

SON-Life Echo

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH
CHRIST

MARCH/APRIL 2011

Get Ready To “Be Bold”

This summer is rapidly approaching us and we at SON-Life Camp are more than excited for what we have coming up this summer. We have picked “Be Bold” as our theme. “Be Bold” is based off 2 Timothy 1:7 which says “God doesn’t want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible” (MSG). We will be focusing on the fact that God wants us to “Be Bold” in our faith and to spread the message of his love, even if there are scary things that could stop us from sharing that love. He also wants us to “Be Bold” in the gifts and talents that he has given to us. Our FUSION lessons this summer will teach us how we can rely on God and that we are not alone in times of trouble and despair.

There are many times in our lives when we feel like we are alone, maybe a loved one died, or someone close to you is sick with cancer. God tells us that he is by our side all the time and that we shouldn’t fear, but should be bold in our love for him.

While not all of you who are reading this are able to come and be a part of this summer, we want to encourage you to think about

how you can “Be Bold” in your life and in your jobs, or with your



The theme this coming summer is “BE BOLD” which is based off 2 Timothy 1:7

group of friends. No matter how old you are, God has a plan for you and he wants you to know that he loves you and that he is always by your side.

That is the message we are going to spread this summer at camp. Will you join us in not being fearful, but being Bold because God loves us and we are not alone?

Please begin to pray for the kids who are already planning on coming to camp, as well as the ones who don’t even know they are able to come, but God is already opening doors for them to come. Pray for the staff that is

being hired to invest their summer to these kids. Finally, please pray for camp in general. There are needs everyday that happen at camp and without the love and support from people like you, it would be impossible. Thank you for your support of SON-Life Camp and the ministry happening everyday.

Upcoming Events:

April 19: Seat at a Table Dinner

May 14: Fishing Marathon

May 16-20: Retirees’ Week

June 11: Bass Tournament

June 18: SummerFest 2011

June 20: First day of Camp

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NEW! Family Camp

Are you looking for a fun week of camping with the whole family that includes the summer camp experience? Look no further than SON-Life Camp. This week will be full of many family activities that are great for all ages. SON-Life Camp staff will be running all activities as well as supervising the waterfront, so you parents

who want to take a nap instead of hanging out at the beach may do so. We will also have scheduled family time where you and your family can connect with each other in whatever way you choose. We will have family praise and worship times and then separate lessons for adults and children. This week will be a

great time to refresh your family’s relationship as well as faith.

For more information:

www.son-lifecamp.org

Or

call 269.792.2081

July 4-8

From Counselor to Youth Pastor

I remember walking into the SON-Life Camp retreat center for my first week long camp experience. I don't know how old I was exactly, but I do remember that I had three counselors in my cabin because we were in cabin 7. Like any new kid I totally didn't know what to think, feel, or even do really. We just stood there staring at each other without saying much as our counselors were greeting the other kids coming in and introducing themselves to the parents. What does stick out in my mind is how much my counselors smiled. Even though I had never meet them in my life, they seemed like people I could like and it helped that they were playing a Jars of Clay CD, one of my favorite bands...a gold star for each of them in my book.

The next thing I remember is sitting on my bunk nervously waiting for my turn to introduce myself. Being one of the last kids to go, we had found out that in our cabin there was three kids named Josh, myself being one of them! Dean, who went by the name of "Deano", said that we needed to come up with some nicknames to help keep the three of us straight and thus was born the name "Treehouse". The rest of the week went by like a blur and I loved every minute of it, especially the time spent at campfire and in Bible study.

The next two years I went on Outpost camp, and couldn't get enough of the "camp life"! I decided that the only way to stay involved was to be a Counselor In Training (CIT) the following summer. It was really cool because my first year on staff I helped lead a cabin with a senior counselor, Chewy, who was one of my counselors the first year I went to camp! We spent a lot of time that summer talking about camp ministry and why he loved working

with youth. That summer solidified my passion for sharing Jesus with others in a camp setting. The next four years I served at SON-Life and loved my job. I was a lifeguard for two years and the second year stepped up to waterfront director. I always helped in the kitchen, but only to make morning coffee because my cooking skills don't go far beyond making the punch to drink. I loved the time playing soccer in the big field and doing group-building activities along the lakeside trail.

