



# Wind Word

Biannual Newsletter for Wilderness Wind Inc.

Fall/Winter 2010

## Table of Contents

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Executive Director's Letter       | 1   |
| 2010 Summer reflections           | 2-5 |
| 2011 Staffing and volunteer needs | 6   |
| What to look for in 2011          | 7   |
| The new bunkhouse                 | 8   |

My Dad is known for many things. The list includes a compassionate heart, a vivacious laugh, a generous spirit, and an ability to share his beliefs with passion. One of our memorable discussions was about the omniscience of God. Dad believed God knew everything past, present and future. I felt there should be some space in God's all-knowing nature

for our choices, perhaps prayerfully discerned perhaps made on a whim. Jeremiah 29:11 is a passage he shared. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord...."

My Dad died suddenly this past winter. This being the first summer to experience both father's day and his birthday without him, our conversations and his gifts to me showed up on many occasions. Oddly enough, though Dad had nothing to do with the creation of the bunkhouse, he came to mind during many moments surrounding it.

Deciding to build the bunkhouse was not a small decision. We have been contemplating such a building for years in a desire to make the transition to the wilderness more accessible to various ages. The platform tents require a lot of pre and post season care by staff and are starting to show wear. This summer, given a higher number of Wilderness Wind and Big City Mountaineers trips, there were multiple times when four canoe groups were in camp at once. Having only three tent sites, we either needed to purchase more canvas tents, or take the leap. With a four-week commitment from a builder and a crew of volunteers for one week, the bunkhouse project seemed attainable. Soon after we decided to build, I recalled my Dad's advice when Miles and I bought our house, "Building projects take twice the time and money that you think they will." Having twice of neither, I wondered what would transpire as the building began. All was well for two weeks. Then the rains came. Progress slowed and it became clear that it would take a Herculean effort involving staff time to get the roof on. By now it was early July, the builder needed to leave, and the bunkhouse was not usable. However, notable miracles followed.

- The school principal who was coming to volunteer for one week arrived four days later. The week prior someone reminded me that he had previously worked as a contractor! He installed the windows, doors, the interior wall, and hung the remaining exterior walls.
- At the same time, six youth and two adults (volunteering before their canoe trip) helped with some of the above, but also started on the much needed bunk beds.
- Two days after they left, an 18-member youth group arrived for a two-day service project. With lots of positive energy, they applied two coats of exterior sealant, cared for interior details, hauled piles of brush from the site, and built the picnic table for the deck.
- Three days after they left, a SOOP volunteer arrived and applied the last coat of sealant, and all three coats to the deck.

Two days later the building was in use, and it was used throughout August. A building was started and finished in the same year, a first for Wilderness Wind

As I observed the progression of this project and the many people who participated from start to finish, I was often amazed. I marvel at the timing of each group's arrival which I did not plan. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." The passage now resides and resounds not only in my head by also in my heart. I think my Dad was onto something.

- Kathy Landis, Executive Director

## What Campers are saying...

### Laughter: ours and God's

**I describe myself as an “occasional poet”, but at the writer’s retreat I was delighted to find time and space to be still, dredge memories, observe loons and lake, and find poems welling up each day.**

- Gayle Gerber Koontz

Our youth group delighted in the time we spent at Wilderness Wind, and within the north woods! Being from Denver, it felt absurd to be around, above, and in, so much WATER. Who knew the wilderness consisted of melted snow and leveled mountains?

We paddled hard, soft, and everywhere in between. Beavers, moose, eagles, and pike visited us and rapids, j-strokes, and bare feet nearly did us in. We learned immense truths about ourselves, each other, the wilds, patience, laughter--and God.

God was on the bus, in the canoe, around the camp fire, next to the bear bag, over the bow, and in the general ether. God took joy in the portages, the under-the-breath critiques of sternspeople, and the unbridled innocence of laughter.

