

What Fairmount Camp has Meant to Me

Michael J. Dunn

At the age of 77, I am looking back on my experiences at Fairmount Camp. I don't remember my first introduction to the campgrounds because I was taken there by my parents in 1943 when I was three years old. My father, Rev. Kenneth Dunn, was pastoring his second church (Wesley Chapel, Shelbyville, IN) after graduating from Marion College, later known as Indiana Wesleyan University. The campground, established in 1895 by the Wesleyan Methodist Church, was a campground for summer church activities and week-long camps for children and teens.

My first memory of the campground was the summer I turned five years old. My father was pastoring two churches known as a circuit: Warren Wesleyan Church and Plummers Chapel. Some men from these churches had joined forces to help my father build a cabin for our family. I remember sitting on the ground watching what resembled an Amish barn raising. All the lumber was used and donated by the parishioners.

I remember the day I was finally old enough to attend Junior Bible Camp where I enjoyed making friends and many of those turned out to be lifelong friendships. I looked forward to connecting with these friends every year, continuing through my teen years at Youth Camp. The relationships established and the teaching I received at these camps in my youth had a major impact on my life, the development of my faith in Christ and the person I am today.

When we entered adulthood we were back each year for Family Camp, which was the highlight of our summer. Since then I have had the privilege of seeing my children and grandchildren attend the same camps that I did and watch the effect it has had on their lives. Today they all have fond memories of their experiences at Fairmount Camp and they are thankful for the part it has played in their lives.

This campground has had a major impact on many young people's lives, and has been instrumental in many of them making decisions that have guided them into a life of service to others, the church, and the secular world as well.

I am honored to serve on the Board of Trustees of Fairmount Camp, and as chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee. This gives me great pleasure. And for several years now I also have enjoyed the privilege of having a cabin on the grounds, which happens to be located on Dunn Drive, named in honor of my father.

In today's environment many church camps have had to close for various reasons, including lack of support from the people and churches they have served. I am happy to report, however, that Fairmount Camp is alive and well and is still having an effect on people's lives. It is the *future* of Fairmount Camp that is at stake. In order for the camp to continue for the *next* 100 years, it

must become financially self-sustaining. This can only be accomplished when the camp is able to function year around and rent out its facilities for events that not only serve the church, but the community as well. With increased function and availability, the campground could be used for events such as married couple retreats, literacy camp for kids, church retreats, various men's/women's retreats, camp & craft retreats, camps for special needs kids, and Hispanic church camps & retreats as well as one-day events.

Since Fairmount camp was established as a seasonal camp, some of its facilities must be converted to year around use which requires heating, cooling and proper plumbing, and we have begun that process.

The greatest need now is the addition of a 13,680 square foot multi-purpose building which can be used for athletic functions, concerts, seminars, church services, weddings, receptions and other events. The addition of this building, along with the conversion of existing buildings, will truly make Fairmount Camp self-sustaining and guarantee its future for many years to come.

I believe the impact this camp has had on young people and families for the past 100+ years is possibly an even greater need in the next 100 years. Fairmount Camp wants to continue to be an asset to the Fairmount community and to the many people outside the community who count on gathering there every year. It is my hope that you will see the vision and want to be a vital part of the future of the camp through a financial contribution.