The past year at Widjiwagan was another strong and stable one. The mission continues in an outstanding way for summer campers experiencing the classic wilderness canoe and back pack trips and for diverse fall/winter/spring school groups experiencing the in-camp Outdoor Learning Program. Widji is in an excellent position to ensure that the programs are sustainable for many years to come. The board, staff, and volunteers started in 2017 and will complete in the first few months of 2018, a three-year strategic plan (strategic road map) working on identifying innovative ways to strengthen and celebrate our traditions and direct future activities for 2018-2021.

As the board chair, I witness the power of connecting campers and alums of all generations throughout the year, and it is a true pleasure to observe the Widji experience in so many different ways. One particular highlight in 2017 was when it was decided to have one current Widji board member experience and participate in a canoeing break-in trip that is a part of staff training for the 90 summer staff members. I was very fortunate to be the board member to experience this tremendous opportunity this year.

Staff break-in has groups of 7-8 on a four-day BWCA canoe trip and is led by two third- to sixth-year staff with a mix of first- and second-year staff. There are shared sessions within the groups on how to teach campers wilderness skills, group dynamics best practices, safety issues, and planning and going on a trip as you would with first- or second-year campers. My experience in this was truly remarkable. As a summer staff member for six years in the 1980s, the break-in trip was just as fun as I had experienced by going on trail with others with a love for the outdoors and outdoor experiential education—then and now. Additionally now, it was also even better in that the staff are now even better equipped with tools and skills in best teaching practices, individual learning styles, and group dynamics to ensure the best and safest camper experience possible.

Something that did not occur in the 1980s was each staff group member at break-in spent about 30 minutes teaching a self-chosen “enrichment” to the others while on trail. I chose to show how to make almost perfect fresh baked bread in a reflector oven. Others did watercolor painting of a pine tree, how to make perfect Gado Gado (pasta dish with a spicy peanut butter sauce) for dinner, and tips for the most effective teaching different types of campers etc. In all, I found that the current staff give campers an outstanding experience in all the good traditional ways and of “good old Widji”, and importantly in even better new ways for the current generation.
Greetings from Camp Widjiwagan

BY MATT POPPLETON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In April of 2017 I started in the Director position for Camp Widjiwagan. It’s a position that I had aspired to for quite some time. Having last worked at Widji about 12 years ago as the Wilderness Program Director, I was excited to return for this new opportunity.

Starting in April meant a month and a half to familiarize myself with the staff and board and then a quick transition up to Camp for the summer. It was inspiring to reconnect with the strong leadership amongst the full time staff, volunteer board and committee members. My family and I, which includes my wife Kristen and kids Rachel and Will, received a very warm welcome from the Widji Community and great level of support as we took on this exciting new adventure.

Upon arriving at Widji, two things struck me; the incredible staff and amazing buildings and property. I quickly realized the impact of Liz Flinn’s steady leadership as the most recent Director of Widji and my responsibility to carry this good work forward. Throughout staff training I was able to connect with our In Camp staff team and Trail Counselors. I was impressed with the intentionality and professionalism that everyone brought to their job.

On June 15 our first session of campers arrived! It was great to watch the time honored tradition of kids arriving at Widji with a mix of nerves, excitement, and curiosity. Introducing Widji’s mission of developing respect in young people on the shores of Burnstide Lake brought me fully back to the reason I wanted to return to Widji. It was then a privilege to witness Widji’s mission play out in both big and small ways throughout the summer program. Closing Campfires were particularly special for me to hear from every camper on the impact of their experience.

September then marked another Widji transition. We concluded a successful summer program and welcomed staff eager to work for the Outdoor Learning Program. Teachers and students from throughout the region prepared for their annual fall trip to Widji. I realized how committed these teachers and schools are to having their students experience Widji. I had started working at Widji as an Instructor for the Outdoor Learning Program over twenty years ago, and saw some of the same teachers still bringing their students up to Widji! The dedication and commitment of these teachers year over year was another indicator of the powerful experiences that Widji can provide that support the overall mission.

