

# **The Harcourt Herald June 2023**

The Harcourt United Church Community







## ***Harcourt Memorial United Church***

An Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Canada

We are a people of God called together and sent forth by Christ to... **Seek. Connect. Act.**

**Our Mission:** Inspired by the Spirit, we participate in Christian practices that strengthen us in the building of just, compassionate and non-violent relationships.

**Our Vision Statement:** To be an authentic community of spiritual growth and service.

**Our Core Values:** Risk... Respect... Responsibility... Vulnerability... Trust

**Our Purpose:** To welcome and strengthen in community all who wish to serve God and follow the way of Jesus

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## Table of Contents

From the Editor's Desk.....	4
A Note from Our Minister – Kate Ballagh-Steeper.....	4
Partnerships/Community Hub Project Update - Steve Pierce.....	9
Food for the Journey: Everyday Pilgrimage??? - Stan Bunston for the Spiritual Life Committee.....	10
Christian Camp - Bill Chapman.....	11
Church Camp – Marilyn Whiteley.....	12
Summer Camps - Arlene Davies-Fuhr.....	13
Summer Camp - Kent Hoeg.....	15
Summer Horse Camp – Jane McNamee.....	15
What is Summer Camp anyway? - Toni Wagner.....	16
Experiences from Pioneer Camp, Port Sydney, On. - Sharon Chapman.....	17
New Forms of Summer Ministry for Children – Jen Auger, Norval United Church.....	18
My Journey To Christianity – Holly Hue.....	20
Discovery Day – Taste and See – Andre Auger.....	21
Volunteers needed to help maintain the Harcourt grounds – Sarah Lowe.....	22
News from the Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship – Jean Hume.....	23
Shirzai Family Update - Peter Gill.....	24
An Interview with (Reverend) Edna Miller - Judi Morris.....	24
Harcourt's Family Camp - Marilyn Whiteley.....	30
Better Than Summer Camp - Lisa Browning.....	32

## From the Editor's Desk

June! Summer! The wonderful season begins. And this issue of the Herald is full of wonderful articles about your experiences at summer camp. Thanks for these! Maybe they might encourage you to think about coming to Harcourt's "Discovery Day" on Saturday Sept 23 at Crieff Hills!

Many people ask us "What will you do this summer, where will you go?" The answer is: "Nowhere". And that's okay! Andre and I are happy here to experience fully this great season. We will relax in the garden (work a bit on weeds), see what Guelph has to offer, and visit or invite friends. (And perhaps, just perhaps, my surgery will be behind me by the time the September issue of the Herald rolls out!) See you all in September!



## A Note from Our Minister – Kate Ballagh-Steeper

I didn't have to think very long about this month's theme of summer camp memories. My camp memories and connections were foundational in my faith growth and development, not just in my pre-teen and teen years but really throughout my life!

I have been connected with Camp Kintail on the shores of Lake Huron for 45 years now. Operated by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, I count many of the resident full-time Directors over the years as close friends and mentors (including the current Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Dr., Bob Faris). I even applied to be the full-time Director several years ago and was devastated when I was not chosen for the position. My disappointment did not last long however as shortly afterwards I did get hired to be the Chaplain of the London Community Chaplaincy, which was an incredible opportunity.



Our children attended Kintail as Campers and then as Staff members themselves. And while living in Goderich we remained connected.

For many children and teens, camp brings many, many gifts that the institutional church simply cannot. Camp allows people to develop a relationship with creation in ways they may not be able to otherwise. Camp can give children and adults the space and time to relax and be recreated in the company of a supportive community. And camp is fun!

When I sent my children to camp, I looked forward to a week long break from parenting! But it was also a break for my children from being parented! I knew they were safe at camp, and they got a week of not listening to their parents ask (or tell) them what they needed to do, how and when! Camp Counsellors were always way cooler! Camp gave our daughters a chance to explore and push their boundaries in new ways. They had to learn how to get along with their cabin mates without coaching or guidance of parents, important skills all children need to have the opportunity to develop.



For me, as a camper and as Camp Staff, I encountered those who were further along the journey in faith than I was. Because we were sharing our meals, our space, our worship, ourselves with one another, the impact of those mentors has lasted a lifetime. Many lived their faith boldly and vibrantly in ways that drew me deeper into faith. God became real to me in new ways at Camp and I am grateful to have experienced joy, hope, grief and laughter in the context of intentional Christian community that was camp.

Camps run by the Church need our prayers, our support and our investment of time and energy. The United Church has many camps – perhaps too many. But camp creates the space and time for Holy Encounter for children and youth. It is more important than ever to provide camp encounters for children and youth who largely have no contact with church or the faith story.

Let us pray for all the Camp staff, campers and board of directors who keep the campfires burning and the Spirit glowing.



In many e-Harcourt weekly updates I publish items from Council. It feels as if I then summarize them in the Harcourt Herald it will be nothing but a repeat. However, I do recognize that some may not read the e-Harcourt. If you do, feel free to skip to the next section. If you do not read the e-Harcourt or need a refresher, then here it is:

### Community Hub

May 7 we held a Congregational Meeting to discuss our progress towards a Community Hub (one of our 4 Harcourt priorities). It was a meeting filled with lots of updates followed by thoughtful questions and responses. We ended the meeting with two motions.

Steve Pierce started his presentation by playing a video of activist Holly Near singing "I Am Willing", which begins:

"I am open and I am willing  
To be hopeless would seem so strange  
It dishonors those who go before us  
So lift me up to the light of change."

Powerful words indeed.

Steve informed us of the great progress that has been made towards a community Hub and referred us to the Community Hub Information Package that has been shared with the congregation. I won't repeat what's in the information package but it provides an update on much of the activity that has taken place. We are reminded that while an outcome of a Community Hub may be to raise funds, its true purpose is to build and strengthen our relationships with our community. To do so, we will take small steps forward. To begin, we will create a Rental and Community Relations Group made up of members of Harcourt and the Community. This committee will assume responsibilities for Harcourt rentals and Community relations. We will also hire a Community Relations Coordinator to focus on rentals and community relationship building. This will be a restructuring of the current Office Administrator role, and as such will not add new costs to Harcourt.

It is noted the incredible amount of research and efforts that has gone into this proposal. Using the wisdom, experience and efforts of the Trinity Centres Foundation we have interviewed many in the community to understand their needs. Countless volunteers have



worked on sprucing up the interior and grounds of Harcourt. Policies and rental agreements have been drafted. Governance models have been proposed. Our website improved.