**It was in the laughter that I re-collided with God.**

Laughter seems to be the release of our transcendent nature back into the world. In nature, dualities abound, they confuse and they confirm God's ongoing paradox. The wilderness teaches refuge and strength,

harmony and sanctity, trauma and truth. It divides us and brings us closer together, provides and prevents, listens and talks--it conversely correlates divinity and the human condition.

We grow, we fall, we understand, we overlook, we create, we destroy...we live and we laugh. But why? God's wildness invariably answers: Patience, Patience, Patience...laughing eternally, as we paddle together, all the while.

- Ben Gerig, Denver, CO



Cooking quesadillas over the fire.

Photo by Susan Mershon.



The Denver Youth group overlooking the Nina Moose river. Photo by Matthew Rody.

### Paddle-a-thon Results

15 paddlers and over 120 supporters made the sixth annual paddle-a-thon a success. Together we raised \$12,036 and are very glad for such generous support and enthusiastic paddlers. Thank you to all who participated. Each one of you is helping to reshape Wilderness Wind.

## Thankful for all that is good

In 1971, at my mother's urging, I participated in a wilderness canoe trip for high school boys offered by Menno Haven Camp in Illinois. The canoe trip was in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and the Quetico Park of Ontario.

This first wilderness canoe trip was an incredible boost to my spiritual journey. As one who had a deep fondness for the natural world, I was keenly aware that suddenly in the BWCA I was surrounded by incredible natural beauty almost unaltered by human activity. I recall several experiences of having a deep sense of God's loving presence as Creator. One epiphany moment came to me as the group climbed to a high bluff overlooking a series of lakes. As the sun went down, darkness settled in and then the rising moon provided adequate light to return to our campsite. Additional encounters included tiptoeing through a lichen and moss-covered forest floor, and paddling by moonlight with gentle winds after daytime strong winds had prevented safe travel on a large lake.

I have longed to share this wilderness setting and experience with Ellen and our children: Luke, Simon and Anna. Ellen and I operate a small labor-intensive organic produce farm. Given the tedious detail and economic realities of our vocation, summer vacations are difficult to pull off.

A year ago, as our oldest son Luke was getting ready to leave for his first year of college, he lamented that "his father had never taught him how to canoe." Ouch. His sentiment stimulated my initial response of having let him down, but also that there would be opportunities in the future for him to master canoeing. His lament catalyzed further thought and conversations between Ellen and I.

Why not a wilderness canoe trip? We could pack a lot of agenda into it: a rare family vacation, the celebration of 25 years of marriage and 20 years of farming, and we could support the Wilderness Wind vision as participants.

And so this past August, our family canoed into the wilderness via canoe. We took the Wilderness Wind vision and philosophy seriously. This is best illustrated by our daughter Anna, age 11, who prior to our trip came to Ellen asking, "Do I need to type or can I simply write out my answers to the Wilderness Wind reflection questions?" All five of us brought written responses to our orientation day discussion. This laid an excellent foundation for the spiritual and reflective dynamic which is enhanced by the wilderness setting and intentionally encouraged by Wilderness Wind staff through readings and times of silent reflection.

Each of us experienced highlights as we interacted with God's self in the wilderness and the times of quiet reflection. Anna: swimming and seeing nature; Simon: catching fish and eating some cooked over a campfire; Luke: exploring the flora and fauna and having a modest portion of the Wilderness Wind library with him for reference, Ellen: hearing loon and merganser families interacting, each in their own way; Dennis: having space to more fully grieve the passing of my mother (August 2, 2010), the one whose encouragement led to my first wilderness canoe trip almost forty years earlier. I reflect on the shared family trait of a deep fondness for the natural world, and how I understand the divine truth that Jesus taught: "The meek shall inherit the earth" as referring to an intimate relationship with creation. Indeed we did inherit many wonderful gifts of the earth as we traveled through the north woods as guests endeavoring to leave no physical trace of our passing.