In October we also held our board and staff retreat at Camp. With a new director and the sunset of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, we kicked off the planning process for the 2018-2021 Strategic Roadmap. We were fortunate to have Anne Hoyt Taff who traded her hat as a board member and agreed to facilitate the planning process throughout the board year. Our work began with board members and staff at Widji and continued with other events throughout the fall. Our hope was to gather as many voices from the Widji Community as possible to help us chart our path forward. Our planning efforts included voices from current and former board members, staff, campers, and teachers from the Outdoor Learning Program. This consensus building approach allowed us to work together and acknowledge a variety of perspectives and what our top priorities should be. The work continued with the board and will become fully realized and placed into action starting in 2018.

So through this first year I’m excited to be a part of this incredible Camp. The mission, values, and traditions of Widji are strong and there is also an openness to how we can better serve today’s young people. The energy and passion of our board and staff along with our Strategic Roadmap will help guide our efforts for the next few years to best serve Widji’s mission of respect for self, others, and the environment through wilderness adventures and environmental education. While this mission seems so simple I feel it one of the greatest needs for our kids today. I look forward to the journey ahead!

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**ENROLLMENT HISTORY**

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Building the Next Widji Leaders: The BOLD and GOLD Internship

BY AMY HADOW AND KURT SIMER

During the summer of 2017, Widji graduated our first cohort of Boys and Girls Outdoor Leadership Development (BOLD and GOLD) Interns. This Internship offers a culminating experience for BOLD and GOLD campers. The BOLD and GOLD Program started in the Seattle YMCA in the early 2000’s. Following the success of the Seattle Program, Y camps across the country piloted BOLD and GOLD programs that followed the Seattle model. Widji and Menogyn adopted the program in 2013. YMCA Camp St. Croix and YMCA Camp Ihduhapi now also offer BOLD and GOLD programs. As a community, we have spent the last five summers working to interweave the method and values of BOLD and GOLD with Widji’s. We hope that our new Internship will be another step in this process.

BOLD and GOLD trips are designed to prepare campers to respectfully engage with their increasingly multicultural communities while enjoying the beauty and wonder of wilderness and having fun. The BOLD and GOLD experience starts by recruiting campers to form intentionally diverse groups in terms of race, sexual orientation, religious background and socioeconomic status. Campers come together to participate in wilderness trips that range in length from 4 days to 2 or more weeks. Campers canoe at Widji but might backpack or rock climb at other locations. BOLD and GOLD campers learn the wilderness skills necessary to navigate and enjoy these environments. BOLD and GOLD campers also participate in a series of activities that are designed to draw them into age appropriate and engaging discussions about their identities and help them develop culturally conscious leadership skills. BOLD and GOLD campers at Widji are invited to progress through two tiers of BOLD and GOLD trips and then either participate in other Widji offerings, such as our advanced camper program, or apply for our Internship. Interns not only practice all of the skills the BOLD and GOLD program seeks to develop but also role model culturally competent wilderness leadership for younger campers.

In 2017, we hired a select group of folks who demonstrated the wilderness and leadership skills necessary to engage with a diverse group of campers in a wilderness setting. Our first cohort of Interns included five young people with an excellent array of leadership experience from participating in BOLD, GOLD and traditional Widji trips as well as the Youth Leadership Initiative with the Wilder Foundation. Our Interns spent one 10-day training session honing their trip leading skills, had a day off and then spent a 10-day session co-leading an Intro or Bold and Gold trip with a Widji Staff person. Interns coached campers through homesickness, celebrated challenging portages and helped cook dinner! At the end of their experience, our Interns commented on learning about their mental and physical strength, building confidence in their leadership, and learning to balance the many styles of leadership necessary for working with youth.

We hope that the Internship will serve as another path to building the skills and confidence required of a Widji Trail Counselor. We have found that some older campers who enjoy trail and have excellent leadership skills lack the time, financial resources or have other conflicts that prevent them from spending 4 to 6 weeks on an advanced trip. These folks often find other awesome opportunities and lose their connection to the Widji community. The Internship offers paid employment for 16- to 18-year-olds. We hope that our new Internship will keep these older leaders engaged by creating more inclusive opportunities at Widji. We are proud to expand upon this program in 2018, as we develop the next generation of Widji Counselors.
Jefferson Community School comes to Widji’s Outdoor Learning Program

BY KAREN PICK
OUTDOOR LEARNING PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The faculty and staff from Jefferson Community School, a Minneapolis Public School, begin building excitement for their students’ March trip to Widji more than six months before the actual visit. It begins with a slide show in September from the previous year’s trip. Then comes a visit from the eighth graders themselves where they get to share stories with the seventh graders about their adventures. Weekly class meetings follow, in which students can ask questions, discuss the activities they’ll be doing and get information about the gear needed.

