



# Wind Word

Biannual Newsletter for Wilderness Wind Inc.

Fall/Winter 2008

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“Run, run, run as fast as you can, you can’t catch me, I’m the gingerbread man”. This oft repeated line of a well-known children’s story popped into my head several times this summer. Though there are days when all Wilderness Wind staff work hard enough that they feel like the gingerbread man, it came to mind for very different reasons.

This children’s story ends with the slow, attentive fox “winning the prize.” Wilderness Wind had its own experience with foxes this summer, and it continues to teach us. In spring we discovered that a fox was raising her two kits under the office... more specifically right below my desk. During the day I could hear the kits tussling with each other. They would whine, yip, and bark. In late afternoon, they would venture outside and lie in the sun, play with any piece of rope or birch bark lying around, or carry on in mock battles with each other. Concerned that the busyness of camp would become a problem for this young family, I questioned a wildlife biologist.

She assured me that we would likely be able to cohabitate, and if the situation became too problematic for the mother, she would relocate the kits to a new den. So, the fun of observing continued. Volunteers stopped all activities to watch them, staff adjusted office and shop hours so the mother could continue her pre-dusk return to the den, and everyone drove slowly in the lane in anticipation of spotting them. The level of laughter, curiosity and joy increased exponentially around camp. Sigurd Olson, a local conservation writer, once said, “It is the intangibles that bring meaning to life.” We came to understand this truth as it unfolded right before our eyes and within our hearts.

Then, the mother fox was killed on the highway, followed by one of the kits. We don’t know what happened to the other kit, but given its age, I suspect that it too has died. The line from the gingerbread man haunts...run, run, run... Why are we running? Why are we driving, literally and figuratively, so fast that we can’t slow down enough to allow other lives to come to their full fruition? What, like the gingerbread man, are we running from and where is our running leading us? I was shocked as I read a few statistics. Over 100 people are killed daily in the US due to traffic accidents, admittedly not all are due to speeding. A mere decrease of 20 mph increases the survival rate of a pedestrian hit by a car by 80%. If this is one of the implications of increased speed, the side effects of the pace we live are tremendous.

Yet, times are changing. Carl Honore claimed in his book In Praise of Slowness, “Everywhere people are challenging the canard that faster is better and that every moment must be filled with activity.” In addition, the financial circumstances of our day suggest that, whatever the motivation, some of us are slowing down. It seems that for many these changes are greeted with fear. Slowing down, however, may be humanities path to a more life-giving and sustainable future. In Coming Back to Life, Joanna Macy suggests that the first step toward righting our relationships with our communities and all that God has created is stopping. In the midst of change, can we choose



Photo by Kathy Landis

trust instead of fear as the gospel challenges us to do? Maybe, God is inviting us to quit running. Perhaps we are being called to be still, to know, to drink more deeply of the gifts of the intangibles, the invisibles, the mystery of our own lives. Perhaps we are being called to stop and regain the understanding and importance of our interconnection with all living things. Perhaps we are being called to invest more deeply in the breath and breadth of the Great I Am.

~ Kathy Landis, Kansas

## What campers are saying...



Photo by Ryan Rittenhouse

**I appreciated the intentional times of silence, and group prayer became important to us while we travelled together.**  
- Camper, IA



Photo by Mary Ruth Kamp

**Wilderness Wind takes into consideration the whole experience - pre and post trip which is very helpful. I also appreciate the focus on recycling, resource stewardship and caring for the earth.**  
- Camper, MN

## Canoeing a Dream

For years, our family had talked about canoeing the boundary waters. It took moving to Pennsylvania to realize that dream. Our children were the right age; it's hard work portaging a 50 lb. canoe and carrying a 40 lb. pack on your back for five days! Our trip with Wilderness Wind was a special time of being together as a family; two parents, a recent college grad, a college junior and a high school junior. We also joined the Millers, friends from our previous community in Iowa. The lakes and trees are beautiful and quiet, and as Jonathan, 16, said, "For five days we listened to nothing but our own thoughts", and the sounds of the wilderness. No ipods, no cell phones, no computers, no watches, just family and friends and God's creation. For me, it was an accomplishment to realize that I was strong enough physically to do it, even though at times I wondered why I hadn't taken the weight training suggestions to heart BEFORE the trip. It was an interesting discovery to see how little we needed to survive for a week with only one spoon and one small bowl for each person, dinner for nine in a Ziploc bag, and a change or two of clothes. And yet, it felt like we could have taken less especially because we had to carry it all.