After Steve provided an update on the project, the congregation was invited to ask questions. I will not repeat the questions / answers - they will be shared in the resulting Minutes of the meeting. But we did our best to provide assurances that Harcourt's identity will remain and we will stay true to our faith and values, we will remain collaborative and stay in touch with our community to hear concerns and opportunities. On May 16 we will hold a community consultation with potential partners who can hear our vision and we can hear their needs.

The following motion was then approved: **On the recommendation of Council, the Harcourt Community of Faith endorses the exploratory work accomplished to become a community hub, and authorizes Council to proceed with the creation of the Harcourt Community Centre and the implementation of required governance and policy changes. An evaluation will be reported back to the congregation at the next Annual General Meeting, March 2024.**

We then discussed the option of allowing alcohol being served at events. Thoughtful expressions of concern were raised - Harcourt has a mission to support the vulnerable, is serving alcohol contrary to that? What liabilities would Harcourt be subjected to? What impact could this have to our neighbours? There also came expressions of support and acknowledgement that many churches, United included, have successfully adopted such a policy.

The following motion was then approved: **On the recommendation of Council, the Harcourt Community of Faith endorses the limited circumstances of preauthorized use of alcohol at events at Harcourt. Council will work with the Rentals and Community Relations Group to develop and approve an alcohol use policy.**

While the motion was approved, the voices of concern are noted, and we must do all that we can to ensure that an alcohol use policy addresses the concerns raised. The meeting

ended with a commitment to provide further updates, including an information session later this fall.

I cannot express enough gratitude for all the efforts of Steve Pierce and the many, many volunteers and staff who have gotten us this far. We now have formal congregational approval to move forward. We will take small steps, evaluate and adjust as necessary - but we are on our way!

Also, On Tuesday May 16 Harcourt held its consultation with various community representatives. A dozen people showed up. Good conversation and good feedback. This will be useful as we continue developing plans for our Harcourt Community Hub.

### GUM

Also on Tuesday May 16, representatives from the GUM churches gathered. We continue to meet and discuss ways in which to collaborate and share. Of note, M&P committees are starting to connect and get to know one another. We are also working on a proposal to restructure GUM to allow us to be more nimble and to purposefully take action towards sharing our resources. Early stages, and more to come!

### Council Meeting

On Wednesday, Council met. Updates were given on the Community Consultation and GUM. We also debriefed on the Congregational Meeting held May 7. We were so impressed (but not surprised) by the thoughtful and respectful way in which questions were raised and answered. Clearly people read the information package shared and/or attended the May 1 Informational Session - they were very informed questions. We hope that everyone felt that their voices were heard. Council is committed to ensure next steps (such as policy creation) will take into account the feedback and concerns raised.

Harcourt - a happening place!





## Partnerships/Community Hub Project Update - Steve Pierce

First, I wish to thank everyone who attended the congregational meeting for their presence at the meeting. It is important for everyone to be informed about what is happening with the project. The questions and comments were most appropriate and covered many different issues related to the project and the issue of the alcohol policy.



The summary and update prepared for the congregational meeting covers all the different areas the project has been addressing. Since the congregational meeting, a Community Consultation was held on May 16<sup>th</sup>. An open discussion was held with 12 community organizations directed by Kendra Fry and Mike Wood Daley from the Trinity Centres Foundation. Comments from the discussion will be part of the report that will be prepared by Trinity Centres Foundation.



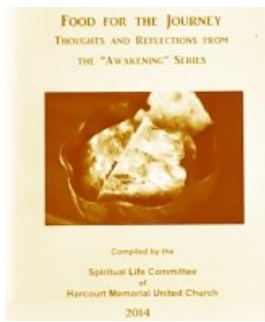
Meanwhile, requests for rental space continue to be received. Pat Eton-Neufeld and Nancy Ryan have been busy in this regard. All past rental agreements have been reviewed and are now up-to-date. New rental agreements are being discussed with various organizations. The computerized system is up and running.

The new position of Community Relations Coordinator, within the Harcourt office, has been advertised and we are looking forward to having that position filled.

The Hub Team continues to work on various tasks. New interior signage is being explored to help guests find their way. The TV screen has been installed to provide information about who is meeting where and to inform people of upcoming events. The TV is to replace the white board outside the office. There is a plan to redesign behind the stage area to accommodate the storing of chairs.

While the project has accomplished a number of things, there are challenges ahead particularly around funding and having enough “people power” to implement what needs to be done next.

I appreciate the support of the congregation. All of you are part of the broader community and you can let people know what is happening at Harcourt. For those who attended the congregational meeting, remember the phrase “lift me up to the light of change”.



## Food for the Journey: Everyday Pilgrimage??? - Stan Bunston for the Spiritual Life Committee

*"Pilgrim, how you journey  
On the road you chose" Enya*

As the years pass (*accelerate* it seems!) I am coming to accept that I may never get to walk the Camino or any other historical spiritual road. Yet, my heart yearns for the gift of that "thin place and time" to focus on the presence of the Divine for an extended "walk"! However, pilgrimage is available to us, at any point in our lives, no matter our limitations.(1) Like prayer, at the core is our **intention**. Every day we have open to us a contemplative path with all the features that pilgrimage offers.

There is much we can learn from centuries old religious traditions – paths to holy sites in Europe and the biblical sites like Jerusalem and the River Jordan, Islam's Hajj to Mecca, and the Jewish Exodus. One early adaptation was walking the labyrinth, a contemplative practice from medieval times to walk in place (or nowadays even "walk" with one's fingers on a miniature labyrinth). One of our intentions is to journey inward and appreciate the present moment -- not be rushing to a future. As Richard Rohr puts it, "as long as we think happiness is around the corner, it means we have not grasped happiness yet. Because happiness is given in this moment and this place, and this moment and place are as perfect as they can be."(2)



We can also learn from the tradition about the spiritual disciplines of being on such an actual or metaphorical journey. One such discipline is to endeavor to open our hearts. For example, we may need to make amends for any wrong-doing or seek to forgive others before we begin. In other words, the intention of the journey, by Grace, is a loving, peaceful interior journey – vertical between ourselves and God / Spirit --along side whatever steps are taken, or not, here on our earthly, horizontal plane. Pilgrims, not tourists! Silence and solitude are usually a part of the experience as we take a break from technology and television and observe our internal experience. How do we feel? Has anxiety or judgment or anger clouded out our joy in the gift of life? What might Spirit be communicating to us or asking of us at this time?