There are a lot of nerves about the trip—getting out of the Twin Cities is a very new experience for many of the students and spending time outside, hiking and exploring the natural world and experiencing quiet is something not many of them have ever done so they are very apprehensive about it. The north woods is a completely new environment for most of the students. “It takes a lot of time and effort to convince them that the trip will be fun and worthwhile,” says Maria Bowker, Jefferson’s lead teacher for the Widji trip. “Hearing the eighth graders talk about what a great time they had is one of the most valuable ways we have of convincing the seventh graders to come. Once they get to Widji, they have a terrific time and have experiences they will remember for the rest of their lives but getting them on the bus takes months of effort—but it is extremely worthwhile.” Bowker went on to say, “the staff was awesome and genuinely wanted to understand how to work best with our kids. They supported all our students so well.”

Claire Weiss, a Jefferson science teacher commented that, “the Widji study groups were a great way for nervous students to feel safe in a new environment with new experiences.” She continued, “The instructors were always saying yes to the students, I loved that! The staff were incredible with all of our students. I absolutely loved how hard they worked to reach every single one of our students. That is a tough job and they did fantastic!”

Comments from the students about their experience...

“Looking at the stars was one of my favorite moments of the week because it was so peaceful”

“I learned to explore nature and see stuff that I’ve never seen before.”

“I enjoyed my time at Widji because you got me to get outside my comfort zone and made me get off of my phone.”

“It was life-changing to be here.”

OUTDOOR LEARNING PROGRAM GROUPS—2017

Anishinabe Academy
Blake School
Brightwater Montessori
Carondelet Catholic School
Ely 7th Graders
Ely Girl Scouts
Expo Elementary
Fall Women’s Weekend
Free at last
Friends and Family of Anne Murphy
Great River School
Groveland Park Elementary
Jefferson Community School

King of Kings
Lake Country Montessori
Life House
Many Rivers Montessori
Marshall School
Montessori School of Duluth
Northeast Range School
Northrup Urban Environmental School
Oak Hill Montessori
Oh! No 18 Lutheran Social Services
Olson Middle School
Rosemount & Simley German Exchange Group

Seward Montessori
Shakopee Area Catholic School
SISU Knitting
Southern Adventist University
St. Paul Academy
St. Therese of Deephaven
Sunny Hollow Montessori
University of Minnesota - Institute of Child Development
Valley View Middle School
Widji Leaders
Widjiwagan Board
Widjiwagan Fall Sampler
Winter Women’s Weekend
Behind the Scenes Magic

BY KATHLEEN FLOBERG, WILDERNESS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

For me, the question of “What makes Widji special?” is an easy one to answer. It’s the staff. By staff I don’t mean myself and the other directors. I’m talking about the phenomenal group of individuals who join our team every summer, fall, winter, or spring and dedicate several weeks to providing a meaningful and enriching experience to all our campers and students. Within our group of seasonal summer staff there are a select group who operate largely behind the scenes and whose efforts are instrumental in ensuring that Widji continues to be a positive experience for young people. I’d like to highlight those few individuals and commend the energy they put in to Summer 2017.

Among these were our Tripping Center staff Andrew Johnson, Alice Loewenson, Crawford Cunningham, Ellie Johnson, and Caroline Arteaga Ortiz. The Tripping Center houses all our food and gear and outfitted each of the 190 trail groups that came through Widji this past summer. This is not an easy job. It involved bagging (the process of putting food from our bulk supply into a group’s individual bag of that food item) 425 pounds of chocolate chips, 800 pounds of oats, 1,400 pounds of raisins, and 4,000 pounds of pasta! They have to organize, repair, and maintain 9 different types of tents, 70 stoves, 215 Duluth Packs, and all the rest of Widji’s gear! These staff brought positivity and thoughtfulness to their work and enriched the experience for every camper who came through that building. This is evident in all the thank you notes trail groups wrote to the Tripping Center staff throughout the summer (see photo).