It was a week of depending on one another to make it through each day successfully. We had to help each other paddle (especially one windy day when it took all our paddling energy to make it across one of the larger lakes). We all had jobs to do as we set up camp (hang the bear pack in the tree, erect the tents, gather wood and build a fire over which to cook our dinner). We teamed up to hoist the canoe onto each other's shoulders for the portage, and we relieved each other when it got too heavy. I don't think I heard the kids complain once!

We all appreciated the preparation our guide, Jenny, put into making the week a spiritual journey of reflection for us. We had quiet time each morning to meditate on a thought or a quote. In the evening we reminisced about our day. The experience was a physical challenge and boy were we ready for the hot showers, clean clothes, and fresh food at the end of the journey, but I think we'd all do it again.

~ June Hershberger, Pennsylvania

**This really was a life changing experience for me. I have never challenged myself physically and I had never planned to; I did it! Many connections came together for me in this experience.**

- Camper, CA



Photo by Ryan Rittenhouse

**Wilderness Wind is a more raw experience in a way that is more invigorating than painful. On Wilderness Wind trips, I come alive.**  
- Camper, PA

Come explore the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, slow down your pace by canoeing the lakes, and find your spirit renewed. There are so many reasons why you should schedule a canoe trip for this upcoming summer. We look forward to hearing from you. For more information and to plan your wilderness journey, call **Kathy Landis** at **316-217-1129** or send an email to **kathy@wildernesswind.org**.

## Seek and ye shall find

Toward the end of the school year we ask one another about summer plans. For me this year these conversations with colleagues sounded something like this:

COLLEAGUE: So, any interesting plans for the summer?

ME: Yeah, I'm looking forward to spending a few days at a writer's retreat, near Ely, Minnesota. You know, in the Boundary Waters area? It'll be at a small Church-based camp called Wilderness Wind – a few cabins on a lake ... the website pics look great!

*Short pause.*

COLLEAGUE: Hmm. So, uh, what do you do at a writer's retreat?

ME: Well, I imagine we'll probably talk about writing, read some writing, and then ... write ... I guess.

*Short pause.*

COLLEAGUE: Interesting. Any other plans?

*End of scene.*

Spending three days in a rustic setting talking, reading, sharing, and writing is a tough sell these days. Our tastes are marred by things fast and bright and loud and easy. While we talk of “going green,” actually engaging in a slowdown, even if only for a few days, tests us. In fact Blackberry buzzes and cell-phone ringtones can intrude as easily in the woods as on the job. In our search for good work these days, we can be simultaneously connected and distracted.

Seeking an antidote, ten of us gathered at Wilderness Wind's Lakeside cabins to focus and connect. Led by Ann Hostetler and Julia Spicher Kasdorf we found “the time at Wilderness Wind was both a time of quieting [the] mind and engaging in conversation and exercises that prompted new writing.” We learned that Yoga at seven in the morning, reading and sharing personal struggles, attempting challenging assignments, and writing in silence stacks up just fine against an all-inclusive vacation.

We sat with new friends and we sat alone. We worshipped. “We washed dishes together, listened to one another's poems and stories, marveled at the tiny, turquoise-bodied dragon flies ... such gifts.” We were uncovered in “a supportive, yet challenging atmosphere, [that] left [us] full of ideas, words ... drawing connections [we] hadn't seen before.” We wrote and we discovered. Even in the hard work of writing we were met with “... helpful feedback from facilitators and participants, in an exceedingly beautiful setting (with excellent food).”

Writers are seekers. We listen for stories and look for images. We agonize over the words we use to share our finds. It's hard to explain the satisfaction of that struggle to many people. At the Wilderness Wind retreat however, it needed no explanation. We wrote, were read, and were understood. Together, and alone, we were found.

*Quotes (in order of appearance) from writers: Connie Braun, Julia Spicher Kasdorf, Minke Sundseth, and Joetta Schlabach.*

~ Paul Krahn, Altona, BC



Julia Spicher Kasdorf and Minke Sundseth discuss a few of Minke's writing.

## Thank you!

Thank you to the volunteers who traveled to Wilderness Wind and donated their time, energy and talents this summer. We had a diverse group of volunteers; from youth groups to SOOP participants, from college students to pastors, and a little of everything in between. Each person came with different gifts and abilities and all were a blessing and gave much to Wilderness Wind. For their dedication and generosity Wilderness Wind staff and board members are delighted and full of gratitude. You will hear more about Wilderness Wind volunteers and donors in the January Annual Report.