On the canoe trip, I was also reminded of family traits needing ongoing attention. In short, some communication patterns in which feelings and needs have not always been clearly understood and communicated, came to my attention once again. The beauty of this reminder while on the canoe trip surrounded by God's self in creation and quiet reflection, nurtured a greater resolve to build strength where there has been weakness.

In closing, I share a few excerpts from my journal entry before leaving our last campsite, "What are the nudges of the Spirit as the canoe trip comes to an end? 'Be thankful for all that is good. Rejoice in the good gifts that surround my life, our lives.... Pay attention, be mindful, love deeply and talk openly...?' In a few hours we paddle on from this campsite, this canoe trip, this beautiful part of God's creation; into transitions, into routines of household and work. So be it with a grateful heart. Amen."

- Dennis Zehr, Tiskilwa, IL



**The Zehr family wilderness trip.**  
Photo by Matthew Rody.

## A Fiftieth Birthday Road Trip

At the beginning of August, three brothers (and a 14 yr old nephew) left central Kansas on three aging BMW motorcycles. The purported excuse for the trip was my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. The destination was the Boundary Waters of Northern Minnesota and the possibility of setting foot in Ontario, Canada.

We had acquired reservations at Wilderness Wind for a cabin for two nights, and a guided day canoe trip. We arrived at Wilderness Wind at 8 p.m. and unloaded our bikes, leaving us enough time to sit and watch the sun go down over the beautiful lake facing our cabin. Our cabin, LaVielle was a great, funky home for the next couple of days. It was like something Nate, Pete and I might have built (if we for some reason couldn't find our levels and plumb lines). We all appreciated the low impact systems of water, trash and waste recycling and conserving. The newish bath house was very nice and the pit, composting toilets somehow were nearly odorless.

The next morning after breakfast we headed out to meet our guide for the canoe trip. Greg was loading canoes (very cool high-tech Kevlar units) and other gear when we arrived. We were soon on our way over to our launch point on Burntside Lake. We paddled out several miles to a public picnic site on an island for a morning break that morphed into lunch. Greg set out a fine spread, including gorp, summer sausage, dried fruit, bagels and herb cream cheese, dense molasses bread, and more. When we were done eating we dozed in the sun, and I climbed a pine tree to get a view of the surrounding area. We saw loons cruising on the lake and Bald Eagles soaring overhead and lots more avian life that we could have identified had we been birders. On one tiny rocky island we landed and swam in the cold water. Even without a flag to plant, we claimed the island for Smuckers everywhere.

On the way back across the lake Greg suggested we meander around a little and explore the lake. He filled us in on wildlife, climate and other details of Northern Minnesota. Our quirky senses of humor were taken in stride and Greg was a fine companion for the day. We got back to Wilderness Wind by mid-afternoon which allowed us to take deep afternoon naps.

The next day we loaded our bikes for more road time. Another day at WW sure would have been welcome, but our schedule didn't allow it. We headed off to walk the streets of Hibbing, Minnesota, home of Bob Dylan and to explore International Falls where we finally reached Ontario.

The days at Wilderness Wind were the highlight of my trip. It is great to have finally seen the camp that the staff and Board of Directors have worked so hard to keep growing and improving. The commitment to good stewardship of the earth, spiritual retreat, and fun is obviously reaping rewards. Thanks Wilderness Wind for the great but brief time in the land of woods and water.

*—Joe Smucker, Newton, KS*



**Pete, Noah, Nate, and Joe Smucker**

Photo by Kathy Landis.

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.



Micaiah Landis enjoys the new kayaks at Lakeside.

Photo by Ken Landis.