We also have a group of people who come to work in our kitchen every summer. In 2017 these folks were Cathy McFadden, Joe Weise, Ethan and Joel Hasz, and Adam Krzewinski. These people ensure that our campers eat healthy and are fed well. It is a hard job and sometimes involves feeding 200 people for a banquet dinner! One of our cooks, Cathy McFadden, has been coming to work in the Widji kitchen during the summer for 20+ years. Widji exists because of the connections and relationships people have with the place and with each other. It is dedicated individuals, like Cathy, who commit not only their time but also their heart to Widji that have made it into such a strong program.

The office in Ely is a busy place during the summer and we could not manage without the seasonal staff who work there June-August. Fiona Forbes, Maia Fox, Charlotte McKlveen, and Maggie Murray supported the day to day functions of the office and we could not have done it without them! There are dozens of things going on every day in the office and this crew was able to take challenges and contingencies in stride. When campers get to Widji, they spend three days on site getting ready for their trip before departing for their wilderness adventure. A lot happens in the office during those three days to make sure we’re ready to send all the groups on trail! There’s this great moment the morning groups depart for trail where the office team gathers up all the paperwork, resources, first aid kits, etc. that the camper groups will need for their trip and that we’ve been working to get ready for the past three days. We walk down to the Tripping Center with all these things and send the groups off as a team. The office is absolutely a team effort and I can’t imagine a summer without their support!

I believe the magic of Widji comes from the staff who commit so much of themselves to this place every season. We could not do it without them and I hope they know how important they are to the program!
Thank you, Heritage Club Members, for your commitment to future generations.

HOW YOU CAN HELP SUSTAIN WIDJIWAGAN

YMCA Camp Widjiwagan endowment funds provide essential support for camperships, programs, operations and more.

Your donations will help:

▼ Gifts to the YMCA Camp Widjiwagan General Endowment Fund provide support to Widjiwagan where needed most.
▼ Tribute gifts to any fund may be made in honor, memory or appreciation of friends or loved ones.
▼ Include Camp Widjiwagan in your will or estate plan and be recognized as a Heritage Club member.
▼ For information on establishing a named fund, please contact Jeri Glick Anderson at 651-435-6724 or Jeri.Glick-Anderson@ymcann.org or Matt Poppleton at 651-645-6605 or Matt.Poppleton@ymcann.org
▼ Send donations to “YMCA Camp Widjiwagan Endowment” and write the name of the fund you are contributing to in the memo line.

YMCA Camp Widjiwagan
The Douglas Dayton YMCA at Gaviidae • 651 Nicollet Mall, Suite 500 • Minneapolis, MN 55402

2017 FINANCIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

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BOLD & GOLD Organizational Partners:

- James & Marianne Ude
- Jane E. Verby
- Lynn Rabinovitch
- The Skold Family
- Virginia Ruddy
- The Katter Family
- The Luehrs Family
- The Marshall Family
- The Potter Family
- The Runyon Family
- The Saxhaug Family
- The Stoick Family
- The Therrien Family
- The Wilkie Family

YMCA CAMP WIDJIWAGAN HERITAGE CLUB

Thank you, Heritage Club Members, for your commitment to future generations.

