

NEWFOUND • OWATONNA Call of the loon

FALL 2025



GRACE RIPLEY

Welcome Home

BY SETH JOHNSON, Executive Director

I enjoy every day in the summer as the Executive Director of Camps Newfound and Owatonna. From the very first day of pre-camp – when the lake is still cold and we still burrow under several blankets at night – to the last day of Creative Arts – when the first leaves of the fall are starting to change color – I love spending my days at camp with the campers, counselors, families, and adult arts campers. However, about every five years, we host a reunion that makes the summer – if possible – even more special. We get to welcome the whole camp family back to camp where we can be together to sing, sail, swim, play volleyball on the sandbar,

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Call of the loon

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toast s'mores on the ski beach, share at Morning Meeting, and feel the deep bonds that make us all know that Newfound and Owatonna is our home away from home.

One of the most inspiring hallmarks of Camps Newfound and Owatonna is the depth and breadth of the support camp receives from alums, friends, families, parents, and grandparents, showing the profound impact the camps have had on so many lives for so many years. Each summer, we celebrate over 100 years of educating children based on the teachings of Christian Science and on our camp's Vision Statement that camp is a place where "Christian Science is lived and loved through a great summer camp experience." This past summer we had over 750 campers, families, staff, and alumni from all around the globe join us at camp during our Newfound and Owatonna sessions, Family Camp, Creative Arts, and the Reunion.

During the reunion weekend, I talked with a few alums from six decades ago. One gave an inspiring talk about the history of Newfound. Another told me about his first summer in Cabin 16 and mused on how the spiritual values, the loving community, and the enduring camp friendships have remained the same over the passing years.

I also spoke with current Newfound and Owatonna campers who had just been at camp for seven weeks but couldn't wait to be back to have one more trip down the zip line, one more water ski on the glassy lake, one more perfectly roasted marshmallow.

Alums traveled to Maine from California, Colorado, Florida, St. Louis, Canada, Seattle, and many more places. When they made the turn onto Route 35 they knew that their trip was going to be worth the distance, and when they saw the Newfound and Owatonna signs on the side of the road, they knew they were home.

Six past camp directors came. Instead of waking up at 5 a.m. to prepare for a full day of leading counselors and campers like they all had done for so many summers, this time at camp they got to enjoy the loon calls and whispering breezes as they lay in their bunks, thinking about if they would join the Hawk Mountain hike or roll over and sleep until the bell woke them for breakfast.

There were attendees who came alone and others who gathered a group of cabinmates and came together. Those who came by themselves were embraced by friends old and new as they joined cabin groups, ate wonderful camp meals in the dining room together, competed in a soccer game, and learned to play disc golf up at Owatonna.

And there were a few reunion attendees who had never been to camp before! They were drawn to the reunion by relatives, friends, or just the love and joy that they had heard about from others. One brand-new visitor to camp told the family that he came with that this was the best vacation that he'd ever gone on!

For me, watching the mix of all the reunion attendees was a highlight of my summer. It really made me think about how important camp has been – and still is – to so many people. Camp alums travel many paths after their summers at Newfound and Owatonna, but they will always have a home at camp. If you missed the reunion, or just can't wait to get back, please feel free to stop by camp in-season or during the off-season. You are always welcome.

Coming Home to Camp

BY TERRY COOLIDGE, Reunion Coordinator

The hustle and bustle of the wonderfully successful Labor Day Weekend reunion this past August led to an unexpected highlight for me. As one of two Reunion Coordinators, I had made a concerted effort during our planning sessions to include some traditional Owatonna activities, even though most of the action would be based down at Newfound much like it is for Family Camp and Creative Arts. Did we really need to conduct a Flag Raising and Flag Lowering at Owatonna every day even though we would be having these down at Newfound as well? I felt it was important to provide Owatonna alumni an opportunity to revisit some of these classic moments from past camp experience just exactly as they had happened for them decades before; so I was grateful that my superstar of a partner, fellow Reunion Coordinator Meg Reehl, and our fearless leader, Executive Director Seth “Chic” Johnson, were very agreeable to adding Owatonna Flag Raising/Lowering to our schedule.