So a pilgrimage need not take place in some faraway destination. It can happen in our "everyday" places. Pilgrimage can certainly happen anywhere – but it is more than a neighborhood walk, hike, run, bike ride, or steps in our back yard, because it has a **spiritual intention**. Pilgrimage, however small, asks something of us, yet offers us a "thin place and time" to abide in the house (rather, the home) of Spirit.

May we feel the invitation, encouragement and inner peace and joy when we are reminded in the midst of daily life that this day too – now, now – can be a pilgrimage grounded in the Holy.

Footnotes:

(1) Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations, March 5-11, 2023

(2) Rohr, March 5, 2023

## **Christian Camp - Bill Chapman**

*“ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.” Acts 2:46-47*

How many hours a day are we involved in our “usual activities”? If we take out sleeping, about 8 hours, work or school, about 8-10 hours, chores, another hour at least, we have about 5 hours a day of “discretionary” time. Internet, TV, movie watching, telephone or email communication, maybe a sport activity and necessities like shopping often consume all the rest.

In the middle of that we might fit 15 to 20 minutes a day for spiritual reflection or prayer and maybe an hour and a half on Sunday for some form of spiritual focus. So our “spiritual self” gets, at the most, 4 hours a week out of the 35 hours a week of discretionary time and, if we add the work/school cultural formation, our spirits only get about 4 hours out of 85 hours available.

What changed and challenged me the most in my formative years was a Christian Camp. I won't name the ones I was involved in because that isn't necessary but what they offered was an experience of intense and extensive faith involvement and exchange. As residential camps they began each day with devotional, offered activities and events that allowed for physical growth, and fun that were led by people who used those opportunities to be a blessing to those in their care, we ate meals served by volunteers who were there because they wanted to be a giver of gifts and we had opportunities during the day and evenings for biblical study, sharing, fellowship, and questioning. The camps ran for 6 full days and during that time the purpose was to offer a supportive, caring environment, without distraction, to focus on your walk of faith.

A week of 90 hours of Camp offers exponentially more than those same number of hours doled out in weekly installments of 4 hours over 5 or 6 months. And you interacted with others, fellow campers or staff, who were on the same journey of delight and discovery, who were happy to talk, listen and share their journey with you and that pushed the learning to unbelievably new heights.

Acts 2:46-47 identifies a biblical experience that paralleled that of camp and the interesting conclusion was “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”. In their intensity and consistency they were transformed.

Maybe 4 hours, or less, a week of spiritual focus, just isn’t enough. Maybe we all need to go back to Camp.

## **Church Camp – Marilyn Whiteley**

About a month before I entered Grade 7, I spent a week at our denomination’s junior-high camp. The first year it was on the south shore of a lake, only ten or twelve miles from my home. After that—for the remaining two years of junior high and then for the next three years, when I was in high school—it moved to a more developed conference ground on the north side of the lake, just a few more miles away.



I have many happy memories of those six one-week camps. We began each day with Morning Watch. The second campground had a point of land that nosed out into the lake, and there we went each morning, sitting among the trees on grass sparkling with dew, to read the day’s devotion and to pray. During the rest of the day, we sang; we did crafts; and one year, when my mother was among the counsellors, in small groups we did choral reading. And of course we worshipped together.

One year we had a staff member who was especially trained in drama. I was thrilled to be chosen for the part of the innkeeper’s wife in the short drama “A Child Is Born,” written by Stephen Vincent Benét. That was probably the highlight of my six sessions of church camp.

Some years, the camp was enriched by the presence on the staff of a rabbi and a Black Baptist minister, both of them from a nearby city. In my small hometown, there were only three Jewish families and no “Negroes,” though I had seen African-Americans during our visits to cities. But at church camp, I learned from the testimony of these men of anti-Semitism and



of racial prejudice, and—perhaps more important—I got to know them as *people*, outstanding people, but people just like everyone else.

Camp could be challenging, too. One year I had an experience that raised questions in me. As usual, I was in a cabin with five or six other girls, some of whom I knew, some new to me. One of the new ones was Dody. There was something unusual about Dody: perhaps she had an extra toe on one foot. One night after lights out, Dody told us a story. She had attended a series of services on the Book of Revelation, and it had excited and inspired her. One evening, as she was walking home from the service, the sky became light, and bright, and colourful. And Dody heard God say, “Sing, Dody! Sing!” This raised a question in me. I was fully open to the possibility of personal religious experience. But I had also heard Dody sing, and I couldn’t help questioning either Dody’s experience or God’s musical taste!

Church camp was a time for developing friendships beyond people I knew in my own hometown, and I am still in contact from time to time with Gail, whom I knew only at camp. But more than that, my weeks at church camp gave me a chance to reflect on my faith and to grow in that faith, and I will always be grateful for that opportunity.



(I am at the centre in the photo of campers. Gail is second from the left, and second from the right is Helen, daughter of my minister; I am still in touch with Helen, too.)

## Summer Camps - Arlene Davies-Fuhr

Robert Louv, in his book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, devotes an entire chapter to summer camps. Louv notes, “Some of the most exciting findings show a link between contact with green space and developmental outcomes ... participants [in summer camps] continued to report beneficial outcomes long after their nature experience.” Indeed, many youngsters relish the chance to connect with nature, but also to escape parents, participate together in games, and make new friends.

My first programmed outdoorsy experience came when I was six, and my brother was two. We tagged along when mother found herself the camp nurse for a week at church camp on the Upper St. Lawrence.

The summer after Grade Five, I was immersed in a Baptist camp experience for one week. Who knew girls at this conservative camp were required to wear dresses all week, not just on Sunday? By Wednesday, craving variety, my friend and I exchanged clothing. In spite of problems, this camp had a pool with an aquamarine bottom which encouraged me to practice my crawl and breast stroke. As a city kid, I detested slippery moss, jutting rocks, and black eels. During chapel, my atheist buddy responded to an altar call. I knew I had to follow because I was the one who attended church and Sunday School regularly. Years later, this spontaneous decision saved me for the Evangelicals in my family who hounded me with, "Have you been saved? Have you given your life to Christ?" And I could legitimately answer, "Yes!"



A summer camp in the Quebec Laurentians, takes the prize for the strangest experience. Parents in my Grade Six class got wind of a rustic camp catering to poor inner-city French kids. So middle-class youths were signed up for a two-week, reasonably-price, French immersion experience. My young sibling also endured the bizarre adventure which provided my parents two weeks of kid-free bliss.

At the dilapidated facility, raisins were liberally sprinkled on everything, including macaroni. Given the lack of hygiene, a rumour circulated amongst *les Anglais* that they weren't raisins but rather dried, dead flies. Raisins morphed into a swear word among us.