## 2009 Summer Employment

Whether you are interested in trip logistics and administration, building and grounds maintenance, or discovering all the back bays and rivers of the Boundary Waters, Wilderness Wind has a position for you. In 2009, we are looking to fill the following staff positions:

- **Trip Leaders** (2-3 months): Each summer we need 3-5 trip leaders who are excited to learn about and grow in leadership skills. Trip leaders teach and empower canoe trip participants as they journey through the wilderness.
- **Buildings and Grounds Director** (1-5 months): This person will care for on-going maintenance of buildings and grounds, as well as help Wilderness Wind catch up on some long term goals. You may find yourself replacing steps, installing solar lights, or repairing rain gutters.
- **Head Cook** (1-3 months): Wilderness Wind is looking for someone who enjoys cooking and is interested in preparing food that is healthy and wholesome. This job includes planning the menu, organizing and managing the kitchen, aiding in food packing for trips, and ordering food from local vendors and a national cooperative.
- **Program Director** (3 months): Come and manage trips, bring leadership to trip leading staff, and develop program resources for campers and staff.
- **Gardener** (1 month): Plant seeds, transplant seedlings, tend to the weeding and harvesting and learn how to extend the growing season in Ely, Minnesota. Wilderness Wind has gardens at both the Pine Ridge and Lakeside properties that need nurturing.
- **Kitchen and/or office assistant** (1-3 months): This position is for someone who likes variety in their work, enjoys organizing, has gifts in hospitality, and prefers to work in a support role.

The above positions are all very important to the success of a summer at Wilderness Wind. Come and join the Wilderness Wind team. For more information visit the website at [www.wildernesswind.org](http://www.wildernesswind.org). (We are currently updating the employment pages.) To request an application or to pursue your questions, please contact **Kathy Landis** at **316-217-1129** or send an email to [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org).



Geer Gilesby (volunteer), Dave Leonard, Peter Wigginton, Luke Keller, Jenny Hochstetler, Mary Ruth Kamp, Jon Spicher, Verena Hoffman (volunteer), Kathy Landis (Missing in the picture are Robin Fletcher, and Aryn Baxter.)



The new yurt at Wilderness Windl. (A yurt is a modern adaptation of the ancient shelter used by Central Asian nomads for centuries.) Photo by Kathy Landis

## Lakeside Cabin Rentals

There are openings for groups or individuals to rent lakeside cabins during the upcoming season. In addition to the four cabins at the lake, a yurt has been built that will house up to 10 people. The yurt is a beautiful structure inside and out and can be enjoyed by an individual, couple or group. For more pictures of the cabins and yurt, visit the Wilderness Wind website ([www.wildernesswind.org](http://www.wildernesswind.org)). Call **Kathy Landis** at **316-217-1129** or send an email to [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org) to reserve a cabin or the yurt, or to gather more information.

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Thanks again for the absolutely wonderful retreat we had in La Vielle. It is hard to put into words how much the week meant to us! We were blessed in a multitude of ways. Thank you, thank you, thank you, for providing this retreat setting! You are helping people connect with God and God's creation in very special ways.

~Jane Roeschley, Illinois

## Programmed Retreats

Wilderness Wind will be offering several retreats during the summer of 2009. The dates and details are being worked on at this time. Visit the Wilderness Wind website ([www.wildernesswind.org](http://www.wildernesswind.org)) in the upcoming weeks as these retreats develop. The possible retreats are a writer's canoe trip, a quilter's retreat at the lakeside cabins, a women's spirituality canoe trip and the Creation and Renewal trip with Arthur Paul Boers. More information will also be coming to you in the Annual Report in January. If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact **Kathy Landis** at **316-217-1129** or send an email to [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org).

Are you an orchid  
With purple-whitish ringing  
Seven little bells?

What bird could you be?  
White-breasted and with a song  
That softens our heart.

What wind could that be  
Coming over the waters?  
It is the Breath of God!

You are called the sun  
And you are everywhere;  
North, South, East, West, Here!

The Here is magic.  
Plant, bird, wind, water, and sky  
Telling us of THEE!

~ Verena Hoffman, SOOP volunteer



Photo by Cheryl Mast

### Wilderness Wind Wish List

- volunteers
- books to add to the library (there is a list compiled)
- 2- White Mountain hand crank 6 qt. ice cream makers
- a 12 gallon copper or cast iron kettle
- pie irons for use by lakeside guests
- a composting toilet for the yurt
- heaters for the lakeside cabins

*Thank you very much for creating an opportunity for me to abide with God in an entirely new way. - Camper, IA*

## Wilderness Wind

(<http://wildernesswind.wordpress.com/>)

Images for the broader community - let the water carry you...

