Camp Lakewood has now completed another awesome summer, and without the staff and counselors, Camp Lakewood could not operate and thrive. The counselors were an amazing group once again. We had return counselors - “Vader” included, and this year, a former counselor is now the summer camp director – Jill "KC" Sells.

The staff came from all corners of the earth to join the honored ranks of Camp Lakewood’s finest. Many nationalities were represented, including United Kingdom; South Africa; Australia; New Zealand, France, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Northern Ireland, as well as counselors from right here in the good ole’ USA! Their dedication to the campers was evident every day - alumni should be proud of the newest generation of counselors to take their honored place as Camp Lakewood counselors.

Summer is well under way, and we had a fantastic time here at YMCA Camp Lakewood. Everywhere you went at camp you could hear the sounds of happy campers. After a record breaking spring season for our OE department, Camp Lakewood rolled into one of the best staff training sessions anyone had seen in years. Our new Summer Camp Director, Jill "KC" Sells did an outstanding job of recruiting staff from across the country and around the world, and they came together to form an incredible team. Family reviews are better than ever and you could see the staff’s hard work pay off every day in the campers’ smiles. Congratulations to KC and her team for a job well done!

2013 saw some true successes here at Camp Lakewood. Our Leaders in Training and Counselors in Training programs were all sold out, and we were very excited to see the staff of tomorrow hard at work today. Our new teen programs were also a huge success. High Adventure, Jr. Sportsman, and Digital Animation were all popular, and I expect each program to grow rapidly in the coming summers. Both our Rangers program and our Trekkers programs were very popular as well, and it was great to see our campers taking the adventure beyond camp’s borders. Meanwhile back at camp, everyone was thrilled to be adventuring in Mud Cave again!

As the summer of 2013 winds itself down, we want to thank everyone for another amazing season. We’ve had endless laughs, miles of smiles, and enough new cheers to keep everyone humming for the year to come. And as we look forward to next year and all of the challenges it holds, we know we can all face it with a little more courage. We know we can make the effort, because win or lose, we know our camp family will want to hear the story next summer. You are a part of the camp family too, and we’ll be here next summer, and every summer, waiting for you “around the campfire”.

Matt “Mufasa” Garcia
Director, Camp Lakewood

Don’t forget about Winter Camp for children ages 7-16 from Dec. 27-30, with awesome camp activities; www.camplakewood.org/wintercamp to register.
From the East Coast to the West Coast and many points in between, alumni returned “home” on May 17th to a special place nestled in the Ozarks called Camp Lakewood. The young and young-at-heart who attended represented the past five decades of Lakewood Staff.

Preparations for this weekend began nearly a year ago with the Alumni Committee meeting several times down at camp, with two focal points identified: East Camp and the Pannebecker Campfire/Waterfront area.

After breakfast on Saturday morning and a group photo, we divided into teams and went to work. With drills and saws in hand, all of the 98 bench tops were removed at the Campfire area and stain was applied to the supports. New wood was cut and screwed in place. The concrete walkway was power-washed and new wood chips were disbursed around the area. Tabletops at the waterfront were in serious need of replacement. The old “graffiti covered” tops were removed and affixed to the waterfront supports to allow returning campers and staff to find their names and remember the previous summers. The old Pannebecker bench tops were used for the new waterfront tabletops, as well as for the construction of a wood box to protect campfire wood from the elements.

The crew over in East Camp began the day on leaf patrol. Blowers and rakes moved the leaves, the outdoor basketball court got a face lift, the backboard was repainted, and the court was power-washed and striped. The support poles for the sand volleyball court were sagging and thereby removed, holes were dug and the poles reset in concrete, new sand was brought in and spread out over the area, and the many concrete steps leading from the dam to East Camp received a new safety strip of yellow paint for visibility at night.

The weekend wasn’t all about the work projects. Seeing people that you worked with so many years ago and catching up on each others lives was present throughout the weekend. Telling old camp stories around the campfire at night and singing those favorite camp songs allowed us to relax and enjoy those moments together. The launching of the Chinese Sky Lanterns from the dam on Saturday night reminded us that we may have left Camp Lakewood but our light still shines bright. The collective effort of alumni, current camp staff, maintenance crew and above all the support from the YMCA administration resulted in a productive and successful work weekend preparing camp to welcome the 2013 campers.

-Marty Pliske
UPCOMING EVENTS

August 30 - September 2, 2013
YMCA CAMP LAKEWOOD FAMILY CAMP
Have you ever wondered what it would be like to experience camp as a family? Well this is your chance. Pack up the family and get ready for a new adventure! Stay with us at YMCA Camp Lakewood this Labor Day weekend and spend quality time together as family. Eat together, play together and grow together over this exciting three-day program. You'll have an opportunity to swim, participate in a tower climb, take a horseback ride, get crafty, play games or just relax! Don’t worry about the food, activities or the planning - we’ll do it all for you! Contact us at 1-888-FUN-YMCA ext. 114 (Judy Gillam). You can also check us out online at www.ymcaoftheozarks.org

Fall/Winter 2013
TROUT LODGE FAMILY ADVENTURES
Summer is great for all of the water activities, however Fall and Winter also hold a special place for guests and staff alike - and is a very busy time. There is Thanksgiving Weekend (complete with turkey at every table), and Pioneer Christmas (Pioneer Village comes alive with tours, crafts, Dutch oven cooking, story-telling, ornament-making, popcorn garlands, games and more). There will be our ever-popular Halloween (with haunted hayrides and trick-or-treating - the staff really outdoes itself with this event), and much more. And with the arrival of fall comes the gorgeous fall foliage. Those of you who have been here during that time of year will attest to the artist’s palette of colors that glisten from across the lake as the sun hits the trees just right. Why not make plans to visit Trout Lodge during one of these special activity times - we’d sure love to have you. For more information, you can go online at www.ymcaoftheozarks.org or call 1-888-FUN-YMCA.

Fall 2013
STRONG COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN
Beginning in November, YMCA Trout Lodge & Camp Lakewood will kick off its annual fundraising campaign. This is the opportunity for those more fortunate to help those who are not - children who want to come to camp but can’t afford to, children with illnesses such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, Crohn’s disease, those missing limbs (and more) who just want to be kids again even if only for a while, and families struggling with financial or family member loss. When you are approached for a donation, please remember your good fortune and help those in need. For more information, please contact rgodinez@ymcastlouis.org or 1-888-FUN-YMCA ext. 220 (Renée Godinez).

If you don’t already receive this newsletter via e-mail, contact us at bcampbell@ymcastlouis.org, and we will add your name to our e-mail list. You will then get the full experience of reading this publication in color. You may also visit our website at www.ymcaoftheozarks.org, click on the Alumni tab at top of the home page, scroll down until you find the most recent newsletter link, click and enjoy.