdoor ministries are different from most any institution or agency of the church or other organization that touch us as we move through life. Gronlund Sayther Brunkow (GSB) has been in a unique position to observe how people become engaged with this ministry and how that relationship often lasts as long as a lifetime.

The form of involvement changes through the years, from camper to camper parent to grandparent, to donor, board member, sometimes campaign leader or board chair – always as a passionate supporter and advocate. GSB has invested more than 40 years providing fundraising consulting services to outdoor ministries across the country. As we have walked with these ministries in their growth and development, we have encountered innumerable examples of these lifelong stakeholders.

True, many folks establish strong relationships with their colleges or universities. Others have very significant roles with their congregation(s) or a social service agency. Some establish very close ties to other organizations such as scouting, 4-H, athletics, the arts, etc. But few, if any, of these entities attract and hold the loyalty of those served like outdoor ministries.

Many of those who demonstrate faith-driven leadership as they guide other organizations, businesses and ministries point to their outdoor ministry as most formative in their lives. And they retain their loyalty and stakeholder status with the camp(s) that have meant so much to them.

What we, at GSB, have seen is that most of these long-time stakeholders maintain their relationship primarily through financial support. One outdoor ministry campaign, now underway, is chaired by a former camper, parent and grandparent of campers, board member and decades-long advocate. He and his wife are also the largest donors to the campaign. This is not unusual, from our experience in working with more than 85 outdoor ministries in the past 42 years.

So what does this mean? That we should hold dear our tens of thousands of camper and staff alumni and those who have become, in other ways, stakeholders of our outdoor ministries.

*GSB is a firm comprised of consultants that have served as campers, camper parents, camper grandparents, counselors, parents of counselors, campaign volunteers, and executive leaders of camps. They provided the photos for this article.*
Thanks for the opportunity to tell you a little bit about Campwise.

CAMPWISE came about because of a need we saw for camps to have state-of-the-art cloud-based software to give you the freedom to access important information wherever you are.

And the flexibility doesn’t stop there. You can use the complete software package or choose just the modules and apps that fit your camp’s needs from individual registration and camp management to conferences & retreats, online staff applications, donor management, Point of Sale for your camp store, medications and check-in. At the heart of CAMPWISE is our commitment to serve you:

*Our team will be there every step of the way to help your camp succeed and thrive as an organization which, in turn, helps you serve your customers to the best of your ability*

Service is at the heart of CAMPWISE and we strive to deliver an outstanding user-friendly product, superior customer support and a company committed to your success. And, no matter how strong the software package is, the real strength of any company lies in its ability to serve and support its customers and lets you access and use your data with ease and efficiency.

There are two things that are important to know:

- First, Campwise is designed to be *the* camp’s database. Information about campers, staff, donors, parents or churches and organizations is all in a common database. We can track all the connections an individual has with a camp.
- Second, Campwise serves many camps of different types and with different missions. If you go to our website, [www.campwise.com](http://www.campwise.com), and look at the “About” page you will understand why we place a priority on service and why we share a common goal with faith based camps. We want to serve you so you can touch the lives of those you serve.

We would love to talk with you. Visit [www.campwise.com](http://www.campwise.com) or call us at 866-297-7111.
Over my career, both professionally and as a student, I’ve had the fortune of writing for several newsletters. When I was in my church youth group, they started an officer position called “Youth Reporter” and I got my feet wet writing articles about our activities for the church crowd. In college, I started a column called “In Conclusion” for Penn State Lutheran Campus Ministry’s newsletter. Because I had a following back home in your church from my high school days, the church secretary was kind enough to republish my articles there, as well.

When I worked as a public relations director for a local county, we had an employee newsletter. “In Conclusion” appeared there, too. It followed me to camp as well and when we were printing our newletters (some of you remember those days), I wrote “In Conclusion” columns for the camp audience.

But then, media changed and we went to digital newsletters at camp. Because we tried to keep them brief and concise, I stopped writing columns. That changed when I started my part-time role in communications. I brought back “In Conclusion” for a number of years for our rostered leaders’ newsletter. But in time, space constraints took that away from regular publication.

So, because I enjoy to write, I began a blog. Guess what I named it? In Conclusion. There, I write parenting stories, stories about my radio career, and even did a series on writing tips. Can you tell that writing is one of my passions? (You can read my blog at chadhershberger.wordpress.com)

It’s been on my mind for over a year now to write some articles on leadership. And so, I thought “why not resurrect In Conclusion once again and use it to conclude each LOM newsletter? I figure my LOM friends would enjoy some reflections on leadership. You would be the ones who I could safely laugh with about learning leadership lessons the hard way. And, you might be able to tell some stories of your own!

Be looking in the coming months for those anecdotes on the back page of the newsletter. I’m sure we’ll have some fun and can use this medium once again for In Conclusion. –Chad Hershberger