Looking for Alumni

Are you a former Kon-O-Kwee camper or staff member? Did you attend the Y Guides/Princesses programs as a child or parent? Have you visited KOKS as a member of a retreat or school group? Are you a former board member or volunteer?

Well then – you qualify as one of our Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer Alumni! We’d love to make sure that we have you in our database so that we can keep you informed of what’s happening at camp. You can provide us with your contact information here.

We’ll let you know about reunions, volunteer work days, plans for the future and much more. Please spread the word among other alumni that you may know – we’d love to double the size of our alumni database!

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Mission

To promote Christian principles through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all

Vision

Kon-O-Kwee Spencer YMCA will be the center of excellence for values-based education. By partnering with parents and schools our highly-trained staff will deliver purpose-led programs for all.

Purpose

To inspire and equip people to find their path, to unlock potential and to create leaders of consequence
**From the Executive Director—Dave DeLuca**

It’s been a quiet summer at Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer. Those are painful words to write. When I arrived here in February I was so looking forward to the 2020 summer and the opportunity to see this amazing camp in operation.

Then COVID struck and, after some agonizing deliberations, made the decision to cancel our summer camping season. Soon after came the realization that, without the revenue generated by our full camp, we could not subsidize and support the many other impactful programs that take place here during the rest of the year. As a result, we made the painful choice to close our doors until April 2021. While I still believe that it was the right decision, it came at a great cost.

Certainly, the greatest cost was the inability to provide thousands of children, adults and families with wonderful outdoor experiences... experiences that are so desperately needed during this pandemic. We also had to lay off nine of our twelve fulltime staff as a cost savings step. We’ve reduced other expenses as well.

Despite these efforts, Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer will experience an operating deficit of more than $500,000 this year. I’ll be devoting a portion of my time to working to reduce this staggering deficit.

We’ll face this challenge in the same manner that Kon-O-Kwee Spencer has faced other challenges – straight-on and with maximum effort. And while doing so, we’ll build upon the many positives that we’re so fortunate to have here. Such as...

- An almost century-old tradition of providing exceptional experiences to children and families
- A stunningly-beautiful campus that abounds with wildlife and opportunities for outdoor activities
- A large, loyal (but somewhat untapped) corps of alumni
- A number of caring donors who have generously supported the camp through the years
- A dedicated board of directors that gives selflessly of their time, talent and treasure
- Strong summer camp enrollment

I’d be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge perhaps the greatest attribute of Kon-O-Kwee Spencer: The enduring legacy of **Uncle Harry and Aunt Barbara Kramer** and their continued love for and support of the camp. Uncle Harry is a legend within the camping world and I am so honored to follow in his footsteps here.
All-camp Amphitheater to be Built!

Nothing says “camp” more than an opening campfire with the entire camp population – more than 400 strong – in attendance around a roaring fire. In the past, these events have taken place on the open field below Kramer Hall, next to the Council Tree. While it’s a lovely location, the lack of appropriate seating and a permanent fire circle has made these gatherings problematic.

We’ve got plans to build a 500-seat, all-camp amphitheater along the far shore of Zivic Pond – a lovely, shaded location with great views. In addition to opening campfires, the facility is perfect for our Candlelight ceremony and will also be used by outdoor education schools, YMCA parent/child programs and other groups that visit camp.

The amphitheater will be named in memory of Rick Deer, who first experienced KOKS as a seasonal staff member and who finished his camping career as our executive director (2007-2012). For a number of years, Rick was the beloved director at Deer Valley. It is a fitting tribute to a man who believed deeply in the value of summer camp. The fire circle will be named in memory of Lance Frye, a Heart Camp camper who loved his KOKS experience. We’d like to have the amphitheater completed by the start of the 2021 summer. For more information on this project—including opportunities to help support our efforts—please contact Dave DeLuca.

New Program Zones?

The KOKS program offers a great deal of variety – there’s something for everyone! Still, there’s always room for more activities. What would YOU add if you were interested in seeing something new at camp?

Our new Trail of Courage has been installed and we’re starting the planning for a new zip line and a completely-renovated climbing barn (more on these exciting projects in the near future!).

So—if you’re a summer camper, or a participant in the YMCA Guide/Princess program, or a retreat group guest—what new activities would you like to see?

How about...

♦ A mini-golf course
♦ A farm & garden
♦ A biking program

These are just a few ideas – let us know your thoughts! The sky’s the limit!
Come Lend a Hand at Camp!

During this period of shutdown, our skeleton crew of staff can certainly use some volunteer assistance. We’ve scheduled monthly work days throughout the fall to help us with such tasks as landscaping, cleaning, organizing, inventorying and more. You can learn more about these work days on our [website](#).

In addition, we encourage individuals, service clubs or businesses to come out and lend a hand at other times. We can identify a number of projects that are suitable for people of all abilities. Please contact Dave DeLuca or Karla Schell at the camp office for more information.

DONATE TO CAMP KON-O-KWEE SPENCER!

Please consider making a gift to help us recover from this pandemic-induced shutdown. Your donation will help to ensure that a camp experience will be available for kids—the ones who need it the most.

Visit the YMCA’s website [here](#) to make a secure gift. Please be sure to select Kon-O-Kwee Spencer from the dropdown menu.

NEXTGEN Committee

Several years ago, the KOKS Board established the Next Generation Committee as a way to engage younger alumni and other like-minded individuals in service to the camp. The NextGen Committee currently consists of nine individuals—all young professionals with a love of Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer and a desire to give back to the place that has meant so much to them.

The group has focused its efforts on such initiatives as raising funds for scholarships, enhancing summer staff morale and connecting with alumni in the greater Pittsburgh area. The committee created and oversees the KOK 5K, a race and family fun run held each October on the camp property. Unfortunately, the 2020 KOKK 5K has been postponed due to lingering concerns about COVID19. The committee is working to develop alternate ways to give back to the camp including social media fundraising and other efforts.

For more information, contact Dave DeLuca.

Summer Camp 2021!

We’ll be opening registration for the 2021 summer in early October. We’re already planning for a tremendous ‘21 camping season—especially after the loss of the 2020 summer. We’ll offer a similar schedule to what we’ve done in the past—including the return of our popular teen program.

Watch your email and the Kon-O-Kwee Spencer website for more information. Don’t miss out on what will be an amazing summer experience at KOKS!

YMCA CAMP KON-O-KWEE SPENCER

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Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer is a branch of the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh