What’s Inside
Don’t have time to read the whole issue right now? Here’s a quick summary and the bottom lines:

Page 2: Coronavirus Response Continues

- The LOM COVID-19 response team is ready to help in these unprecedented times!
- **The Bottom Line:** Contact Don if you think some retired LOM professionals could help walk you through the next months.

Page 3: Words from Don

- Exciting news about our conference and financial help for LOM CON 2020
- **The Bottom Line:** Registration and airfare reimbursement are available to lots!

Page 4: News Briefs

- LTE, ACA, and Auction
- **The Bottom Line:** Training, dues, and planning are what’s going on.

Page 5: Pandemic Ideas

- A think piece from another retired LOM professional on what you might do
- **The Bottom Line:** There are lots of possibilities

Pages 8-11: Monthly Features

- Articles from Ministry and Business Partners and our LOM Webmaster
- **The Bottom Line:** They all have thoughts about coronavirus!

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**May 14, 2020:**
Shape for Women in Outdoor Ministry ZOOM Meeting

**August 31-September 3:**
Executive Directors Gathering

**September 20-23, 2020:**
Shape for Women in Outdoor Ministry Retreat 2

**Sept. 27-Oct. 3, 2020:**
Compass Points

**November 5-9, 2020:**
Leadership Training Event

**November 9-13, 2020:**
LOM Conference

**January 24-27, 2021:**
Shape for Women in Outdoor Ministry Retreat 3

**March 2021 (dates TBD):**
Shape for Women in Outdoor Ministry Retreat 4

More information at [www.lomnetwork.org](http://www.lomnetwork.org) where you can also check out our featured site! Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp (CO) is our latest camp on the homepage.
**COVER STORY: The LOM COVID-19 Response Team**

By Rev. Ralph Yernberg, former Executive Director at Good Earth Village, Crossways Camping Ministries and Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp from 1975 to 2006. Ralph served as the first President of the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Network and helped design the organization’s governance structure. From 2006 to 2016, Ralph served in management roles in fraternal support with Thrivent Financial.

The willingness of LOM professionals to support and counsel one another demonstrates the culture of support that is not new to LOM. What is new is the impact we face from the COVID-19 pandemic which has thrown the LOM Network into the necessity of planning for crisis management.

A few of us retired LOM professionals are sensing that we left outdoor ministries a long, long time ago. Your collective ideas on how to serve the Church are inspirational and represent a new generation of constructive solutions. On April 14, Dave Jarvis expressed a mission driven approach to the coming year. Many of you will mine his wisdom. Likewise, Dave Holtz shared his approach to enter into a form of “conservancy” to preserve Luther Crest for future ministry.

But there is another reality, too. If your situation is dire, if you have a high debt ratio, if your organization is watching its cash disappear and are still promising to keep your staff, you may be hearing a whisper in your head that keeps you up at night. You may be wondering whether you can weather this storm or if you have no choice but to close down your operations for the summer or lose it forever.

I have been asked to form a very small group, LOM COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM. Our sole purpose is to walk by the side of those of you who may not be seeing any way past the challenges you now face. When Dave Holtz shared his “conservancy plan” he shared that the crisis he faced literally froze him in time. That is what disaster does. Its sheer magnitude prevents you from moving forward. Your organization’s ability to make calm decisions is taken from you and you lapse into letting your world collapse.

The LOM COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM is willing to walk by your side as you and your board to address your situation. We will not make your decisions or draft your plan. Instead we will act as advisors, coaches, or confessors and offer you a calm, organized crisis management system based upon three processes:

- Immediate conservancy, which is essentially financial relief for your organization.
- Conservancy Management, which is your response to your challenges while safeguarding your assets and preserving your ministry for future generations.
- Long-term Renewal which is a planning process to enter adaptive planning for your recovery.

If you don’t recognize these processes, they are loosely drawn from a practice called business continuity planning. These processes are also part of the National Volunteer Organizations assisting in Disaster (NVOAD) methodology which has long advocated that those engaged in addressing crisis plan for periods of rescue, relief, response and recovery. In our case, our focus is on relief, response and recovery.

The LOM COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM process is privileged, and it is confidential. What takes place and the results you create are your organizations plans, approved by your governing board and you can share them with whomever you wish. What is being offered is not a boilerplate plan but an orderly and analytical process that will give you an opportunity to navigate into your future.