However, in an effort to make best use of available staff during a weekend chock-full of moving parts, we discovered that we were missing a staff member up at the Owatonna flagpole when it was time to lower the flag on Sunday evening before dinner. When I arrived at the “rock,” I only saw one former Owatonna camper there, waiting patiently with his wife, as the time was approaching. I confirmed with him that he was there for the flag lowering, so I got on my walkie-talkie to see if we were going to be able to find an available staff member to help with the retreat ceremony in just a few moments as we really did need an extra set of hands in order to replicate the full experience. For just a moment the thought crossed my mind, “Maybe this was a mistake ... there doesn’t seem to be much interest in this. Look ... there’s only one former camper here.” That thought was quickly dismissed when I realized that we did indeed have one person for whom this experience meant enough that he chose to be here for this above all of the other offerings on the schedule. When it started to become apparent that an extra set of hands might not be arriving as rapidly as I had hoped, I started think-

ing about how we might pivot. A rather obvious solution popped into my head almost immediately. I approached our patient audience member. “Doug ... would you like to be the one to lower the flag?” His eyes widened. “May I?!?” Crisis averted! While I hadn’t anticipated that one of our reunion guests might want to participate in a flag lowering himself, having Doug fill this role turned out to be a perfect solution. The excitement I could perceive from everyone there made it clear that this was a special moment. I felt silly that I hadn’t thought of this before. This was turning out to be more meaningful than originally planned, and I suddenly found myself eager to also get involved. “Hey Doug ... may I help you fold the flag after you’ve lowered it?!?” I hadn’t folded an American

flag in over 30 years, but I had done it enough as an Owatonna camper that the proper procedure/technique came back instantaneously. We may not have folded the flag perfectly, but we did it pretty well. Enough to pass inspection at least! Pictures ensued.

This experience was truly a highlight for me in a weekend jam-packed with wonderful moments. Yes, simply going through the motions of familiar camp rituals certainly is nostalgic, but the treasure trove of memories connected to each and every experience throughout the weekend is so precious. Seeing dear camp friends who I hadn’t seen in many, many moons (some I was seeing for the first time in over 40 years!) was

incredibly rewarding. Delightful conversations that included lots of reminiscing, and often lots of laughs, inevitably led to remembering other camp friends who may not have been at the reunion but whose positive influence and substantial contributions to the rich legacy of camp continue to be felt deeply.

I also made some new friends over the weekend! It’s amazing how close some “strangers” felt after just a few days together because of our shared summer camp history. It didn’t matter that some folks were generations older or generations younger – both Owatonna and Newfound are known for attracting and developing individuals of sterling character, and these outstanding people are truly a pleasure to know. I met a Blues teammate’s aunt who



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The Art of Growing Forward

BY MARY RANKIN, Newfound Director

What if growth isn't just about stretching higher but also learning to move forward with grace? Camp teaches us this every summer ... the art of growing forward. The ability to step into something new, even when it means releasing something familiar: a fear, a friendship, or an old version of ourselves. It's not always comfortable. In fact, it can feel a lot like standing on the edge of the H-Dock, wondering if the water will hold you, and it always does. Because growing forward doesn't mean leaving anything behind, it means carrying forward the courage, love, and lessons that shape who we're becoming.

In my article last spring, "The Courage to Come," I wrote about the bravery it takes to do hard things, to step into challenges and trust that growth will meet you there. This fall, I've been thinking about what happens after that moment of courage ... after we've done the hard thing, stretched, changed, and quietly evolved. Growth doesn't always look like forward motion; sometimes it looks like standing still in an unfamiliar space between what was and what's next.

A few weeks ago, a camper's parent emailed me about her daughter who was struggling because the friends she'd been

close with at school last year weren't as connected this year. She asked if I had any thoughts that might help her daughter navigate that shift. I shared that when we grow, we often find ourselves in transition. It can feel like something is wrong, but really, it's a sign that something new is unfolding. Maybe her daughter is simply growing forward in those friendships for now ... not because anything is amiss, but because something new is ready to unfold. Growth can sometimes create space, and that space, though often uncomfortable, is sacred ground. And in time, that sweet camper will discover new, like-minded friends who meet her right where she is in this next chapter of growth.

