First Email Blast of the Summer

The LOM Newsletter that was sent last week is the last one we will be sending until the end of summer. Our LOM Webmaster and Newsletter Editor is Chad Hershberger. Chad’s primary job is to serve as the executive director of Camp Mount Luther and although that keeps him busy during the whole year, the demands of summer camp keep him especially busy at this time of year. From time to time during these summer months, we’ll be making sure the LOM news continues to flow with emails such as this.

The Impact of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM)

I hope you remember the email we sent to you back in February. It was written by Sarah Erickson who, together with her husband, Adam, serve as the executive directors of Mount Cross (CA). Sarah told a very compelling story of how she and Adam accepted a call to serve a camp experiencing some very challenging circumstances with no prior experience of full-time outdoor ministry leadership. They were “blown away” by the welcome they received by colleagues at the LOM Executive Directors Gathering in 2018 and how valuable have been the relationships cultivated there and since that time throughout the LOM network.

A few weeks after that email went out to everyone in our LOM database, I was copied on this email to Sarah from Paul Hill. With Paul’s permission, I now relay the substance of his message to Sarah –

Dear Sarah,

I am a retired former camp director and friend of LOM. I also served on the board and was board chair for a few years. I read your recent testimonial in the LOM newsletter and had to put your comments into a deeper context.

In 1981 I became director of the sinking ship called Lutherdale in SE Wisconsin (Jeff Bluhm is there now). We had a $675,000 debt at 15% interest, rapid camper decline, deferred maintenance everywhere AND...like you, I didn’t have a clue as to what to do. So, I went to a LOM directors’ event and rekindled my relationship with Bill Crouser, director of Mt. Cross. (I had been on his board when I was a pastor in Oakland.) Bill knew I was in deep doo doo. We talked a lot and he coached me a lot. But then he said this: “Paul, if you ever get to a point where you really need me, I will fly out at my own expense and help you.” Can you imagine that? I called him often and felt I always had a friend and safety net. Eight years later we had completed a successful $1,000,000 campaign, the debt was down to under $100,000 and we were building new facilities. And our program was strong and healthy. It would not have happened had not Bill Crouser, of Mt. Cross, befriended me and coached me.

How’s that for ironic. Now you find yourself in a similar situation to what I was in only you are at Mt. Cross. Such is the nature of LOM, we always watch out for each other. So now I get to return the favor. ‘If you ever get to a point where you are really stuck, I will fly out at my own expense and help you out.’
You can check with Don Johnson to know I have the skill set.

Blessings to you and as you work the problem of Mt. Cross, remember...you have friends (even old retired ones you’ve never met) who will not let you fail.

You are on God’s Belay,

Paul Hill

Note from Don Johnson: This is another great example of the kinds of good things that are happening all the time because of what we are all doing together through the platform we know as LOM so that outdoor ministry will be as strong as it can be – everywhere! Thank you for what you are doing to make this a reality.

Your participation, prayers and financial support are what continues to make sure that LOM provides the highest level of education, empowering, equipping, and encouraging throughout the camps and retreat centers of the ELCA. You can make a gift to LOM at http://www.lomnetwork.org/donate.html. Or send a check payable to Lutheran Outdoor Ministries to Jon Skogen, LOM Administrator, 1218 W. Addison St., Chicago, IL, 60613. To explore the possibility of including LOM in your planned giving strategies, please contact Executive Director Don Johnson at director@lomnetwork.org.

Our newest Ministry Partner Member of LOM

The Naming Project is a Christian ministry serving youth of all sexual and gender identities. We provide a safe place for youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning or allied to learn, grow, and share their experiences. In this way, The Naming Project is a space in which youth can comfortably discuss faith and who they understand themselves to be and how they relate to God and the rest of the world. The Naming Project is a Christian ministry that walks with youth wherever they are on their own faith journey. Youth from around the country attend our summer camp, and we communicate with youth, parents, pastors, youth workers, and others who care for LGBTQ youth.

Know a young person interested in The Naming Project Summer Camp? July 28-August 2, 2019, at Bay Lake Camp (an LOM Member Organization). Take a look at www.thenamingproject.org/summer-camp. A faith-filled camp for LGBTQ teens who want to explore faith, identity and community.