Dave Holtz shared his walk-through Holy Week when he used and tested this planning process. But now we might describe these processes as Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Remember, during Lent many churches bury their alleluias – I think you are permitted to do the same thing. Easter is about “rising;” Pentecost is about “being.” It is our prayer that we may be of help to anyone who would value the conversation. To see if you qualify for participation, contact Don Johnson, Executive Director of the LOM Network at director@lomnetwork.org or 603-848-9904.
Words from Don

In all of our social distancing and staying at home, one of the realities for us as outdoor ministry leaders that has become clearer than perhaps ever before is the importance of staying connected. We are fortunate. Throughout the first 100 years of outdoor ministry for Lutherans in the USA, staying connected with other outdoor ministries has been a priority. This is manifested now in the collegiality and collaboration, the friendship and support, we experience in the platform we now have – LOM.

Thanks to the functionality of ZOOM, we have been connecting with each other more often and in greater numbers than is often the case during “normal” times. Last week, the two LOM ZOOM Forums maxed out (per our ZOOM contract) at 100 participants and there was a score of those who couldn’t log on because we were maxed out. Thankfully, both of those sessions were recorded and can be accessed on the LOM website.

The ultimate time for everyone in LOM to be connected is the LOM Annual Conference. Never will it be more important for us to have this face to face opportunity to connect, console, encourage each other, and learn from each other. Never will the budgets of our organizations have had less capacity for us to gather together in that way. For some time, this conference has been envisioned as a way to “kick off” the Total Inclusion! initiative which is being funded by a grant to the ELCA for LOM from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP). Thanks to the cooperation of our friends at ELCA Mission Advancement and the understanding of our friends at MACP, we have been able to make adjustments to the grant in such a way that two representatives from each of our member organizations will have access to a full scholarship to the Conference at the double occupancy rate and many of the participants from the more distant locations will be eligible for some travel reimbursement.

Encouraging, educating, equipping, and empowering – these are the cornerstones of our LOM mission. In a very specific way, these are the cornerstones of a new initiative that has been organized at the suggestion and with the direction of one of the emeritus directors of LOM, Ralph Yernberg – the LOM Covid-19 Response Team. He has organized a group of persons who have retired from outdoor ministry leadership with considerable experience in the area of camp finances. They are willing to consult with and advise outdoor ministry leaders as they navigate their way through all the financial challenges we are all facing today. There’s more detail about this initiative in another section of this newsletter.

The LOM Board had a special meeting last week to deal with issues related to the Covid-19 crisis. Because of the extreme financial challenges that every camp is experiencing, the Board, among other things, decided that LOM will not be asking member organizations to make financial contributions to LOM in 2020. LOM will accept contributions from organizations that choose to do so. For the financial viability of LOM during the rest of 2020 and into 2021 and beyond, it will be very important for LOM to receive financial contributions from individuals.

This is what we are asking of all the member organizations of LOM - participation in a video project. We’re asking every camp to send me a 10-15 second video clip of one person from their community of participants and stakeholders (camper, parent, counselor, retreat guest, pastor, Board member, etc.) saying why they love their camp so much (make sure they name the camp), or in the case of camps that have to be closed this summer, what they will miss most about camp. We are going to put it together into one video that all LOM camps can use to uplift the importance of outdoor ministry, the importance of supporting their local outdoor ministry, and the importance of supporting the glue that keeps all our outdoor ministries connected - LOM. Please send the video clip (videos filmed on a phone are OK) to Don Johnson director@lomnetwork.org.

It’s the season of Easter when we turn much of our scriptural focus to the earliest communities of the church as recorded in the book of Acts. One of my favorite passages is from the closing verses of Acts 2: “All who believed were together and had all things in common: they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day they spent much time together in the temple; they broke bread at home and ate food with glad and generous hearts praising God and having the goodwill of all people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (NRSV)

Sounds like a description of how staying connected works in LOM. Stay at home a while longer, but stay connected, everyone. I’m looking forward to seeing you around the network. --Don Johnson, Executive Director
ACA Update

In the past few years, LOM has sent out renewal letters for the annual ACA membership and dues in March. This year, that paperwork will come directly from ACA and should have been emailed to you this month. ACA says they have a grace period this year, lasting until the end of May.

LIRS Camperships

At the LOM Auction last November, the Auction tithe, together with the challenge match for the tithe, were donated to Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in order for LIRS to establish a campership fund for children of migrant and refugee families to go to LOM summer camps. Even with everything with which you are dealing, if you are aware of families who can benefit from such a campership, you will find the information here: https://www.lirs.org/summer-camperships.

Calling All Camps!!!