One camper summed it up perfectly on closing night of camp last summer; when I asked what she had learned at camp, she said, "I used to think hard things and change were really scary, but now I see that it just means I'm growing into a new, better version of me."

Camp gives our girls countless opportunities to practice that art ... the art of growth through both courage and release. We see it when a camper faces the Big Float Test with trembling confidence and, by the end, learns to trust the water, her breath, those around her, and God's presence. One girl shared, "I was so

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SKIP SCHNEIDER

The Owatonna Man

BY REID CHARLSTON, Owatonna Director

“I can honestly say that this has been the most amazing summer of my life. It was so enriching and gratifying being able to work in such a supportive and loving environment with my beautiful fellow Owatonna staff and with these amazing kids. I learned so much about myself, working with kids, and my relationship with Christian Science. What we are doing here is truly special. The world needs good men and Owatonna is not afraid to step forward and set the standard for these young boys. It is not a coincidence that everyone I know of who has grown up going to Owatonna every summer is loving, respectful, hardworking, and passionate about the things they do and with the people they work with. Thank

you again for the amazing summer, I will do everything I can to be here next year.”

This note was sent to me by a counselor who was on staff at Owatonna for the first time last summer, and I think he sums up beautifully the impact of the Owatonna experience. Clearly, he fully embraced and was inspired by what we have for years referred to as the Owatonna Man. But, this term has always been used in a rather amorphous way. When it has been used, we all pretty much knew what it meant, but until this year, it has never been clearly defined.

During the winter last year, we set out to come up with a clear definition of the Owatonna Man. We knew that being able

to articulate this concept more precisely would help each one of us know exactly what we are striving for. As Mrs. Eddy says, “One cannot scatter his fire, and at the same time hit the mark” (*Science and Health* 457:21-22). We needed a clearly defined mark to aim at, and we hoped it would be a guide for all the boys and men at Owatonna, both while at camp and as they live the rest of their lives.

As you can imagine, coming up with something like this is a tricky proposition. There are so many good qualities to include and different ways to state each of them that finding a solution that spoke to everyone seemed impossible. But, the time had come, and we decided to go for it.

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attended Newfound in the 1950s and coincidentally was the daughter-in-law of one of my foundational Sunday School teachers when I was growing up. I am now happy to count her as a dear friend of mine. I also met a spirited guy who wrapped up his years at Owatonna the year before I arrived, and before the end of the weekend I found myself telling him, "If you and I had been cabin mates back in the day, we would have been inseparable pals!" Finally, just like our reunion four years ago, I had the great privilege of working with, and in many cases meeting for the first time, numerous selfless and dedicated camp alums who participated as reunion staff members. I was able to lean on some new acquaintances pretty heavily at times, and it's no surprise that these tireless workers proved to be incredibly reliable as well as friends who I look forward to staying in touch with moving forward. I couldn't be more grateful.

I encourage all Owatonna and Newfound alums to give serious thought to participating in any future reunions. One friend who hadn't been at camp since the early-80s remarked on the "sense of serenity, and instant belonging" that he felt upon his return. From what I witnessed, this friend's experience was not uncommon. My wife Karen was a good sport to work on the reunion staff with me despite her having no personal connection with the camps since she didn't attend, and she emphasized to me numerous times afterwards that it truly was her pleasure to see first-hand the light and love being expressed by those returning to our "home away from home." Reflection of divine good-

ness and harmony in action was clearly discernible even by a non-alum. After all, as Camp Ropioa established upon its founding over 100 years ago, "Reflection of Perfection is Our Aim." I can hardly wait until the next reunion!

"I loved returning to camp (after 50 years!) and reconnecting with many old friends. The weekend for me started with the Cherry Island swim, a tennis lesson, and pickleball. And that was just the first day!! I also enjoyed the hymn sing, paddling in the war canoe, and camp songs & s'mores around the fire. By the end of the weekend, I felt like I had never left the love & friendships I found at Camp Newfound!!!"