**Thank you for the warm  
welcome and the attention  
to environmental  
stewardship. It was great  
to talk with our kids  
about this.  
- Lakeside Camper**

## Staff Reflection

One of Wilderness Wind's greatest strengths is how it cultivates the innate curiosity and interests of all the people passing through, particularly staff. If you hint at an interest in something, you are encouraged to explore it, and "go with it." Whether applied to building design, theological musings, or innovative s'more recipes, this freedom and trust fosters an environment of diverse creative energies. In nature, diversity is the foundation of a healthy ecosystem, and we've come to realize that it is the same for community life here at Wilderness Wind.

Because staff meet together for meditation and reflection every morning, naturally over the course of a summer we become familiar with where others stand theologically, politically, and philosophically: what intrigues them, angers them, bores them. Both of us were surprised by the sustained patience with which we listened to one another and asked questions. Wilderness Wind is unique not only in its open-mindedness but in the way it appreciates a diversity of thought and backgrounds.

This manifests in so many ways, from working style to faith to footwear preference. Do you believe God is personal and an active presence in the world, or something else? Do you tie down canoes with a trucker's hitch or a few half hitches? Prefer cumin in your grits, or brown sugar?

Working with a fellow staffer on a Wilderness Wind YouTube video about trip clothing, I (Matthew) quickly discovered that, though we were both trip leaders, we had very different approaches to packing. But in the name of synergy, we heard each other out and used our collective experience to create a great tool for campers (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2rPLM7qrns>). Because we collaborate so often here (even in writing this reflection), we cannot fail to appreciate the benefits gleaned from a diversity of interests and skills.

Placing a \$500+ food order early in the summer, I (Brooke) was asked if there was any special bulk item I'd like to work with. I mulled over this offer of free culinary license and asked to purchase bulgur, a grain I wanted to get to know better. After all, I pleasantly speculated, it's great for tabbouleh, so maybe Mexican food too! Why not throw it in anything! Everything! It's now September and a fifty lb bag of barely-touched bulgur sits forlornly in the camp kitchen, a victim of my curiosity and... subsequent neglect. Sometimes curiosity pays off, and sometimes it doesn't. But as in nature, openness to new things and space to explore are what weave together the Wilderness Wind community: by experimenting, adapting, stretching, and learning.

*-Matthew Rody (trip leader) and Brooke Wyssmann (cook)*

## Wilderness Wind Blog

Just a reminder to visit the Wilderness Wind Blog. Many different perspectives have been shared this summer from staff, to volunteers, and campers too. The blog will continue to be updated throughout the upcoming months with stories and upcoming events. The blog address is: [www.wildernesswind.wordpress.com](http://www.wildernesswind.wordpress.com)

## Available Staff Positions in 2011

Whether 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 2010 we are looking to fill the following staff positions:

- **Trip Leaders** (2-3 months): Each summer Wilderness Wind 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** (1-4 months): This person cares for ongoing maintenance of buildings and grounds. You may find yourself building a woodshed, repairing roofs, installing flooring, or building a small greenhouse or solar oven.
- **Head Cook** (1-4 months): This job includes menu planning, cooking, baking, organizing and managing the kitchen, aiding in food packing for trips, and ordering food from local vendors and national cooperatives. Position can be cared for by two people so each can help with gardening, etc.
- **Program Director** (year round): Provide leadership of trip logistics and staffing, lead trips, and develop program resources for campers and staff.
- **Gardener** (1-3 months): Plant seeds, transplant seedlings, weed and harvest as we extend the growing season with a hoop house and hot boxes. Gardens are located at Lakeside and Pine Ridge.
- **Lynx** (1-3 months): Variety is the name of the game as you help each facet of camp run smoothly. You will assist in the kitchen and office, welcome guests, organize, clean and assist with trip logistics.
- **Office assistant** (1-3 months): This person helps keep the gears running with data entry, word processing, excel, adobe, and organization of camper registrations.

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 web site at [www.wildernesswind.org](http://www.wildernesswind.org). To request an application or to pursue your questions, please contact **316-217-1129** or send an email to [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org).