Anonymous
Jim & Julia Adams
James C. Andre
Kristin Gendron & Matthew Bailey
Walter & Virginia Bailey
Armand & Beverly Ball
Mary Horak Binger
Sandra M. Bjorndahl
Gretchen & Brian Boyer
Greg Bradbury
John & Jill Bradford
Geoffrey Brewster
Mary Broeker
Carmen A. Brunner
John Burke & Kathleen Joyce
Polly M. Burnham
Michael & Marcia Bussey
Peter Butler
Arta Cheney
Jane Clements
Douglas & Kathleen Clock
Paul & Rachel Craighead
Alan & Karen Crossley
Blake & Sandra Davis
Kelly Davis
Steven Diede & Anne Zerby
Mairi C. Doerr
Charles Driscoll
Carolyn & Sara Ellstra
Sharon K. Erickson
Ann & Dwight Ericsson
Betty Felix
Elizabeth P. Fesler
Nancy Fesler
Liz Flinn
James Dorsey Flinsch Sr
Frederick & Dorothy Forro
James & Joan Gardner
Jamie & Cindy Gardner
Edward & Dana Garvey
Judith Gavin
Jean Geist
Laura J. Giaquinto
Jean K. Godfrey
Susan & Robert Greenberg
Ann L. Guzman
Linda Gustafson & Roxy Port
Rose M. Gustafson
Tom Hiendlmayr & Jan Ormaza
Geoffrey & Linda Hirt
Christine & Douglas Hlavacek
Lucy Hollinshead
Ruth & John Huss
John & Polly Jackson
Nathanial Jacobson
David & Judy Jervis
Charlotte & Ward Johnson
Frank & Meredith Johnson
Arthur W. Kaeemner
John & Sally Katter
Cheryl & Daniel Kelley
Esther & Martin Kellogg
Dessie P. Koch
Tom & Cheryl Kranz
Bethanne Rochlin Kronick
Mary Levins
Judith Frost Lewis & Stephen Lewis
Georgia R. Lindeke
Darwyn & Marie Linder
Armin Luehrs
Kay Lyford
Kent & Barbara Lyford
Kristine Maritz
Gayle Rose Martinez
David & Sherla Mayer
Paul T. McArthur
Elspeth & William McClelland
Lynne Meyer & Mary Walser
Ranlet & Beth Miner
Jonathan & Martha Morgan
Anne & David Murphy
Janet E. Nast
Uri Neren
Robert & Sarah Newman
Nedra Nicholls
Richard & Nancy Nicholson
Joan Ostergren & James Alexander
Doug & Phyl Ostergren
Joanne Oyen
Thomas Paper & Eleanor Bigelow
John Patterson & Julie Sonier
Thomas & Sally Patterson
Steve Patzman
Nancy G. Friedeman
Mary Jo Quehl
Thomas M. Racicatti
Linda & Dominic Ramacier
Margaret A. Rarig
Katie Reed
Gary & Gale Rick
Tom & Donna Riley
Gwyneth Rochlin
Winfred & Barbara Rockwell
Virginia Ruddy
Donna Runyon
Alan & Sally Ruvelson
Connie & Kenneth Sansome
John Saxhaug & Lynn Rabinovitch
John Shepard & Suzanne Brust
Linda & Spencer Silver
The Skold Family
Michael Smuk
Connie & Byron Starns
Mary & Mark Stoick
Ned & Jean Therrien
Rolf Thompson & CJ Jacobson
Rev. Kathryn A. Tieke
James & Marianne Ude
Jane E. Verby
Annie & Daniel Walsh
Jennette Wasmund
Jim & Ann Wheeler
David & Suzanne White
John & Janice Wilke
Daniel & Ruth Willis
Emily W. Wilmer

YMCA Camp Widjiwagan
The Douglas Dayton YMCA at Gaviidae • 651 Nicollet Mall, Suite 500 • Minneapolis, MN 55402

YEAR IN REVIEW 2017 | 7
Management makes time to rhyme

BY JOE SMITH, PROPERTY MANAGER

ODE TO SUMMER SHOWER BUILDING
Kids coming off trail they need showers
With only six stalls it took hours
We built another eight
Folks say its just great
By banquet they all smell like flowers
The day kids return to Widji from their trips is very busy. There is gear to check in, a nurse to visit, hot dogs and ice cream to eat, and showers to take before the banquet, campfire, and sauna. A bottleneck in this process was our shortage of shower stalls with only six in the Winds Wash House. With valuable help from the Buildings and Property Committee with design we built a very high quality summer only shower house with eight stalls with individual changing areas.
Result—Happier campers (and parents)

EPIC OF THE A (FOR ATHLETIC) FIELD
The A Field is site of our games
Its rocks, sand and puddles were a shame
So we brought in some loam
Green grass it has grown
Now our campers can play on to fame (with less pain)
The area between Nye Hill and Kirby Dining Hall is the geographic center of Widji. We have worked for it to reflect our philosophy of providing a place of beauty with a natural flavor where kids can have fun and appreciate their experience here. There is a new path from the A Field to the front of Kirby designed to minimize lake shore impact and be wide enough to allow people to travel together. With lots of stone work we created an outdoor gathering place in the hillside overlooking Burntside. We can now have ceremonial campfires outdoors. The last step in the upgrade was the rehabilitation of the A Field. This involved making the drainage ditch more effective and adding one thousand yards of loam to the field to improve drainage and provide better soil for grass to grow.