"We absolutely loved the Reunion! We brought our whole family and enjoyed all the activities. We loved the pickleball tournament, The Great Race, ultimate frisbee, disc golf, archery, rock wall, zipline, tubing, and waterskiing together everyday. It was a highlight to be with the waterski and rocks and ropes staff and experience the joy and patience they give our kids as campers all summer. Other highlights were singing on the beach around the campfire, and making new friends in addition to seeing many old friends. The entire Reunion was run so well, and we had a blast! Thank you, Camp!"

The Joy of Celebrating Camp Together

BY MEG REEHL, Reunion Coordinator

Thank you to everyone who joined us this Labor Day weekend for the 2025 Camp Reunion! Rain on welcoming day didn't slow down the group, and Terry and I loved greeting each car as it pulled into camp. The reunion days were filled with some of our favorite camp activities, including the zipline, waterskiing, morning hikes up Hawk Mountain, and swimming to Cherry Island. There was also ample time for strolling around camp, searching for names on dining room/lodge plaques and in cubie halls, and long conversations sitting by the lake. Each day ended with a fire on the Newfound ski beach, providing more opportunities to share stories and forge new friendships through a shared love of camp. Additional highlights included a traditional camp

hymn sing, an abbreviated version of The Great Race, a pickleball round robin, pick up basketball, blindfolded dodgeball, volleyball on the sandbar, and building and launching rockets from Coomber Field. There was something for everyone, and it was an absolute joy to see the group creating new lasting memories together at camp!

I'd like to extend a special thank you to the reunion staff who came together to put on an incredible weekend for our guests. From lifeguarding, driving the boats, shuttling guests between camps, caring for our youngest attendees, and responding to the needs of the day, everyone embodied the phrase "work hard, play hard" – and did it with a smile. The kitchen and dining room staff produced

delicious meals and kept up with the shifting demands of feeding a group whose headcount changed daily. Finally, to our facilities crew, year round camp staff, and my "co" in all things planning, Terry, I'm grateful for all the collaboration, event prep, and organizing that was many months in the making – it made all the difference. So thank you again to everyone who traveled far and wide to share in the joy of the 2025 Newfound-Owatonna Camp Reunion! Who's ready for the next one!?



Scan the QR code to enjoy
a Newfound-Owatonna Reunion hymn sing!



DON SEYMOUR



Heading Home to Family Camp

BY RICK LIPSEY

The attraction of camp is deep, palpating, and irresistible. The flames of inspiration never wane, for both campers and staff, no matter how long you might have been away from Long Lake. So I didn't need an iota of convincing to lure my son Timmy, 17, and my friend Brook to join me in returning to Harrison for Family Camp's second session last August. We had all been away from camp for too long.

Timmy had been an Owatonna camper for a decade before deciding to spend last summer caddying and practicing golf to prepare for college competition. In the summer of 1983, Brook had been an Owatonna sailing counselor, and in 2018 he worked as an Owatonna kitchen helper and driver. Starting in 2008, I had made dozens of trips to camp to drop off and pick up Timmy and his three siblings (Alex, 15; Ricky, 22; and Claudia, 23), who together spent over 40 summers as campers and staff at Owatonna and Newfound; and starting in 2015 I spent four summers as a trips counselor.

Brook, Timmy, and I spent months anticipating and discussing our impending return to camp. Brook, who lives in Los Angeles, and I (New York City) would be family campers, inhabiting a

lakeside Newfound cabin. Timmy would work on staff supervising the Moose program, assisting the kitchen crew, and doing myriad other jobs, while bunking up the hill in an Owatonna cabin with Owatonna counselors also working as Family Camp staff.

Brook was especially keen to make the cross country trek back to Long Lake. "I always cherished the freedom to be with like-minded people, as a camper and a counselor," says Brook. "So now having a chance to have that camp experience again, to just relax and play all day with well-organized activities and to be quiet in the reading room, was a treasured opportunity that I couldn't miss."