**This place is a refuge.**

-A Lakeside Camper

## Volunteer positions for 2011

Make a world of difference in a week or for the whole summer. While none of these are full-time, they can be combined with these and other tasks. To speak with someone about your interest and your questions, please call at **316-217-1129** or email her at [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org). Wilderness Wind needs assistance in these areas throughout the summer.

- **Pastor/spiritual director**: Provide leadership to quiet time and group reflections.
- **Lakeside host(ess)/housekeeper**: Prepare the cabins and welcome guests.
- **Driver**: Hear canoeing stories as you drive 30-40 groups to and from their entry point.
- **Kitchen assistant**: Enjoy the energy in the kitchen as you create, bake and pack trip meals.
- **Maintenance assistant**: Projects can be set to fit your interests and skill level.
- **Builders, Builders, and more Builders**: Big City Mountaineers need a larger gear storage building. (See the August 23rd blog post for more information.) Plans are subject to availability of funds.

None of this interests you? We can work with that. Let us know your skill set and areas of interest. All are welcome to join in the growing and strengthening of Wilderness Wind.

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

## Programmed Retreats

Stay tuned (check the web site [www.wildernesswind.org](http://www.wildernesswind.org) and the Annual report) for details about 2011 retreats that anyone can join.

Retreats that are being planned include:

- A birding retreat at the Lakeside cabins in early summer.
- A fishing canoe trip in the Quetico-Canada.
- The Creator's retreat at Lakeside in the fall.
- Others are in the works, but not far enough to mention yet.

If you have questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact **316-217-1129** or send an email to [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org).

## Reservations for 2011

### Lakeside Cabins/Yurt 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, family or group. Rent one for a quiet retreat or all five for a family reunion.

### Canoe Trip Reservations

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. Who goes on trips:

- If you are ages 4-78 we can design a trip for you.
- Families
- Youth groups
- Three generation combinations
- Groups of friends, women, men, and co-ed
- Church small groups, etc. etc.

For canoe trip or Lakeside cabin information or to make a reservation, call **316-217-1129** or send an email to [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org). There is also more information on the web site: [www.wildernesswind.org](http://www.wildernesswind.org).

### Wish list

- Food Dehydrator
- Front loading washing machine
- 40 carabiners
- Projector to show photos after trips
- Grant writer
- 12 -gallon Cast Iron Kettle
- Good quality rain gear for those who forget to pack it (used is just fine)
- Grills for Lakeside cabins (barbeque or gas)



Counter clockwise from top. **Kevin Wilder sets the stage by building the bunkhouse foundation. Salem Zion youth group after transforming the exterior walls. The bunkhouse completed!**

Photos by Matthew Rody and Kathy Landis.



Wilderness Wind  
2945 Hwy 169  
Ely, MN 55731

return address requested

**Board Members**

John Daniels, IN  
Melissa Falb, MN  
Glenn Gilbert, IN  
Ed Kauffman, Calgary  
Marshall King, IN  
Beth Landis, ID  
Paula Northwood, MN  
Donna Minter, MN  
Steve Mullet, OH  
Brenda Sawatsky-  
Paetkau, IN

**Executive Director**

Kathy Landis, KS

**Publications Editor**

Mary Ruth Kamp, OH

218-365-5873

316-217-1129

[www.wildernesswind.org](http://www.wildernesswind.org)

**\*\* Coming up in 2011 \*\***

## Wilderness Wind's 25th Anniversary

Throughout the coming year we will be celebrating this big event in numerous ways. **Some will stay a secret, while others will be announced along the way.** We will post the year's happenings on our blog and let you know through email updates.

**If you haven't been receiving blog update emails, please send us your address so we can celebrate the year with you. [kathy@wildernesswind.org](mailto:kathy@wildernesswind.org)**

### This just out:

- First two canoe trips to book in 2011 with 6 new campers get a free trip for one participant.
- First two youth groups (first timers) to book in 2011 will also get a free trip for one participant.