It seemed the “Spirit of A Field Past” was not going to let us proceed without some challenges. Less than a week after seeding, a torrential downpour washed away some of our work. The good news was that given the intensity of the storm it was remarkable how little damage was done. The drainage worked. But we were not finished. A plague of caterpillars emerged and in one day ate a huge percentage of our once lush grass. We were able to treat the field that night which saved enough of the grass to be able to regrow on its own. We opened the field for games this fall and it will be used and appreciated this summer.
BALLAD OF THE CARETAKER GARAGE

The Caretaker now has a garage
Words to rhyme this prove a mirage
But the building is real
A very good deal
—so we would like to thank those that helped—
and put the worry of rhyme in the garbage
( pronounced with a French accent to rhyme with garage, sort of )

It’s a first-class garage with two stalls and room for a work bench and storage in the attic.

Other accomplishments in 2017 include -
- Replacing the boards on the SOC deck
- Putting metal roofs on Kirby Kitchen and the Caretaker’s House
- Installing an air conditioner for Kirby Kitchen
- New firewood sheds for Kirby and the Caretaker’s House
- A shed by the Maintenance Barn to provide winter storage for five trailers with canoes and a shelter for summer vehicle parking and equipment
- Bruce Casselton and the Fleet Management Committee have enhanced our canoe program by maintaining the history of our fleet and providing guidance for its future.
In Memoriam

**Allison (Silver) Anderson**, age 50, passed away peacefully on June 21, 2017. She was a Widji camper for three summers, canoeing in the BWCA and the Quetico Wilderness Area. Allison loved the outdoors and her camp experience lasted a lifetime.

Allison graduated from White Bear High School in 1985. She earned her B.S. in Zoology from the University of Texas and pursued postgraduate studies at Texas A&M University. As manager of the Ichthyology and Herpetology Collections at Texas Natural History Collection, she developed the skills that launched her 20-year career in database programming/administration.

Allison is survived by her husband David of 31 years, parents Spencer and Linda Silver, sister Jennifer (Arthur Windus), nephew Zachary and niece Zoa.

Allison’s legacy will live on for generations to come through the establishment of the Allison Silver Memorial Endowment Fund benefitting Widji campers who could not afford the camp experience.

**Robin A. Ball**, age 52 passed away unexpectedly after battling with Acute Myeloid Leukemia on March 4, 2017 in Fort Meyers, Florida. He was the beloved son of former Widji Camp Director Armand and Beverly Ball (1962-1974). His family includes sisters Kathy and Helen Pounds; four children: Nicole, Stephanie, Rhyan and Lyndsey; five grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

The first 10 years of Robin’s life were spent at Camp Widjiwagan and he later became a camper. He loved the northwoods and Widji.

Robin was the owner of Modern Property Services and Star Computer Services. He was very active in collecting and sending care packages to Iraq for Operation from the Heart.

Memorials received in Robin’s name were placed in Widji’s General Endowment Fund, enabling campers’ life lasting experience that he had so many years ago.

**Molly Commers**, age 80, passed away on April 7, 2017, leaving behind the pain and confusion of Alzheimer’s disease.

Molly served on the Widjiwagan Board in the 1980s, was a dedicated member of the camper services committee and the annual fund administrative team. She was recognized as Widji’s distinguished leader in the 1980s.

Molly was a volunteer who was always ready and willing to take on almost any task when asked, whether it was meeting a Widji bus or alphabetizing hundreds of annual campaign prospect and pledge cards. Molly was one of those humble, selfless volunteers who shared her time, talents and treasurers to help further Widji’s mission. Molly will be remembered for her warm smile, many acts of kindness, and quiet strength. She was a homemaker who hated to cook and a chauffeur to her boys even though she hated to drive, but she cooked and drove because both gathering her family around the kitchen table and watching her boys play hockey brought her great joy. She generously, patiently, and persistently provided constant support for the success of her family.

Molly is survived by her husband Fred of 54 years; sons Chris, Tim, and Steven; and six grandchildren.

**Bill Gray** passed away on January 19, 2017 at the age of 74. Bill spent the first three summers of his young life at Widjiwagan when his father Ted was the camp director (1940-1945). He never became a Widji camper, but supported the annual campaign for decades.

Bill dedicated his life to education as a teacher, assistant principal and principal. He had a passion for teaching and his students were drawn to him.

Bill is survived by his daughter Elizabeth, son Adam, three grandsons and his sister Barbara Wenschlag.