Timmy wasn't drawn back to camp so much for the activities, although he was thrilled to slalom waterski with Skip driving the boat, as he was for the bonds of brotherhood, which he had sorely missed after just one summer away from camp. After Family Camp, Timmy was ecstatic. "Working Family Camp was the best part of my summer," Timmy said emphatically. "The connection and bond between the staff was very special. We've all gone through the same experiences and have so much in common."

For me, the list of things luring me

back to camp was long. I couldn't wait to hear the howling echo of loons over the lake; to swim at dawn across the glassy smooth lake to Cherry Island; to take tennis lessons from coach Ray; to see bald eagles soaring overhead; to pray in Newfound's stunning reading room; to nail a few bullseyes at the archery range; to participate in the talent show; and to enjoy s'mores while stargazing at a lake-side campfire.

Above all, the attraction of camp is felt and experienced in the heart and soul. One loves camp because it embodies the glory of God's harmonious, stable, and beautiful kingdom. A quotation from Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer of Christian Science, in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, aptly describes the spirituality that is the core of Camps Newfound and Owatonna. It's that spiritual-mindedness which lured Brook, Timmy, and me back to camp last August and has us committed to return to Family Camp in August 2026. "There is but one real attraction, that of Spirit. The pointing of the needle to the pole symbolizes this all-embracing power or the attraction of God, divine Mind" (102: 9-11).





A Very Hard Place to be Afraid

“...the most powerful I ever feel is in those moments where I’m reminded on a daily basis that I can make something out of nothing...” – Jeff Tweedy

BY DEB HENSLEY, Creative Arts Director

This past summer at Creative Arts we did just that. We cooked, baked, created films, painted, sketched, danced, cartooned, wrote songs, orated, and made something out of what at first looked like nothing.

This, of course, brought everyone great joy. Still, it was not all fun and games. It required us to study nuances of tone, color, texture, taste, and meaning; to discern the difference between cobalt and ultramarine, pitch and tone, solitude and loneliness, happiness and joy.

The truth is, each time we create, each time we present a beautiful rebuke to the mortal construct through a brushstroke, a melody, a spoken word, or a flash of humor, it imparts something that’s absent from the material, limited discourse taking center stage in our world today and thus, banishes fear. That something is this: devoted listening. This mindset is a very hard

place for fear to flourish. And the impact of this deeply creative attention is always expansive. It continues to bloom throughout the year too – gently, intelligently, and sometimes wildly – in the lives of those who let it.

I’ve been blessed to have witnessed Creative Arts teachers and students willingly follow their own beautiful imaginations and make something out of what could have been nothing. I’ve seen them practice the devoted listening that moves them and others out of fear, into their own uniquely creative work.

My take away is this: Creative Arts is not only a very hard place to be afraid; it is a place of confident, intelligent joy. And isn’t that what the world needs more of?

“When you align yourself with creation, you inherently take a side against destruction.” – Jeff Tweedy



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scared of the Big Float Test. I stood on the dock crying. But then my whole cabin started cheering, saying, 'You can do it!' I felt so supported. It made me feel brave."

We see it again on the hiking trail, where a girl who didn't think she could make it to the top of the mountain peak suddenly finds herself gazing out at the horizon, realizing how far she's come. One camper laughed as she told me, "I didn't want to hike. I told my counselor I was bad at it. But I made it to the top of the mountain and it was actually kind of awesome."

And we see it in the quiet, steady moments of leadership, too, when a girl's courage to be herself becomes its own quiet light, a force for good in the world around her. An older girl reflected, "I used to think I wasn't a leader. But this summer I found my voice during Camp Fire and Team Day, and I realized I can help others just by being myself."

This summer, I found myself coming back again and again to our metaphysical theme for last summer, the beautiful truth from Exodus: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Growth isn't always about motion. Sometimes it's about standing still long enough to feel God's presence in the unknown ... in that moment between "what was" and "what's next."

In Christian Science, we learn that progress is the unfolding of spiritual truth, not the accumulation of new material experiences. Growing forward, in that light, isn't about loss at all, it's revelation. It's the gentle uncovering of what's already true about us as the reflection of Divine Love: whole, radiant, and free. Every time a girl at Newfound lets go of fear, comparison, or

self-doubt, she's not becoming someone new: she's remembering who she really is.