One of the many ways that Wilderness Wind desires to communicate with you is through the blog. The wordpress blog (our chosen host) was begun in the spring of 2008. During the summer, staff communicated with the broader community of Wilderness Wind (you) about the events and learnings that occurred on trips, during retreats, at staff meetings, and in the simple day to day life at camp. Though the busy season is over, the blog will continue. Unlike many blogs out there, the Wilderness Wind blog will not be updated daily, though you can expect to see multiple updates throughout each month. In these posts, you will find pictures from the summer, updates on program, facilities, and staffing, reflections on the world around us, meditations and ponderings, as well as book reviews and other interesting things that enable Wilderness Wind to continue to fulfill its mission.

**Wilderness Wind nurtures relationships with God and creation through wilderness living which promotes spirituality, cooperation, and environmental sustainability.**

## Why go to nature?

John Burroughs said, “I go to nature to be soothed and healed and to have my senses put in tune once more.” John Burroughs was a naturalist and essayist who lived from 1837 to 1921 and his words ring true for me even today.

Over this past year, I’ve been reading a book called Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv. It presents the current trends between children and nature, argues the reasons why children (and adults) need encounters with nature, discusses the reasons why children don’t spend as much time in the outdoors, and recommends many responses and movements individuals, towns, and professionals can take to reconnect kids with the natural world. This book is full.

As I read this book and consider the last ten years of work with Wilderness Wind, I continue to come across many of the same concepts. Working for Wilderness Wind and spending months living in the woods and traveling on the lakes of Northern Minnesota have given me a direct experience of the natural world. I have experienced wonder, joy, personal restoration, a deeper understanding of the Love that pervades all things, and have developed awareness and attentiveness. While wandering through the wilderness, my senses have been expanded and sharpened, and the encounters I have had with other living beings have opened me up to new ways of being. The last ten years have brought me into the realm of embodiment; of learning to live out the ideas that I carry around with me, the ideas that I glean from all the marvelous and wise wanderers that have gone before me. I have learned to live these out in the particular of daily life.

The gift, then, of Richard Louv’s book is that he puts into words and research what I have experienced in the tangible. The reasons why children (and adults) need encounters with the natural world are plentiful. The natural world can act as a stress reducer. Being in nature provides for a healthy development of the senses which leads to learning and creativity. Time in nature is restorative to the mind and to the spirit. The attentiveness that develops as one spends time in nature strengthens one’s ability to focus and also broadens one’s understanding of how the world works. Another fellow traveler, Gerald May, in his book The Wisdom of Wilderness, writes that wilderness [or nature] calls us to the present moment, to fully being in the now. The natural world does not spend time trying to be anything other than what it is, and thus it is so fully and immediately whole. May suggests that this wisdom helps us to experience ourselves as we truly are and enables us to rest in our wholeness and in our worth.

In one of the chapters in, Last Child in the Woods, Louv tells the story of a group of young men who as part of the city sponsored Urban Corps attend a charter school that emphasizes hands on conservation work. As a part of this program these young men spent weeks on a nature preserve pulling non-native/invasive plants, clearing trails and learning from the dedicated staff. The wisdom offered by one of the youth filled me with gratitude as I read his words. “When I come here [to the nature preserve], I can exhale. Here, you hear things; in the city, you can’t hear anything because you can hear everything. In the city, everything is obvious. Here, you get closer and you see more.” Carlos makes me want to set my pen down, turn off the computer, and head out into the natural world; to walk slowly with my eyes and ears open to what is, to know Love more deeply, and to receive the gift of the present moment. And as John Burroughs says, “...to have my senses put in tune once more.”

~ Mary Ruth Kamp, Ohio

## Paddle-a-thon 2008

Thank you to all who took part in the Paddle-a-thon of 2008: paddlers, volunteers, and financial supporters. There were 14 paddlers who each traveled between 30-70 miles during the event. The event raised \$13,308 for Wilderness Wind, as of printing. To see pictures of the paddle-a-thon visit the Wilderness Wind blog. (<http://wildernesswind.wordpress.com/>)



## Wilderness Wind Water Bottles

This summer the water bottles were replaced. Instead of purchasing more plastic water bottles, the decision was made to invest in stainless steel water bottles from the company Kleen Kanteen. The water bottles are made of 100% recyclable, high-quality, food grade stainless steel, are very durable and BPA-free and won’t leach chemicals, toxins, or funky flavors into your water. We have 40 oz bottles available for purchase. They each have the Wilderness Wind logo and name on them and are a great gift. The cost per bottle, including shipping, is \$30 ) Call **316-217-1129** or email [wildernesswind@juno.com](mailto:wildernesswind@juno.com) with any questions or with requests.