To perpetuate Bill’s legacy, memorials were directed to the Frank and Laura Nelson Memorial Fund (his grandparents). This was the first endowment fund established in 1962, benefitting Camps Widjiwagan and St. Croix with an investment of a little over $20,000. Over time the distribution to the camps has amounted to nearly $300,000. The proceeds have provided campership for thousands of youth and teens, and serves as a living memorial for many of the Nelson Family and extended family members over four generations.
In Memoriam

Donald H. Ogden, passed away on September 12 after a long illness. He was a Widjiwagan camp counselor in the 1940s-50, an experience he cherished. Don loved Northern Minnesota and continued to return to region for many more canoe trips, sharing his love of the outdoors. He also led Boy Scout trips in the Grand Canyon.

Don attended Central High School and graduated from Carleton College and Harvard Business School. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1953-1956. Don went on to manage early corporate computer systems for Honeywell, Motorola and Southwest Forest Industries. His good cheer, quick wit, innate curiosity and easygoing manner endeared him to everyone he met.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Phyllis, children Chip, Sarah, Laura and three grandchildren. To honor Don’s memory, memorials were directed to Widjiwagan’s General Endowment Fund, perpetuating his legacy, while enabling campers to have the life lasting experience that he enjoyed.

Lottie Sugden, age 102, passed away on November 22, 2017. Lottie loved camping and valued the experience her five children had as Widji campers and counselors. When asked to become a Board member, it was easy for her to say yes. She served on the Board for nine years in the 1960s and continued as a volunteer into the 1970s.

Lottie earned a degree in home economics from NDSU. She taught high school Home Ec for three years, then met her husband Malcom and married in 1944. She enjoyed cooking, gardening, traveling and camping. She loved her work as a Minnesota State Fair food judge for more than 30 years.

Lottie is survived by children Byron, Lisa, Paul, Penny, and Mark; 8 grandchildren; and 3 great grandchildren.

Robert “Skip” Wilke, age 79 of St. Paul, died on December 31, 2017. Camp Widjiwagan lost a great friend with the passing of Skip. Please see page 12 to read a meaningful tribute to his contributions to Widji and many other Y organizations. Widji is but one of many organizations that will miss Skip. He is survived by brother John (Jan), nieces Jenny (Scott) Hagberg and Julie (J.P) Newman, nephew David (Amanda), and their children.

Patty served on the Widjiwagan Board in the mid-1970s through the early 1980s and served on a variety of standing committees. She volunteered generously because she believed in the mission and the power of community, not only for Widji, but a number of other organizations.

Patty is survived by her children Shelly, Mary, Peggy, Janet, Richard and John; 13 grandchildren and a great grandchild. All of her children attended Widji and some of them became counselors. Just this past summer one of Patty's granddaughters went on a Widji trip, continuing the Poore family legacy as a camper.

Terry Williams passed away suddenly on August 15. He was a Widji camper in the 1950s and a Voyageur in 1957, canoeing Lac La Ronge to the Pas. In 1958 Terry became a counselor and guided trips for several years. Terry’s passion for the outdoors continued beyond Widjiwagan and lasted a lifetime. He took many personal canoeing trips into the BWCA and fell in love with road and mountain biking in Minnesota and Colorado. Terry was a talented photographer and loved music of all types.

In the early 1960s, Terry worked for the Minneapolis YMCA as a Program Director and later was employed by Bloomington Parks and Rec for 31 years. His early outdoor experiences led him to his career choices.

Terry will be deeply missed by his wife of 54 years, Barb; children Lara and Sean; brothers Lance and Scott; sister Valerie; and sister-in-laws Mary Williams and Sandy Johnson.

Terry’s legacy will live on at Widjiwagan through the “Blanche and Russ Williams, Russ Williams Jr. and Terry Williams Memorial Endowment Fund” which provides financial assistance for underprivileged campers and continues to share Terry’s love of the wilderness.
In Memoriam: A tribute to Skip Wilke’s remarkable life

BY ROLF THOMPSON AND CJ JACOBSON

Widji and the entire YMCA lost an amazing role model when Robert ‘Skip’ Wilke passed away on New Year’s Eve 2017. We both had the honor, privilege and good fortune to know Skip since 1977, first while on his staff when he was Director of YMCA Camp Menogyn, later as Rolf was Director of Widji and Skip served as a board member and supporter, and throughout forty years as an incredible and steadfast friend.