2019 LOM Awards

Now is the time to submit nominations for the Manlove-Howells Leadership Award. The deadline for doing so is July 15. Details and nomination form are available at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/awards/manlove-howells-leadership-award/

The Innovative Program Award is awarded annually to an LOM organization recognized for innovation and creativity in an existing program. It includes a $1,000 cash award to be presented during LOM Day at the Great Gathering. More information and application form available at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/awards/innovative-program-award/

The LOM Diversity Grant will again be available in 2019 to assist an LOM organization that wants to initiate a new project or a new element of an existing program that promotes diversity within the
ministry and community. The grant will be in an amount of up to $2,000. Details and application form are available at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/diversity-grant/

Great Gathering Update

Registration for the OMC Great Gathering opens on Wednesday, May 1. You won't want to miss this ecumenical event that will bring together camp and conference professionals, board members, and volunteers at Lake Junaluska in Western North Carolina this November 10-14 under the theme "RelationSHIFT." Register early at omcgreatgathering.org to guarantee your housing preferences.

LOM Day at the Great Gathering

In the afternoon and evening of Tuesday, November 12, the schedule for the Great Gathering will allow for each denominational association to break into their own time together. The plan for LOM is very exciting. We are providing for charter coaches to pick up all the LOMers at the Great Gathering and travel the 30-45 minutes to Lutheridge. We will be met there by the business and ministry partner sponsors of LOM Day, as well as members of the LOM 100th Anniversary Planning Team. From that point on, the schedule looks like this –

2:00 Buses arrive at the Faith Center @ Lutheridge
2:00 to 3:30 Exhibit Hall will be open, afternoon refreshments, explore Lutheridge
3:00 to 4:30 LOM Business Meeting - in the Faith Center
5:00 to 5:45 Milestone Recognitions and Awards Ceremony - In Faith Center
6:00 to 7:00 100th Anniversary of LOM Banquet
7:30 to 9:30 Annual LOM Auction
10:00 Load Buses to return to Lake Junaluska

A really great thing about this event – for all LOM members at the Great Gathering it will be completely free of any additional expenses.

LOM 100

According to Mark Burkhardt, in his publication, A History of Lutheran Church Camping in the United States, the first recorded organized camping program of the Lutheran Church originated in Pennsylvania with the Lutheran Inner Mission Society of Pittsburgh. This social service agency provided services for the spiritual and physical care of those who were lonely, living in poverty, sick or otherwise in need. Among their programs was a commitment to serving disadvantaged youth. The first day of the first session of this camp was on July 5, 1919. As we well know, outdoor ministry has developed in many astounding ways during these first 100 years. As much as we will be looking back and encouraging all our organization members to look back at your histories, we will more importantly during this milestone year be looking forward to the next 100 years. One of our first steps in this direction will be to develop and implement the next strategic plan for LOM.

A section of the LOM website has now been dedicated to LOM 100. It will be a work in progress. There’s already quite a lot of detail about the anniversary that can be found there: https://www.lomnetwork.org/lom-100-2/

We are hoping that camps and retreat centers throughout the ELCA will celebrate the 100th Anniversary on July 5, 2019, and for the succeeding 365 days to a culmination on July 5, 2020. The members of the Anniversary Task Force know that they don’t have all the good ideas for celebrating, so they are asking that you please submit your plans and/or activities by filling out the form at: https://www.lomnetwork.org/lom-100/
Here are some IDEAS that have been shared so far:

- Share a meaningful impact story, have a camper of staff member get up and share how camp has helped them individually connect to faith and grow as a person.
- Photos ... 100 photo wall, create a wall show-casing 100 different photos of your camp, photos from various years of your ministry.
- Collect 100 stories from your camp ... ask different groups of people related to your ministry; donors, campers, parents, staff members, alumni, Pastor’s, etc. Gather these in a book to be shared and used as you feel called.
- Connecting to the nature connection to outdoor ministry and care of creation, plant a tree, or several, at your site to celebrate the anniversary and the future growth of the ministry in the next 100 years. Can we plant 100 or more trees across LOM!!
- Encourage campers to donate 100 pennies, $1 at the end of the week to be donated to LOM or for scholarships at your site to ensure the future of outdoor ministry for all.
- Video campers of all ages at your site this summer, having them answer the question, “What is your dream for the next century of LOM?”
- Equip campers at camp to go home and share the impact of camp at their congregation. Encourage Pastor’s to create space to share during summer services. Have camper video record their story if possible!
- 100 years ago night ... can you serve a popular meal potentially enjoyed at camp 100 years ago, how about an all-camp game highlighting games popular 100 years ago!
- Honor important former staff members ... collect stories of a favorite memory of camp and share monthly via social media or in a newsletter.

Members of the LOM Anniversary Task Force:
- Brent Seaks, executive director, Badlands (ND) – they just celebrated 90 years
- Kelly Preboski, executive director, Luther Heights (ID)
- Mara Stillson, marketing director, Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota
- Marianne Brock, associate executive director, The Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania, and director, Camp Nawakwa (PA)
- Mark Burkhardt, LOM Board member, director, Congregational Centers for Mission Team, ELCA, former director of outdoor ministries, ELCA, Lutheran outdoor ministries historian, LOM legend
- Meredith Massey Beall, LOM Board member, Board member, Lutherhill (TX)
- Ralph Yernberg, now retired, former executive director of ELCA and ALC camps, author, The Camping Movement of the American Lutheran Church, LOM legend.