We slept on hay-filled mattresses and stood in long lines to wash meal plates and utensils in tiny, slop-filled basins. For tuck, campers straggled into town to buy treats. Older campers plugged the jukebox and danced together. That summer, we came to see that French humour is radically different from English jokes. Swimming meant wading into a murky lake rampant with bloodsuckers.

The Saturday between the two weeks, my parents visited and I begged them to take me home. I wailed and demanded to be removed from the negative, nauseating environment. But no luck. My mother firmly stated, "You can't quit. You will look back on these two weeks and see how they built character." What the experience left me with was a deep distrust in my parents who certainly didn't have my interest at heart.

Throughout my youth, I attended numerous other camps including the CGIT one on Lake Memphremagog. As an adult, I was a counsellor at a CGIT Camp in Alberta, and a chaplain numerous times at a Mennonite facility in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. These were fun-filled weeks as I chatted with the campers, designed interactive activities, encouraged campers to memorize Psalm 23, and told stories around the evening campfire. It took me almost seventy years to discover that summer camp can actually be a positive, life-changing experience.

## **Summer Camp - Kent Hoeg**

The theme of this month's Herald is "What experience of summer camp has stayed with you?" Well, I actually only went to one summer camp that I can recall. I was likely in grade 2 or 3. I went with a friend. It was for a week and would include riding horses.

When I arrived a camp counsellor sat me down and asked some questions. The only question I remember besides my name was "what religion are you?" Now, I'm about 8 years old, and my parents have never taken me to church. They were not religious. So this caught me off guard - I had no idea what religions there were. Looking at the blank expression on my face the person said, "You know Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic,..." Bingo! My parents were from Denmark. That's in Europe. So I must be Roman Catholic! And that's the answer I went with.



When camp was over, I had to ask my parents what religion we were. They said Lutheran. I wondered if God would punish me for saying I was Roman Catholic.

## **Summer Horse Camp – Jane McNamee**

My daughters are grown up and gone, but I will never forget how the experience of summer horse camps with Mrs. Walker unfolded. Especially for daughter Sarah and her horse loving friends.

Never were things so well listed, organized, washed, counted, sorted and packed as they were for horse camp. All done by Sarah herself. Tents and sleeping bags were requisitioned for friends, boot polish renewed, jodhpurs borrowed or lent or mended, brushes for horse manes and tails purloined, cameras fitted with film, mosquito nets ...

For tents a last minute thought, mosquito spray last minute too. Well, all that was sorted and packed before we drove Sarah and her friends to horse camp in a car that seemed to be sagging under all that luggage.

Then we watched as our car was unloaded, a quick goodbye was said before they dashed off to feed the horses. We were invited to a gymkhana during the week, and we said goodbye till next weekend. That was our experience of horse camp! For several years in a row, till they grew out of it!



## **What is Summer Camp anyway? - Toni Wagner**

I am probably the least likely person to be asked to provide comments on my camping experiences because I have never been to a summer camp. Still, I will not give up the opportunity to provide comments about something I feel very strongly about. In my case, some seventy years ago, my only summer experience, other than work, was to go to Daily Vacation Bible School, or DVBS as we liked to call it. It was sponsored by my local church and my only recollection of that time was to recreate bible verses using commercially available letters, made from pasta (like alphabet soup). Fortunately, my late wife did have summer camp experience at a church camp outside Winnipeg.

Just because I did not have summer camp experience was no reason to deprive my children and my grandchildren of such a beautiful life experience. It is also a good reason to seek testimonials from those that have been to a summer camp. Two such testimonials follow:

1) "Each year camps are excited to provide a space for small groups to form communities for a short while. Camps are a place where kids can develop meaningful and long-lasting friendships and learn new skills. A goal is to have each camper grow self confidence through engaging summer activities in a natural setting. No matter your background, beliefs, or experience with summer camp, having an opportunity to experience a week away from home immersed in a new environment - that is safe and supportive - yet challenging, is very worthwhile."



2) "Looking back at my experience at camp, I was always excited to meet my cabin mates and all the other people at camp. It was a lot of fun getting to know them through playing camp-wide games, participating in fun activities/electives,





games, swimming and of course vespers and campfire skits and sing-alongs. Camps even made eating in the lodge a fun activity because I never knew what might happen at the next meal (entire tables having to run around the flagpole for someone having their elbows on the table while eating). Freedom from the usual responsibilities of home and counsellors who cared about inclusion made me feel like camp was a comfortable and safe place to just be me”.

(Beyond these testimonials, I note that my oldest daughter met her husband-to-be at a summer camp.)

Camps can come in many forms, for art, sports, socializing, religious, etc. and are sponsored by many different organizations such as Community Groups, Service Groups, Schools, University, Churches, etc,. Finance, in most cases, need not be an obstacle because many organizations will provide subsidies for kids going to their camp. Where there is a will, there is a way! I have commented many times that it is better for a parent to be waiting for their child outside an arena rather than outside the police station.



## **Experiences from Pioneer Camp, Port Sydney, On. - Sharon Chapman**



My father’s old smelly Air Force duffle bag, packed beyond its reasonable capacity, was in tow. Sleeping bag, pillow, extra blanket, towel, too many clothes, yet not enough, and dreams and fears of what the next two weeks would bring, all bundled into that ‘not yet experience’ that would change my life.

July, 1961....eleven years old. Arriving by train with a car-load of other anxious, excited kids, all eager to begin our two weeks of summer camp. Old canvas-covered wooden platforms with five metal cots covered with thin mattress-like pads for comfort and wooden orange crates for our few precious ‘valuables’. That was my new home for the next 14 days and nights.

This was the beginning of a journey lasting into my adulthood. I learned skills in canoeing, swimming, outdoor living, sailing, crafts, archery and so many others. Music became a part of my everyday world as did Bible study, prayer, sharing and deep friendships that have lasted a lifetime.

And now fast forward to May of 2023. 6'2, hair almost to his waist, confidence pouring from every ounce of his body and a grin and a welcome that warmed my heart. Not I, but my 19 year old grandson, taking a 'gap year' fully engaged as a full time staff person at the same camp I came to with my old duffle bag in tow.....

Proud of his role in a year long leadership training and outdoor ed program. Confident in his ownership of his 'camp home' and full and bubbling over with stories and history and friendships that will last him a lifetime.



And the story goes on as summer camps all over North America and beyond offer an amazing experience totally unique and life changing. I am eternally grateful for the opportunities and the experiences gained in those many summers at camp.