All in all, I spent five years as a counselor there and discovered a lot about how I am a missionary for Jesus right here in West Michigan. While there was plenty of practical learning like how I handle responsibility, or lead Bible study, I really began to see how vitally important it is for me as the counselor to be serious in sharing the love of Jesus with each kid that threw their bag down on my cabin's floor. Today I serve as the youth pastor at Thornapple Community Church in Cascade, MI and I attribute much of my understanding about youth ministry to those early equipping years at SON-Life Camp. Everything from how to be a positive member of a team to sharing the burden of loving the kids who came from really rough places in life together and know that at the end of the week they were going right back to it.

Yes camp ministry is a total blast and it's fine for that to help draw kids in, but the sound of young hearts singing to Jesus around a campfire is unparalleled. Youth NEED loving adults who simply want to be with them and understand them. Don't we all really want this? To know and be known by Jesus? With the always-plugged-in lifestyle that our culture promotes today, our hearts can easily

be left in the dust and the desire to have honest relationships gets replaced by how many "friends" we can have on Facebook. Please pray for the counselors and staff working at SON-Life this summer, they are on a battlefield for souls and will encounter some really tough nights. I remember one night in particular. It was a Thursday night and like every other week we did "2-on-1"s. It's where the counselors sit outside and the kids could come out if they wanted to talk to us about anything. This one particular week had been very crucial to a few of the kids because anyone could see barriers that they had up on Monday when they came were down now. One of the guys, Alex, came out and just started weeping. We sat there with him for what felt like forever just releasing this very obvious weight on him. He hadn't talked much throughout the week and so we were not expecting this kind of vulnerability, but when he lifted his head you could see that he had never acknowledged those emotions before. He told us that his parents announced they were getting divorced the month before coming to camp and he's been bouncing between homes and angry parents. We prayed and cried some more together before he went back to bed. Alex and I kept contact for the remainder of the summer but when school started he moved with his mom out to California and we haven't talked since. I will never forget that night though...seeing how much his parent's divorce was ripping apart his life. That's not the final chapter though. Before Alex went back inside we read Romans 8:37-39 together. NOTHING can separate us from the love of God...that's where we stand strong. That made him smile.

-Josh Westhouse

Josh "Treehouse" Westhouse is a former summer staff member at SON-Life Camp & Retreat Center. He is currently the Youth Pastor at Thornapple Community Church in Cascade, MI

Wish List:

- Hobo pie cookers
- Split Rail Fence
- General sports equipment—basketballs, volleyballs, tether balls, kick balls, dodge ball balls
- Box Fans for cabins
- Painting supplies—brushes, roller pads, paint pans, blue tape



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SON-Life Camp and Retreat Center

Taking Time to Preserve Memories

Anyone who knows me well would say that I love to take pictures. Rarely do I go anywhere without a camera in tow. Capturing a memory with a camera is great, but taking the time to preserve those memories for generations to come is a precious treasure.

The SON-Life Scrapbooking Retreat offers women time away from the busyness of life to work on preserving their memories. The goal of the retreat is to give women the time and place to work on their scrapbooks.

Throughout the weekend many pages are created, pictures are cropped, stickers are used, and captions are written. Some women head to bed on time, some stay up late working on their albums, and some even pull all-nighters to get the most out of their weekend. This retreat provides the time many women need to continue preserving their family memories.

Besides time to scrapbook, there are many fantastic aspects of the SON-Life Scrapbooking Retreat. The retreat creates an opportunity to get away with other women

for hours of fun and laughter. There is a consultant in attendance with product on hand so no one ever has to worry about leaving campus for supplies. Without fail, the food is always delicious. If I were to be completely honest though, my favorite part of the weekend and the reason I continue to go year after year is because of the time spent sharing and creating memories. Laughter is ever-present as we remember days gone by, share funny things family members have said, show off our photographs, talk with one another, and take time to preserve memories for the future.

The SON-Life Scrapbooking Retreat provides time away from the busyness of life, a chance to preserve memories, laughter, delicious food, a consultant with product on hand, and the opportunity to create new memories. Maybe a better summary would be: a weekend you **do not** want to miss next fall.

-Kelly Hirdes



Kelly Hirdes hard at work during the Scrapbooking Retreat

A Seat at a Table

To purchase

A Seat at a Table

Please send this form in with your payment to

SON-Life Camp

Attn. Seat at a Table

189 126th Ave.