Do you have an item to donate for this year’s LOM auction? Start thinking and planning! Big or small, we’ll auction them all! It could be a small item you could bring for the silent auction that showcases your camp OR it could be a bigger item you bring for the live auction. Or, how about a trip or excursion that everyone will be talking about? Let’s break last year’s auction total and support an organization we love! Remember, we’ll have an online catalog of items to see ahead of time, so you have plenty of time to apply for a line of credit for those big-ticket items! Or, you can begin crowdfunding with all your friends to take that adventure trip you’ve always wanted. Plan ahead, open your wallets, and always remember, “It’s not about getting a good deal; it’s about supporting a great cause!” To correspond with the auction committee, e-mail auction@lomnetwork.org.
Ideas for Summer Camp During a Pandemic
Developed by Dr. Paul Hill (paulghill@me.com)

Do parents, camps, summer staffers and congregations share common ground where each groups needs are addressed safely during the COVID-19 pandemic? This document serves as a “think piece” for how camp leaders could deliberate on whether and/or how to run their camps in the summer of 2020. As a retired camp director, I share the experience of camp leaders, yet appreciate the distance from the immediacy of leadership. As I’ve listened to the conversation amongst camp professionals two poles of thinking have surfaced.

POLES:
"Shut it all down”…………………………………………………………..”Run camp this summer“ (even if it’s only later)

I’ve observed that the rationale supporting these positions reflect the finest in our camp leaders as they take their responsibilities to their camps and various constituencies very seriously. I’ve also observed a variety of assumptions that camp leaders have (articulated or otherwise) that have led them to their position. I’m reminded of the old maxim: “It’s not the assumptions we hold that are a problem, it’s the assumptions that hold us that may color our judgment.”

These observations of the shape of the conversation lead me to the question I’m now considering: Do parents, camps, summer staffers and congregations share common ground where each group’s needs are addressed safely during the COVID-19 pandemic? Put another way, are there program strategies that reside between the poles that camps might consider? To answer that question I am identifying the needs of the four audiences and then inviting camp leaders/boards to creatively look at how those needs might be addressed.

Definitions:
• Safety: In the current climate the understanding of “safety” includes the standard camp operational methods/ACA standards. In addition, safety is understood to include compliance with ALL health guidance provided by local/state/federal officials guaranteeing zero exposure to COVID-19.
• Testing: The method provided by health professionals to determine whether a person is a COVID-19 carrier. It is a part of the safety formulation. Without proper testing no camp staffing/programming should take place.
• Needs: Each of the four audiences identified have a number of “needs” that either prevent a camp operation from taking place or provide an opportunity for a camp operation to take place.
• Audiences: Four audiences are identified: parents, summer staff, camp, and congregation.

Needs of Parents:
• Safety for themselves and their children.
• Social interaction
• Childcare support
• Break from the mundane/intensity of social distancing
• Financial support
• Something to look forward to daily, weekly, monthly

Needs of Congregations:
• Food security
• Perhaps jobs
• Intellectual development
• Spiritual development
• Break from boredom
• Others

• Provide spiritual education alternatives
• Provide faith formation alternatives
• Be relevant to their members and surrounding community
• Others
Needs of prospective camp staffers

- Safety
- A job
- To fulfill their idealism: do something important
- Live out their faith
- Hang with peers and friends
- Others

Needs of camp

- Safety
- Fulfill their mission
- Support their constituency
- Stay alive financially
- Steward the camp/s sites and resources
- Serve their primary audiences of summer campers and summer camp staffs (Note that I include staff as part of their audience. In my opinion camp is not simply about the kids, but the powerful formation that takes place in the staff as well.)
- Other

IDEAS THAT MAY RESIDE BETWEEN THE POLES:

It seems to me that there is significant common ground whereby camps could provide vital ministries that address the needs of their three constituencies. Assuming safety concerns are addressed what might that look like? What action steps could be implemented whereby camps provide vital service and ministry safely and preserve the financial stability of their organization for the long term. Here are my brainstorming ideas. You will undoubtedly come up with more:

1. Hire all/part of your summer staff and train them in how to lead camp online via ZOOM, GOTOMEETING, or some other platform. This methodology assumes the camp is the “convener” so as to avoid the appearance/temptation of online abuse of children. Camp songs, Bible study, story telling, even a campfire, could be virtual, lasting between 1-2 hours a day. Such a curriculum could be shared between camps so that the wheel isn’t constantly being reinvented. Camp staffs would never come to camp, but would “be camp and staff” online. This camp is free to campers. A special appeal to donors (especially major donors) to provide jobs to young adults would take place. The question would be: “How many young adults do you want to give jobs to this summer?” A gift of approximately $3,000 would cover one staffer.