Next Up for Compass Points

LOM collaborates with several other outdoor ministry associations of other denominations to provide Compass Points, a continuing education program with a certificate provided by Columbia Seminary upon successful completion. It’s an ideal educational option for those who have completed both the administrative and program tracks of the Leadership Training Event (LTE). The next courses will be offered in March of 2020. Personnel & Leadership and Development will be offered at that time. Jason Gerdes, formerly development director and now executive director at Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries and president of ALDE, will be one of the instructors for the Development course. More information is available at: http://www.compasspointsprogram.org/upcoming-courses-2020/
Sarah Lefler to be Coordinator of the LOM East Territory

Sarah Lefler, executive director of Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD) has agreed to serve as the territory coordinator for the LOM East Territory, an area that takes in all of Regions 7, 8, and 9 of the ELCA. Sarah is a natural for this position with LOM because she is already so active in keeping in touch with so many people throughout the network and keeping us connected with each other. As is the case with all of the territory coordinators, Sarah’s tasks on behalf of LOM will be to:

- Keep in touch with the staff, especially the year-round staff, of LOM organizations in the East Territory.
- Provide information and encourage participation for LOM events such as the LOM Annual Conference and the annual Leadership Training Event (LTE).
- Share stories that can be celebrated throughout LOM.
- Plan for LOM events and activities to take place in the territory.
- Investigate collaboration opportunities with ELCA ministry partners, other denominations, and professional associations throughout the territory.
- Stay alert for trends and needs of LOM organizations in the territory that have the potential of being addressed by LOM nationwide and/or events in other territories.
- Encourage organizations and individuals to increase financial support of LOM.

Prayers

- For Jeff Bluhm, executive director of Lutherdale (WI) and chair of the LOM Nominating Committee. Jeff is undergoing treatment for stage 4 lymphoma.
- For Andrea Scofield, executive director of Lutherwood (OR) and to all for whom Lutherwood is a treasured ministry. Lutherwood lost their main lodge and dining hall to a fire early in April.
- For smooth transitions for Joanne Knudson, who recently stepped down from serving as executive director of Koinonia (NY).
- Of congratulations to Rob Gieraltowski who, on May 15, begins serving as the new executive director of Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Center (LOMC) in Oregon, IL.
- Sympathy for Loren Teig, now retired and formerly executive director of Wapo and Green Lake, and his family. Loren’s brother, Hons died recently.

Update on Lutherwood (OR)

As has been reported on Facebook, Lutherwood (OR) suffered the catastrophe of having their main lodge and dining hall burn to the ground. As you can imagine, executive director Andrea Scofield and the staff and the Board have been incredibly busy during these past few weeks. I was able to connect with Andrea on the phone several days ago and she is in remarkably good spirits with everything she has been experiencing. She wants me to let everyone throughout LOM know how much she appreciates our prayers and well-wishes and the outpouring of contributions Lutherwood has been receiving. The progress they have made is incredible - there's now a portable kitchen and a portable dish washing facility in place as well as a huge function tent that will be the temporary dining hall.

They still need a few more summer camp staff and with everything they are dealing with, not much time for recruiting, so if you have any extra staff for a week or two this summer, make sure you let Andrea know about it. All of their challenge course equipment went up in the flames, so if you have any old but good equipment that you're not using, Andrea wold love to hear from you about that as well.

The LOM Board of Directors met on May 2 for a regularly scheduled meeting. Because of the initiative of
Mar-Lu-Ridge (MD), LOM now has a small (very small) fund that's been established for the purpose of providing relief for camps in distress because of natural or other disasters. The Board decided to send Lutherwood a contribution from that fund, in the amount of $500, as a token of the unity we have as LOM in providing support and relief in this time of need. Lutherwood will gladly accept donations from all who would like to help with a financial contribution; [http://www.lutherwoodoregon.org/fire-update/](http://www.lutherwoodoregon.org/fire-update/)

**In Conclusion**

Whew! This lots of news to report. A good sign that LOM continues to grow as the platform for supporting each other in the passion that we share - strong and vital outdoor ministries, everywhere. For all of you who will be immersed in summer camp – overnight camp, day camp, travel camp, adventure camp, servant ministry camp, and for all the varieties of camp that will be your ministry this summer – here’s wishing you a safe and fun and faith-filled experience. Let me know if anything comes up that LOM can help with or can help get you in contact with somebody who can help. You are in my prayers.

--Don Johnson, LOM Executive Director