Wayland, MI 49348

Name: _____

Number of Seats purchased: _____

Total Enclosed: _____

This winter has brought a BIG change to our dining room at SON-Life Camp. In February we purchased new round tables and chairs to replace the picnic tables. Although we did like the “rustic” and traditional feel of those picnic tables we are thrilled with the new opportunities that having the round tables will offer.

As many of you know SON-Life Camp doesn’t work with all the fancy, high-tech gadgets and gizmos that some other ministries have. We really pride ourselves on being a smaller, more intimate, relational ministry. Now, don’t get us wrong, we love to have fun toys

too but we are really looking forward how we will be able to engage in deeper conversations not only through our camp activities but also around the dining room tables.

So now we would like to invite you to share in this experience. We will be hosting a dinner on **Tuesday, April 19th at 6:30 p.m.** for anyone who partners with us in buying a “seat at a table”. Each chair and 1/10 of a table cost \$25.00 so we are asking for people to purchase a seat for \$25.00 and join us for a meal together in the seat that you purchased. There will not be a program, love offering, or any other

gimmicks... we just want to serve you a delicious dinner to say “Thanks” for partnering with us as we continue to make improvements in the ways that we can build deeper relationships with people and challenge them to grow in their relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ.



Program Director’s Note



Greetings to you all once again. I hope this note finds you blessed and enjoying winter/spring. The past couple months have been busy around camp and I thought I would take some time to share what has been happening. For me personally these past couple months have been a time for planning and preparing. I have been preparing for this summer in many different ways. One of the ways has been by going around to different colleges and recruiting for summer staff positions. SON-Life Camp was present in 7 colleges this winter and because of that, we have a great staff lined up for this summer.

I have been planning for this summer since last summer ended.

I am very excited for what this summer is going to bring. The theme nights this year are going to be intense. For those of you who don’t know what Theme Nights are, every evening during 5-day resident camp, we have a theme for the night. This year our themes are going to be: Christmas Night, Carnival Night, Fiesta Night, and Groovy Night. We have already begun planning out how to make these evenings amazing and fun for everyone. Our theme this year is “Be Bold” and this makes me really excited. I am excited to see how God works in these kids to get them to overcome their fears in life.

Summer seems so far away with the snow still here but it is

coming soon. Begin to pray already for this summer and the lives that will be changed through our ministry here at SON-Life Camp.

- Paul Riemersma



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Winter Wonderland

Wow, I don't know about any of you but I feel like this winter has lasted a long time! The glimpses of sun that I have seen and soaked in through my office window sure have been a blessing to me. Giving me hope that Spring really will arrive this year as it always does.

Although I am not a big fan of winter I did have a few times that I enjoyed it. One time in particular stands out to me. As many of you know... my commute to work isn't real long, just a short distance up the driveway. Now, in the spring, summer, and fall I enjoy that walk that I make to and from the house to the office at least twice a day. In fact, when the weather turned cold I tried to convince myself that I should still keep on walking... winter really isn't that bad and the walk is good for me right?

Unfortunately that thought didn't work too well this winter but on a few occasions I did make my way - on foot - up to the office. On one of those rare occasions that I walked up to the office in the morning I was really kicking myself when it came time to head home for lunch. The idea of leaving the warm office and hiking in the freezing cold just

didn't appeal to me much but I had to go. The one thing that I was thankful for was that the sun was shining and the sky was bright blue. So, I bundled up and headed out.

As I was walking along the drive my eye was drawn to the pure, white, sparkling, beautiful snow. It was at that moment my mind went immediately to the old hymn "Whiter Than Snow" and the verse in Psalm 51:7 where it is said "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow." Oh my word, the thought of how I mess up, take things for granted and just don't always appreciate what God has blessed me with, hit me like a ton of bricks! And yet it was more than that, that in spite of how I see how I mess up and sin God looks at me and because of his loving, graciousness he sees me as pure and beautiful as the snow. Not that I am deserving of anything like that but just because he loves me.

So that afternoon I chose to walk back to the office out in the cold but had a much more joyful spirit about it. Thankful that I am able to serve in a

ministry where I can continue to share the love of Christ with all who come to this place.

I pray that the Lord continues to bless you and your family as he continues to bless us here at SON-Life Camp. May you too feel His love as you look at the snow and remember that as we serve, forgive and be forgiven, love and be loved, we can be Whiter Than Snow.

~ Hope