## **New Forms of Summer Ministry for Children – Jen Auger, Norval United Church**

*[Editor's note: I asked our daughter Jen, Minister for Youth and Young Families at Norval United in Georgetown, to share some of her experience with new forms of "summer camp" for children.]*



The air smells hot and sweet, children's joyful yelps reverberate from every corner, your fingers have glue on them and you have had a church-y earworm stuck in your mind for at least 48 hours. It must be the season for Summer Ministry!

Many people have memories of camp from their childhoods. Hot buggy summer days in the woods maybe. Or busy chaotic mornings at the local VBS program. These camp programs built community for kids: gave them opportunities to discover who they were; inspired them to connect with people they may not have met otherwise; challenged them to explore and grow in new ways.

I know many of these old camp practices have been on the decline in the last decades. We could list all of the many reasons why this might be; but the truth is, things evolve and change, and the systems and programs that may have been effective for previous families no

longer work for as many. That doesn't mean that the benefits of summer ministry are no longer valued by families though - it just means the old ways we packaged those benefits are not fitting anymore.

For many years, I saw my ministry with children and youth as a 10 months of the year kind of affair. Families were away in summer after all. Then I was introduced in a new way to the uniqueness of Summer Ministry. And it is just that: unique! Yes, families' routines change in the summer. And yes, the old VBS format was energy intensive and only still works in a handful of communities. But there are other innovative ways to harness the beauty and benefit of what we as adults may fondly remember of camp. And sometimes summer is the only time we may have the opportunity to think enough outside of the box to really make an impact.

Norval United Church has been running a full day camp program for the last 10 years. Born out of what was once a thriving VBS program, the full day camp has evolved into a much wider community program. Instead of relying on aging volunteers, we take the opportunity to offer leadership and employment training to youth in the community. And while it started with mostly children and youth from the congregation taking part, over the years it has evolved and grown so that today most of our camp participants are from the wider community. Together they build their own church community, with campers returning year after year, and then growing up themselves to become leaders within the program. They create safe sacred space to explore, to grow, to be themselves, to play exuberantly, and to connect with others that maybe they would not meet outside of camp. Maybe it is not as intense of an experience as a week out in a cabin away from home would be, but it still hits the value added points: kids can be authentically themselves, can explore and grow, and can be seen as the valuable individuals that they are within a community system.

And there are other incredible summer ministry ideas out there! Some communities do a weekly intergenerational program for their neighbourhood, others do family meals or weekly backyard campfires. Some do programs out in their local parks or green space, others grow community gardens and help feed their wider community. Yes, it is true that the routine ministry for children, youth and families is a 10-month affair. But that just means that for the other 2 months of the year, the constraints are off and ministry can be as creative, exuberant, and life-giving as people have the imagination to come up with!



## **My Journey To Christianity – Holly Hue**

I grew up in China and had no idea about church and Christianity. I would recognize the image of a church building because of some movies . In the 80's China was just about to open after years isolation from the world. My fiancé's mother was a visiting scholar in the United States. She wrote letters to us often and we were lucky to know a little bit of life in North America. In her letters she would use English words especially if they referred to her friends' names. One day I came across my fiancé's unfinished reply letter, which read, "Mom, you mentioned a lot about "Christmas" in your last letter. Do you have a new friend called Mr Christmas? I did not hear about this friend before." I laughed and told him Christmas was the time for family gatherings and when every house was decorated beautifully with Christmas tree and the colourful lights. This was how little Christian background we had in China back then.

When I was anxiously preparing my journey abroad 30 years ago, a friend of mine told me church is the place where I should go if I need help. This was the first time I knew I could enter a church.

After arriving in Brussels and looking for a place to stay, I kept my friend's advice in mind and entered, for the first time in my life, a church, located on the bus route to my school. Indeed, I got help from a stranger in the church and found a room near my school that day.

As years went by I landed as an immigrant in Toronto. I joined the ESL class group and then Bible study group in the nearby church. Since then I have received care and support from friends in the church, but I was still lost from time to time because the most difficult thing is to believe in God. The harder I tried, the more confused I was.

When I moved to downtown Guelph I knocked at the door of Dublin Street United Church. Guess who opened the door for me? It was John Lawson who welcomed me warmly and I started attending the Sunday service there. I was so attracted to John's sermons which were so clear, vivid with sincere reflection about the Lord's words. I began to understand the spirit, the wisdom in the Bible. Finally I stopped asking myself "where is God" even though I still did not know the answer.

Later I met Ellise Oliver who introduced me to the Sunday service at Harcourt United Church and then to our choir group. I was guided by all the hymns Alison played all those years and inspired by those wonderful people I met in our church. Though I still did not see God Himself I saw how he guided those who believed him and love to follow the same path as theirs.



On the journey to Christianity I was so blessed because God sent guardian angels one after another to be by my side. I don't know where my journey leads ... but I'll keep on walking til I get me home.

**Discovery Day – Taste and See – Andre Auger**  
for the Spiritual Life Committee



*(“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in God.” Psalm 34:8)*

The pandemic interrupted Harcourt’s tradition of a “Congregational Retreat” at Loyola House, just north of Guelph. Some of us have great memories of these gatherings. They weren’t especially friendly to young families, though. So, why don’t we take a page out of Harcourt’s own past and recreate some kind of “family camp,” at least for one day? We found the ideal spot! Crieff Hills Retreat Centre! Acres and acres of countryside full of trails and interesting landmarks; wholesome and tasty meals; a comfortable meeting space to accommodate a range of activities. And a fire pit around which to gather once the day is done for Smores and singing and story-telling.




We called it “Discovery Day” because we intend to explore – arts and crafts, some spiritual practices, some skill-testing games – and to learn a bit more about each other. We’re designing it to accommodate a range of interests and physical abilities. We’ll have activities for everyone, some for children only, allowing their parents a bit of “away time”!



So, mark your calendar: it’s **Saturday, Sept 23, from 10:30 to around 7:00, rain or shine.** We’re still figuring out cost, but it should not exceed \$100 per family, meals and coffee included.



SEPTEMBER		SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
 <b>Harcourt Discovery Day</b> <b>Saturday 23!</b>  <i>Is it already in your Calendar??</i>          							1	2
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		10	11	12	13	14	15	16
		17	18	19	20	21	22	23
		24	25	26	27	28	29	30

## Volunteers needed to help maintain the Harcourt grounds – Sarah Lowe

Do you enjoy the beautiful Harcourt grounds and would you like to help maintain them? If so, the Gardening Team needs your help!

- Have you noticed any weeds emerging and long to dig them up? Or spotted unruly plants growing too vigorously?
- Do you like trimming bushes and flower beds to make things look neat and tidy?
- Are you willing to give up an hour or so in your own garden to help at Harcourt?
- Or are you new to gardening and willing to learn?

Some tasks we need help with:

Dig up weeds and pile them into garden bags, for disposal: including the dreaded garlic mustard beside the compost bins.

Trim dead branches and twigs off the trees and shrubs, and add them to the brush pile

Cut off the spent flowers in flower beds and trim back any unruly perennials: put them in the “feed me” compost bin (no weeds please!).

Cut edges to the flower beds to keep the grass away

Climb a ladder (safely!) to trim out of reach vines and branches

Use the hose to water plants during the dry weeks of summer (a nice cool job)

Shovel wood chips into a wheelbarrow and spread as mulch round the bushes.

Have fun with others outdoors in our lovely summer weather!

If you are interested in helping, please get in touch with Sarah Lowe at 519-824-7206, or [sarah.lowe@sympatico.ca](mailto:sarah.lowe@sympatico.ca)

***We will have several gardening sessions during June, or just come to our annual “Weed and Wine” session on 20 June from 6 to 8 pm (refreshments from 8-9 pm).***



## News from the Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship – Jean Hume



At their May meeting, the Caroline Harcourt Women were challenged by their speaker, Marilyn Whiteley, to write their stories. Marilyn gave suggestions on how to get started as it is not as overwhelming a job if you attack the project piece by piece, one subject at a time. She distributed a sheet with helpful ideas to get started. Her message was very encouraging. Take a thought, an event, a look at a picture or an heirloom and "just write".

The quilters sent a thank you for the donation of \$80.00 that would be used to defray the cost of the batting used in each quilt. The quilts being constructed from donated materials are now going to Residential School Survivors and hopefully to the refugee Afghan family that our church has committed to help support on its arrival.

Take note that the next Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship meeting will be held on **June 12 at 2:00pm in the Friendship Room**. It will be a special Spring dessert party. Our minister, Kate Ballagh-Steeper will be our guest. She will be sharing stories and details of her collection of stoles. All women are welcome and encouraged to bring a friend.

### Shirzai Family Update - Peter Gill

No doubt you'll remember that last year Harcourt and Trinity churches agreed to sponsor the Shirzai family from Kabul, Afghanistan. The family fled their home and have been living in neighbouring Tajikistan for almost two years. Both churches agreed to put up \$25,000 and we subsequently received a generous donation of \$5,000 from a private donor in Montreal.

So I wish I could tell you that the family is on the way but we continue to wait for the Canadian government to conduct interviews and background checks. We are reasonably confident that the family will arrive sometime in 2023 but we have no idea when.

The family consists of a wife and husband, a son who's 26, two daughters, 22 and 21 and two teenage sons. Because the older son and daughter, whose name is Malila are over 21, their applications were separate from the rest of the family. About a month ago we received word that Malila's application had been cancelled with no explanation. This would have been disastrous as the family would never leave her alone in Tajikistan. This week we heard that her

application had been retrieved and was in fact completed along with the rest of the family. As you can imagine, our relief on hearing this news was off the charts!

So we continue to pray for their safety as they wait word from our government. I hope I can give wonderful news by the time of the next Harcourt Herald.

## **An Interview with (Reverend) Edna Miller - Judi Morris**

I had a lovely visit with Edna in her home at the Arboretum, where she served me tea and a delicious piece of cake. I detected orange and pumpkin spice in it. To my surprise I learned she made it with tomato soup!

Judi: Edna, I first met you and Ian at the 9:00 a.m. service. I, of course, was captivated with Ian's name - similar to Canada's famous show jumper – Ian Millar, known as Captain Canada in the horse world. He assured me there was no relation and no horses in his life. What brought you both to Guelph and to Harcourt?

Edna: Retirement. We were looking for some place and didn't know where. There were two or three things on our list. For certain we didn't want a split level and wanted something on a green space – possibly the Arboretum or a conservation area.

We were browsing around Guelph. It is an intriguing city. We stopped at the Evergreen, then someone asked, "Have you seen the Arboretum?" There was a place coming on the market. We came back the next week. The owner didn't want to rush, so we put in an offer for a purchase in six months. We lived in the north end of Toronto. It took an hour to get around in Toronto - living an hour away made little difference.

Judi: We have you in Guelph now ... so what brought you to Harcourt?

Edna: Exploring churches - the 1<sup>st</sup> service we attended was with Jim Ball - a LBGTQ service. We liked to see that a church was progressive enough to address that in a creative way. Another big plus Harcourt didn't focus on or even have an organ. My hearing loss makes organ music an intolerable noise. We didn't look too much further.

Judi: What aspect/s have you enjoyed about Harcourt?



Edna: The emphasis on spiritual development, small discussion groups, spiritual retreats and Ignatian involvement and exercises. I participate in Women's Spirituality, Spiritual Listening, and Mindstretch with a little effort on behalf of Peace and Justice issues thrown in.

Judi: Edna, I always found your spiritual side soul stirring, and your biblical knowledge impressive. Only recently have I learned you were a Diaconal Minister. That explained it all.

In researching diaconal ministers, I read they become disheartened and deeply frustrated at the constant request to explain themselves ... and here is me, asking you to explain it to us and why we are we not familiar with the position as we should be?

Edna: Primarily it's about a different approach to ministry. Diaconals are called to a ministry of Pastoral Care, Christian Education and Social Justice. Diaconals focus on methodology, mutual caring, and sharing is as important as content. Preaching and Sacraments are not part of our commission, although we can do so if the congregation we serve requests it. We are commissioned, not ordained.

Diaconal is ministry of the laity. It is working alongside the people, helping the laity - recognizing their skills and abilities and to find avenues to utilize them. Diaconals are not focused on preaching and telling. Their emphasis is opening the doors to shared learning and questing, exploring the questions before the answers as we journey together through God's world.

This is a totally different concept to many people who tend to think ministry is all about preaching. So when congregations look for a new minister they look first for preaching skills. They never stop to consider the possibility of hiring a diaconal person. As a result, many of my diaconal cohorts went back to college and became ordained. Although MRE (Master of Religious Education) was one year shorter than the MDiv (Master of Divinity) going back demands two more years. I laugh that that is a little backwards since Diaconal is about expanding what ministry is, not shortening it. For me it has become a kind of bridge between the perceived ministry as preachers and the engaged ministry of the laity.