2. Hire all/part of your summer staff and have them tested. If state/county/local health officials approve, these staff would come to camp and covenant to stay at camp. They could do deferred maintenance of the camp as well as online camp as described above. Donor appeal would be the same.

3. Hire all/part of your summer staff and train them to think about how they could create camp/ministry in their particular setting for the summer. Their salary would cover their innovative experimentation. The camp would create an online reporting/dialogue system for the staff to report and share what they have come up with. They would be a “staff of yeast or seeds”. Fundraising is similar to what is described above.

4. Hire all/part of your summer staff and assign them to a congregation for the summer as summer interns. They could virtually/literally do programming for the congregation.

5. Plan an “End of the Virus” celebration day at camp where all those who went to virtual camp come and meet the staff face-to-face. Include donors so that they can meet the staff they sponsored.

6. Other ideas....

It’s my hope that this reflection is helpful to all our outdoor ministries. It’s a tough time to be sure, and outdoor ministries has always prided itself on “thinking outside the box”. This is our moment to demonstrate that.
Offers to Help

Throughout the first 100 years of outdoor ministry for Lutherans in the USA, staying connected with other outdoor ministries and helping each other has been a priority. This is so steeped in the culture of LOM that there are now many who have served alongside us and many who have served us and are now retired who are stepping forward and offering to help.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, retired executive directors Ralph Yernberg and Keith Johnson have referred to the offer of them and several of their emeritus colleagues who have formed the Covid-19 Response Team. These services are free. You can access their services for your outdoor ministry organization by contacting Don Johnson, director@lomnetwork.org.

In another section of this newsletter, Paul Hill has offered his “Ideas for Summer Cap During a Pandemic”. Paul has also offered to be available to LOM organizations for free advice and counsel. You can arrange for that with Paul at: paulghill@me.com.

Two consulting firms that have much experience with LOM organizations have very generously offered pro bono consulting during the Covid-19 crisis:

Gronlund, Sayther, Brunkow (GSB)  https://gsbfundraising.com/
- Mike Ward, CFRE  Ward@gsbfr.com
- Richard Sayther  Sayther@gsbfr.com
- David Brunkow  Brunkow@gsbfr.com
- Evan Moilan, CFRE  Moilan@gsbfr.com
- Jennie Wolf Smith, CFRE  Jennie@gsbfr.com
- Paul Marsh, CFRE  Marsh@gsbfr.com
- Jim Cunningham  Cunningham@gsbfr.com

Kairos and Associates  https://www.kairosandassociates.com
- Kristin Wiersma  kristin@kairosandassociates.com
- Jana Swenson  jana@kairosandassociates.com
Over the past month, states all across the country are seeing a drop in calls to child abuse and neglect hotlines. For example, in Pennsylvania, the state’s 24/7 hotline, ChildLine, saw a 54 percent drop in calls from March 19 to April 15. In Massachusetts, child abuse reports were down 57 percent during one of the first weeks the stay-at-home advisory was in place.

At first glance, you might think this is good news. Unfortunately, though, it’s quite the opposite. Why are the numbers going down? The main reason is that typical mandatory reporters, including teachers and those who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults in churches, camps and other organizations, no longer are in direct contact with those populations. As a result, they are not hearing about or witnessing abuse firsthand—and consequently not in a position to report. Remember, 90 percent of children who are abused are abused by someone they know. This could be a family member or neighbor they currently are spending time with.

What Can You Do?

- **Reach out to the parents and youth leaders you work with.** Make sure they know they are supported, loved and you are concerned about them. Ask about what specific needs you can help with to reduce stress at this time.

- **Reach out to the youth you teach.** As you connect with youth via virtual camp, conference calls or social media, pay special attention to their needs and concerns.

- **Stay vigilant.** If your church or organization offers a food pantry or other outreach at this time, pay attention to those who you serve. Do they appear to be struggling?

- **Call 911** if you believe someone is in immediate danger.

- **Begin or renew your Safe Gatherings training.** When people start returning to in-person church and camp, it is going to be even more important to be trained in what to look for and how to handle an abuse disclosure. **Contact us for details!**

safegatherings.com · 888.241.8258 · info@safegatherings.com
American Camp Association: 
Here to Help During the Pandemic

It has been an unusual month for the camp community. The situation around COVID-19 is shifting, evolving, and changing quickly. As of April 20, 2020, we have not had any federal, state, or local guidance on the potential impact of COVID-19 restrictions on summer business.

“Right now, it’s such a dynamic situation,” said Tom Rosenberg, president/CEO of the American Camp Association (ACA). “The camps themselves are trying to be adaptable and flexible as more information becomes available.”

Recognizing a new need in the camp community in the face of COVID-19, ACA pivoted quickly, leveraging our network and pulling together the COVID-19 Resource Center for Camps with the help of the Association of Camp Nursing (ACN).

ACA also created a collection of COVID-19 resources for parents that includes articles from many national organizations covering topics such as talking to children about COVID-19, how to stay active virtually, and more.

All these resources are free for the camp community and parents impacted by COVID-19. We update these resources daily. If you are a camp of any kind, ACA is here for you.

We understand this situation and the uncertainty surrounding it are challenging, and that it is testing our abilities to contingency plan for endless possibilities. We encourage you to use your best resource to navigate through this — and that is your network of camp professionals. Connect with other people who are asking the same questions, crowd source solutions, and talk through the challenges camp directors uniquely face.

We have also started researching child safety when it comes to virtual programming. While virtual programs have new safety concerns, many online programs include the same considerations camps already know, including the rule of three and mandatory reporting.

Camp is more important now than ever before, and while summer 2020 may not look like any of the summers that have come before it or any that will come after it, our commitment to serving the 20 million campers who attend camp programming annually in the US is steadfast. Research shows that camp is a catalyst for creating thriving adults, and we are dedicated to making that happen.
I Will Do Whatever I Can to Help
By Keith Johnson, The Board Coach

After serving with LOM for 43 years, I launched “The Board Coach,” a spiritually based consulting initiative in 2018 to help support, train and develop camp boards. It has been a joy for me to work with camps and executives all across the country.

However, the impact of COVID 19 coronavirus has forced me to postpone my work and focus on how I can help camps survive and even thrive during the pandemic. Ralph Yernberg, Director Emeritus, has developed a process called conservancy, to help camps preserve their ministry by closing their site for a period of months. Ralph, other Directors Emeritus and I are volunteering to be part of LOM’s COVID-19 Response Team. We will help you determine if conservancy is the right strategy for your camp and help you manage the conservancy period and develop a strategy to reopen your site. Ralph has authored an article in this newsletter with more information.

We are living in extraordinary times of radical uncertainty and Lutheran Outdoor Ministries is facing unprecedented challenges. It is safe to assume our world and camps will not get back to normal anytime soon and we do not yet know what the “new normal” will be. But we do know that LOM will continue to be a vibrant ministry with much to offer our church and world.

I am pleased to volunteer to serve on the COVID-19 Response Team and I will do whatever I can to help and support you and your camp in the weeks and months ahead.

www.TheBoardCoach.org - kjohnson@TheBoardCoach.org - 828-230-7282

LOM News will not be published during the summer camping season. The next edition will be published in early September. We will be keeping you updated through e-mail blasts throughout the summer season and may have special communications as events warrant.

Have a Great Summer Season!

From the LOM Board and Staff
In Conclusion

Parting Thoughts
from the LOM Webmaster/Communications Coordinator

Not iLeadership

We will get back to looking at how Nehemiah helps teach us about leadership. But in these unprecedented times (my wife and I say think that word is getting overused, but it’s being used correctly) I wanted to share some more observations on what I’m seeing when it comes to leadership during this pandemic.

In the last month, I noticed something being done by younger leaders that I don’t think is leadership. That is crowdsourcing. I’ve seen so many go onto social media and professional forums and ask, “What should I do?” Now, don’t get me wrong. I think consulting with colleagues or experts is important. But, asking for the “most votes” in what someone should do as a leader is not appropriate to this old-school guy. You need to weigh all of the facts, options, and consult trusted people to come to your decision. Putting up a poll on Facebook is not leadership. Leadership is looking to do what is best for the people you serve.

So many are making tough decisions these days. Camp directors are having to decide whether or not to shut down their main program of the year. Pastors are deciding how long to keep their doors shut for Sunday worship. Mothers and fathers are deciding how to homeschool their children and provide some continuity in an age that none of us were prepared to deal with. You are weighing options, looking at your context, and making the tough decisions.

These decisions will affect the future of your organizations. In a recent LOM forum, Evan Moilan reminded us there is the response, recovery, and redevelopment phases to a disaster such as this. Many of us have been responding and now we are looking ahead to how we will recover and bring forth resurrection from this time.

How will that be done most effectively? With leadership! Creative minds thinking about how to do new things to meet the needs of the people we serve. We will get through this time with true leadership, not with surveys and crowdsourcing on social media.

As you lead, you will be in my prayers. May the Holy Spirit guide deliberations and decisions in these coming days.

−Chad Hershberger

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