And that remembering? It doesn't stop when camp ends. It goes home with her. It shows up when she's faced with a hard friendship moment, or when school feels challenging, or when she's unsure of her next step. She carries the same courage that helped her climb the mountain and the same trust that helped her swim in the lake. She knows she can do hard things, and she's learning that she can also do heart things ... the quiet work of spiritual reliance: she can release, trust, and grow forward with grace.

So this fall, as the leaves turn and the world seems to be letting go, I invite all of us to notice where we might be growing forward, too ... not in a way that feels worried, rushed or forced, but in the quiet, natural way that Love unfolds. Maybe it's growing forward from an old fear, a habit of self-doubt, or a rhythm that no longer feels aligned. The truth is that growth is happening in all of us, all the time. And just like our campers, we can stand still in that in-between space, trusting that the same God who carried us through the Big Float Test, the mountain peak, the friendship challenge, and other hard moments will carry us into what's next.

Because every moment of letting go makes room for more light ... and that light keeps guiding us home to who we've always been and truly are: brave, growing, and held in Love.





ELIAS BASHOR

Owatonna continued from page 5

From the start, it was important that this definition would reflect the Owatonna experience. The goal was not to create something new, but to build something that everyone would look at and say, “Yes, that’s it! That’s Owatonna.” So, to begin, we sent out a survey to a large number of current and former Owatonna guys. We looked for people who had embodied many of the qualities in their own time at camp, and we were grateful for the thoughtfulness of the responses we received.

From there, we set about grouping and sorting the qualities. We asked ourselves which of these are truly core to what Owatonna is all about, and we crossed off the ones that felt more trivial or subjective. It was a challenging process, but ultimately, we reached a point where we felt the list included all we were hoping to cover.

From there, guided by prayer, it started to take shape. The ideas began to align themselves into cohesive groups, and then a sequence started to emerge. Ultimately this is what we came to:

The Owatonna Man is selfless and humble. He is driven to love, grow, and serve. Daily, he deepens his understanding of his relationship with God by following the example of Christ Jesus and studying the teachings of Christian Science. He is alert to temptation and self-justification, handling these before they influence his thoughts and actions. He sets the standard. His willingness, initiative, and integrity make a difference in every situation. He is hard-working and reliable. He plays to win. He knows that by living his life rightly, his impact will ripple outwards, making the world a better place for all.

With a working definition, the next question became, “How do we use this?” We started by introducing it at Morning Meeting. Each day, a different staff member would take the next line and explain what it meant to him. Often, they would share a quick anecdote that helped to drive the point home. We also posted a copy in each cabin and in the bathrooms. As the sum-

mer went on, a growing impact was seen as campers and staff brought up parts of the definition in their natural conversations with each other.

One line that particularly stood out was, “He plays to win.” In a place like Owatonna, where there are plenty of competitive opportunities, it didn’t surprise me that they latched onto this line. In fact, we had gone back and forth on whether to include it at all, because it is easy to assume it implies a win-at-all-costs mentality, which is clearly not the Owatonna standard. Ultimately, though, we left it in, inspired by what St. Paul says to the Corinthians, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (I Corinthians 9:24). It gave us a great opportunity to talk about the effort we put into our endeavors and how important it is to approach everything we do with the goal and expectation of succeeding. Whether it is school work, a job, a team we play for, or our daily prayerful work, we want to approach it with the energy and focus it takes to triumph in that area of our lives – definitely a characteristic of the Owatonna man.

At the end of the summer, we sent everyone – campers and staff – home with their own copy of the Owatonna Man definition on a postcard. I encouraged them to post it in their room in a place where they could look at it every day. As the last line makes clear, the value of the Owatonna Man is in his impact upon the world. So, if we all regularly look at these postcards and work to develop the qualities of the Owatonna Man in our own lives, then we will have that ripple effect. I encourage everyone to do this, and if you’d like your own postcard with the Owatonna Man on it, please email or text me, and I’d be happy to send you one.

Newfound·Owatonna Call of the loon



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