Judi: So ... when I learn this, I think of Harcourt which had two ministers for a very long time until now. I wonder if we would have done well to have one of each. It might have strengthened us in many ways. Instead, we always searched for another minister with an interest in Christian education.

Edna: (She nods and quietly responds) It might have. I did preach at times and really enjoyed creating more contemporary services.

Judi: What was your occupation prior to this?

Edna: Kindergarten teacher for seven to eight years. I raised a family, took Family life education, leading groups on family life for several years. When we moved to Toronto, Emanuel was just down the subway. I decided to go back to college and take the training at Emanuel. It was a toss-up to go to Emanuel or Centre for Christian studies, where most Diaconals get their training. Since I already had quite a bit of training in Group Dynamics, a major focus at The Centre for Christian Studies, I went to Emanuel for the more theological studies to get Master of Religious Education. I did go back and take courses with the Centre for Christian Studies to establish a relationship with that community.

Judi: So where did that take you?

Edna: I worked in Toronto – but then my hearing was shot. I realized I wasn't hearing those all-important confidential whispers and dropped voices. It became too stressful for me and I assumed those trying to communicate with me, so I went back to my home church and applied my training and skills in a volunteer capacity, trying to live what I had been trying to teach. Lay ministry is as important, maybe more important than professional ministry.

Judi: What age did your hearing go?

Edna: That is hard to answer. I was aware of imbalanced hearing in my 20's but didn't act on it until my late 40's when I realized that I couldn't hear my secretary whispering me messages. Testing at that point discovered a growth, an acoustic neuroma in my left ear. Removal of that killed the auditory nerve in that ear. Coincidentally, the hearing in the right ear started to decline rapidly and within 15 years I had a cochlear implant. It was cutting edge technology in 2000 but now it is more like a model T.

Judi: Can you have a new one put in?

Edna: I can't have another one. I can't even have an MRI for fear of destroying what I have.

Judi: Where did you serve?

Edna: Wilmar Heights United – before I was commissioned. Bloordale United, a church in the round with the communion table is in the middle of the sanctuary and the congregation all around. I retired from there feeling I wasn't serving them well because of my hearing. They would have kept me on.

Judi: What have been the most important issues to you during your career?

Edna: It has changed over the years. I suppose now it would be inclusivity ... that would be from the stress of my hearing loss. How do we incorporate people with handicaps of various kinds? Different things that make people feel excluded or included. How do you incorporate children within the life and community of the church, how to include handicaps so they are able to contribute and feel valued so that they want to share their abilities, talents, and their knowledge? So many people feel handicapped in so many different ways, not all physical. I felt handicapped as the minister's daughter. That put me "outside". Kids swearing would say, "shut up. Here comes the minister's daughter". I felt I couldn't be "me" until I left the community. Then I discovered that my friends too felt excluded, just for different reasons. So, what does it mean to be handicapped? How do we deal with it both personally and as community?

Judi: Is there anything that particularly took you in the direction of Diaconal?

Edna: Well...my Father, Grandparents, Great Grandfather, all were in ministry. Coming from a family of three girls, I sometimes felt I was supposed to have been a boy and gone into the ministry. I know my parents didn't have a name for a girl when I was born. But girls in ministry just wasn't a consideration. All my school years I planned to train as a nurse and then go into mission work. The sudden death of a friend from a ruptured appendix poisoned that idea and I went into teaching instead. It wasn't until we moved to Toronto that I felt called to ministry. At that point it seemed as though all the stars were aligned and it was what I was called to do. I didn't want to go into the ordained and be a "reverend" preacher though, so I entered the diaconal stream. It really wasn't pressure though ... Church and faith has always been important. It was more like a calling. There's a reason why I'm here.

Judi: Were you in United Church the whole time?

Edna: Yes.

Judi: In my youth, sin seemed to be a big thing to be concerned about. How did you feel about sin as a young child? Did fear of sin drive you or affect you?

Edna: Never really got that emphasis on sin. My dad was a progressive thinker. Looking back I remember discussions about good and evil, but not so much on sin. My memories are carried more by the songs and music, Jesus Loves Me, For the Beauty of the Earth, This is My Father's World, God Sees the Little Sparrows Fall.

Judi: What was Ian's occupation?

Edna: He was a chartered accountant and into computers. He worked for IBM, so he never knew whether he was a finance man was always writ large at home and at church working with computers, or a computer man doing finance. In either case financially managed stewardship.

Judi: Where did you meet him?

Edna: At young people's camp. The first time, a thanksgiving young people's weekend. I can remember him, although we didn't connect then. He had taped music that we danced to and listened to a reading of "I was a teen age werewolf." Later I was at a young people union and he was treasurer for the camp.

Judi: How many children do you have and what cities do they live in? Three children: - eldest daughter is church Admin for Cummer Avenue United Church; she lives in Thornhill ... our son lives in Burlington with his family of 6 after five years in Puerto Ricco. My youngest son lives with his family of 5 in Richmond Hill.

Judi: Any in your footsteps?

Edna: In many ways Heather's expanded role as Church Administrator does. Although many tell her she should be in ministry she refuses to consider taking the formal step. I do have a nephew and niece in ministry in the States.

Judi: Can you share with us any spiritual practices that you practice?

Edna: Intentional awareness of a presence of the God's presence and blessings of the beginning and end of the day. My understanding of God allows me to feel that presence of God around me and my part in the wholeness of creation. If I do physical exercises I like to lay outstretched on the ground aware of the ground, part of the earth and all that is, breathing in life and vitality, the breath of God.

Sometimes physical things help. I love to wrap in a prayer shawl aware of all it represents. Sometimes I clasp a warped cross that fits into the grasp of my hand. A friend gave me that when Ian was so sick. It meant a lot to me so I passed it on to a dying friend. She made sure it was on the table at her funeral and then it was returned to me. Simple but so meaningful. I pick that up occasionally while I lay flat, outstretched on the ground, sinking into the earth and be part of the earth and all there is, breathing life and vitality at the same time, planted in creation, and breath in God's breath of life.



Judi: Edna what should people know about you ... your interests ... as a child ... what was important to you?

Edna: I didn't have a lot. I played ball, pretended I was a figure skater. Getting a bicycle when I was 12 was important. I saved my money. My Parents didn't want me riding around Montreal.

Cottage life was very important. That was the only time we were together as a family. The month of the summer holiday at the cottage was family time where we did things together. One set of grandparents was in Alberta, the other in Nova Scotia. One year we would drive to Alberta the next to Nova Scotia, then rent a cottage and the circle would repeat. My Dad went to war as a chaplain shortly after I was born, so I spent the first years of my life with my grandparents in Alberta – education was difficult in Alberta, so the last months of the war we lived with my other grandparents in Nova Scotia. That meant a trip on a ship across the Great Lakes. The horn would blast. I believe it affected my hearing.