## My Friend Virgil

We began our friendship while we both worked in the office of Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries: I in Christian education, and Virgil with the Mennonite Camp Association (MCA).

From the start, we discovered a mutual love of nature and outdoor travel and soon made trips to canoe in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness of Minnesota through Wilderness Wind.

Virgil and his family did a lot of camping and from this he became one of the early leaders in the Mennonite Church promoting camping. He promoted the importance of the camp setting as a place for the strengthening of one's faith. In addition to aiding in the founding of MCA, he supported the emerging ministry of Wilderness Wind. He was on the first board of Wilderness Wind and contributed insights throughout its history.

During the 20 plus years of his wife Helen's illness, with her encouragement, Virgil continued his journeys into the wilderness. He and I put together at least 10-12 groups for Wilderness Wind. One summer he and I took a back-packing (1999) trip to the Rockies of Colorado. What an experience! Perhaps his family could have questioned whether, at his age and after having had two major heart by-pass surgeries, he should try such an adventure but realizing how important this was in Virgil's life, they supported him. Virgil's joy of the outdoors was immense and until fairly recently he continued to make canoe trips to the Boundary Waters.

On our last trip together with Wilderness Wind in 2006, Virgil asked me if I was willing to face the possibility of his having a heart attack while we were in the wilderness without phones and without a way to get quick help. He said, "You know Dave, there is no place I would rather die." And so we journeyed on together and continued a friendship that grew deeper with each year and each experience.

Love, enjoyment of nature, organic foods, healthy living, love of his Creator and the universe his Creator made...these are what characterized my friend Virgil. His living also included a great sense of stewardship of all of life.

I am grateful for these 33 years of friendship. I am grateful to be among the many friends Virgil had and for the immense learning that we shared together in this world. Thank you, Virgil.

~ David Helmuth, Indiana



Virgil Brennehan on a grandfather/grandchild trip in the Boundary Waters with Connie Danzer a Wilderness Wind staff person.

*We all need to allow ourselves to be led into our own wildernesses, there to be taught what we most need to know, and to be healed where we most need it.*

*- Gerald May*

Virgil Brennehan was a faithful friend and supporter of Wilderness Wind. We celebrate a life well lived, and stand with his family in prayer as they continue to grieve his death. In the Spring 2008 newsletter we high-lighted the life of another supporter of Wilderness Wind. Michael Shrock was also a board member and took many trips into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. We will miss the participation of both men, and celebrate the legacies they have left behind. Thank you.

**Wilderness Wind is a nonprofit corporation that has a 20-acre base camp and 3.5 acres of Lakeside property located close to Ely, Minnesota. Wilderness Wind is a member of Mennonite Camping Association and the Central Plains Mennonite Conference.**



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**Executive Director**

Kathy Landis, KS

**Assistant Director**

Mary Ruth Kamp, OH

## Farewell to Assistant Director

Mary Ruth Kamp brought a gentle spirit to Wilderness Wind. She came as a staff member in 1999 and after nearly 10 years of work and service, is leaving the organization. Mary Ruth was a trip leader for a number of years before becoming program director in 2006, when she was also acting director during Kathy Landis's sabbatical. Since May 2007, she's been assistant director. The titles aren't as important as what Mary Ruth contributed. She led around 26 groups into the Boundary Waters. She oversaw staff members and helped to train them to be the guides those coming to Wilderness Wind rely on. She has the soul of a poet and the hands of an artist. She is a potter, but at camp she designed the second edition of the Wilderness Wind cookbook. She was instrumental in setting up the Wilderness Wind blog, which shows her poetic expression and photos.

Mary Ruth said she enjoyed:

- drawing people into the wilderness experience (usually with a little playfulness)
- hearing and learning from the diverse life experiences
- investing fully in her work and in her love of the earth

While she was teaching and guiding, Mary Ruth was also learning and living. She said she has learned:

- to live life deeply and to hold life loosely at the same time
- ways of honoring the earth, fellow creatures, and herself
- the importance of listening
- the need for celebration

In addition to Mary Ruth's contributions, her parents, Stan and Marilyn Kamp, have been regular volunteers at camp the last number of years. Mary Ruth is engaged to marry Mark Dal Pra. Recently, they built a pottery studio in Kidron, Ohio. Thanks to Mary Ruth for her work, but also for her presence. We'll miss her.

~ Marshall King, Indiana