After the war we lived in the eastern townships of Quebec. Maybe that's why space is important. Many years spent on grandparent's farm ... the Coaticook manse was on a large corner lot with huge maple trees, but in Montreal it was an upper flat with a family below ... I missed space. I hated it. Maybe that is why space in and around my home in Guelph became important.

Judi: How did people address you?

Edna: Edna. That's how I wanted it. Otherwise, I could/would have been referred to as reverend. I did not need or want that.

*Judi: I included Reverend in the heading because that is her rightful addressing. We all know to call her "Edna," because that's what she prefers.*

*I found Edna to be most effective with her Diaconal training. In short order she had me telling her about parts of my life. She is very easy to talk with and you feel comfortable to open up. She should work for the police ... she would be most helpful to them get information.*

*I overstayed my visit and we agreed to end with Tickle and a cart ride, which we did on the first warm day of the year. I learned more about Edna than I had realized and more about Diaconals, which leaves me with a question to all. Why do we not use them more?*

## Harcourt's Family Camp - Marilyn Whiteley

In June of 1977, during John Buttar's first year of ministry at Harcourt, Harcourt held its first family camp. The Buttar family joined many others who brought tents and trailers of various shapes and sizes to the Elora Gorge Conservation Area southwest of the village of Elora. Campers enjoyed conversation and worship and play together.

On Saturday evening there was a giant frisbee game. Many frisbees sailed back and forth across the playing field, with players young and old catching them and tossing them back. There were oohs and aahs and peals of laughter as other campers lounged in lawn chairs along the edge of the field and watched the colourful spectacle, enjoying the evening sunshine. By the end of the weekend, the campers felt a strong bond of fellowship and recognized that this was an activity that should be continued.

The next year, the camp was held at Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre in Puslich, south of Guelph. By this time, yellow Harcourt Family Camp T-shirts were available to those who wished to buy them; they made gatherings around the campfire very colourful! (John Buttar was always easy to spot in his red cap with white polka dots.)



In later years, the camp was moved to the United Church's Camp Ganadoweh near Ayr. At that camp there was a pond with water lilies and aluminum canoes, and at the pond, campers found a surprising neighbour: a large snapping turtle!



At all these camps, Harcourt families shared food and fun and reflections, and each year the campers felt that their experience had contributed to the growth of community at Harcourt.



In 1986, there was no family camp because not enough people signed up. In the 1990s, however, the activity was reborn, and again for a few years there were family camps, this time at The Villa, at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre on the north edge of Guelph.



Wherever they were held, family camps strengthened the feelings of connection among the campers and strengthened the Harcourt community.





I do try to adhere to the suggested themes for these monthly articles, as often as I can. This month's, though, had me a bit stumped ... and the fact that I am writing this on the day of the deadline has convinced me that I have nothing of value to say on the topic of summer camp!

It's not that I didn't go to summer camp. I was a member of Messengers, Explorers, and CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training), all facilitated by the United Church. And I remember going to camp with at least one of those groups, on more than one occasion. But I have very few memories of those experiences. I was painfully shy growing up, and I found the camp experience to be very intimidating. I think the best times I had while at camp were during quiet time, when I could sit on my bunk and write in my journal.

While no longer shy, I still derive great benefit from journalling, from looking within. And so that leads me to talk about a camp-like experience I had several years ago, when I visited Liberty Lanes, a retreat centre run by Mena Canonico, who works with a team of therapy horses to help clients transform fear, self-doubt, and unresolved trauma so that they can align with their soul's calling.

At the time, I was struggling with feelings of shame and self-loathing, the aftermath of the abusive relationship that I have talked about before. But I knew, somehow, that I was meant to go there. I was meant to spend some time with those horses.

The centre was located in Caledon, and even the drive up there, on a beautiful Saturday morning, filled my heart with joy and my soul with hope. Following is the testimonial I wrote after my experience, which I hope speaks for itself:

*I really didn't know what to expect when I booked my Discovery session with Mena and her team of horses. All I knew was that I was drawn to the horses, after having met Mena several months ago, and hearing her story about how those horses came to be with her. I was deeply touched by the story she told me, about one of her rescues. "I have to meet that horse," I told her over the phone.*

*The session was everything I could have hoped for, and more. I went there knowing that there was something holding me back from living the life of my dreams, but I just couldn't figure out what that "something" was.*

*Until the horses got involved. It was apparent that they had messages for me ... and Mena's ability to tune in to those messages and articulate them was absolutely amazing. I also*



*appreciated, more than I can articulate, the safe space that Mena created ... a space that allowed me to be open, and to receive the incredible, life-changing gift of clarity and freedom. And perhaps the most amazing thing of all ... the horse with whom I connected the most, and the one who got me to the point of breakthrough, was the same horse I had been so touched by, when I first spoke with Mena on the phone. And his name? Dream. How perfect is that?!*

During the week of May 14-19 this year, I organized a series of events in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Week, and in support of Recovery Speaking Initiative, a non-profit organization of which I am currently Chair of the Board. One of those events was a presentation on equine-assisted learning (EAL), and how it can support survivors of trauma. Mena was one of those presenters, as three other amazing individuals:

Lori Burns – EAL facilitator at Horse Ability, located in Corbeil, Ontario

Dr. Kristina Karvinen – a professor at Nipissing University, who is currently involved in an ongoing research project on the benefits of EAL

Anne Theriault – a sexual assault survivor, who has been helped by equine therapy

There is something about “horse people” that always draws me in. They always exude warmth, openness, and compassion. The presenters at the EAL presentation were no exception. While I was happy to see the results of the initial study, what struck me even more profoundly was Anne’s portion of the presentation. Knowing first-hand some of the feelings Anne had struggled with, I was deeply moved by her courage in sharing a profoundly personal experience, for the first in public.

One of the women in the audience was equally moved, as evidenced by her tearful account of her own childhood experiences. The tear-filled embrace between her and Anne moved me, also, to tears. There is joy and hope in connection, and in sharing our struggles.

***“Look inside yourself; everything that you want, you already are.” ~ Rumi***



The messages that were prevalent during the EAL presentation were life-giving to all in attendance. And I believe that any experiences that lead to a better sense of self, such as my session at Liberty Lane and my journal-writing times during summer camp, can only create a positive ripple effect in the world. For these experiences, I am eternally grateful.