We knew Skip as a man of uncompromising integrity and boundless generosity who believed deeply in the mission and values of the YMCA. Beginning as a camper at YMCA Camp St. Croix and continuing throughout camper years at Widji, culminating in being a member of the first Boy Voyageur trip in 1956, Skip was imbued in the Widji Way and culture. Skip went on to become Director of Menogyn from 1968 through 1982. After Menogyn he travelled around the world and later worked for the YMCA International Camp Counselor Program, recruiting and placing international staff in camps across the country.

When Skip returned home to St. Paul Rolf invited him to join the Widji Board in 1994. The Board understood that Skip’s professional experience and passion for the Widji mission would serve Camp well. During the 1990s Widji evolved to adapt to new and changing camping standards and market expectations. Skip helped us navigate those changes while holding fast to the core of Widji traditions and practices. Skip knew that American Camping Association standards called for two staff on every trip but he also believed strongly in the value of the small group 5-camper to 1-counselor ratio. His input influenced the ultimate decision to have two staff on shorter, introductory trips but continue with the 5:1 model on extended trips with more experienced staff and campers. When it became clear that Kirby Dining Hall was in need of expansion and upgrading, Skip passionately articulated the essential value of classic log construction to the camper experience. He helped us assure this value was not lost in the renovation.

Widji’s innovations with pro-active risk management systems coincided with Skip’s tenure on the Board. When the Risk Management Committee was initiated Skip enthusiastically volunteered to serve and continuously pushed for effective improvements.

Skip’s generosity to the YMCA is legendary and has been well documented. Though he was never one who wanted recognition he contributed to numerous cabins and capital campaigns at many camps. He was instrumental in founding Widji’s Wood Canoe Endowment Fund and encouraged us to keep wood canoes central to the camper experience.

Skip’s professional and volunteer involvement extended to a vast array of camps and organizations. Widji people may not realize that in addition to the Widji Board Skip served at various times on the boards of YMCA Camps Menogyn, St. Croix and DuNord. He was a Trustee of the Sioux Indian YMCA in western South Dakota and would faithfully drive there for meetings. He was especially interested in and committed to YMCA international work, especially in African countries. While Director of Menogyn he also served as the State Director of the YMCA Youth in Government program. Skip was a lifelong member and volunteer for the American Camping Association, spending countless hours (and many more long drives) as an accreditation visitor for ACA camps around the country.

For over 40 years Skip attended and volunteered behind the scenes for the YMCA Mid-America Camping Conference and became a friend and mentor to countless YMCA Camping professionals. When his death was announced on the “Friends of Skip” Facebook page, hundreds of colleagues around the world expressed their respect and appreciation.

Some years ago, a group of us who had all worked for Skip at Menogyn in the 1970s asked ourselves how we could ever show him our gratitude for all he had done for us. CJ suggested we adopt a section of highway in a location so that people driving to and from the northern Minnesota YMCA camps would see the sign and be reminded of Skip’s role model of service. Since 2007 the “Friends of Skip Wilke” have cleaned Interstate 35 between mileposts 202 and 204, just south of Willow River. When you drive by, please think of Skip’s legacy.

As CJ said in her eulogy at Skip’s memorial service last January, “Skip lived service to others, demonstrated integrity, didn’t deviate from his values. Skip wasn’t about to share his inner feelings in emotional outpourings ending in Group Hugs—but we felt love, the caring, his honesty.”
Joe Seliga was a friend to Camp Widjiwagan. The wood canvas canoes that Joe hand-built with his wife Nora have been an integral part of Widji’s canoe fleet for decades. In the early 2000s Widjiwagan received two canoes from the Seliga family; an 18-foot BN Morris canoe and 15-foot BN Morris canoe. Joe Seliga used this specific 18-foot Morris canoe as the model for his original Seliga canoe design, as well as to innovate future designs. The 15-foot canoe was used as a mold for the approximately 27 sixteen-foot canoes he made.

Widjiwagan would now like to restore these canoes and integrate them back into the fleet of wood canvas canoes. The opportunity for campers to know and paddle a canoe made in the early 1900s that also served as the inspiration for Joe Seliga’s canoe work, underscores Widji’s ethic of respect towards the wood canvas canoe.

Widji is teaming up with Urban Boat Builders, a non-profit whose mission is to empower youth to succeed in work and life through woodworking and experiential learning, and Alex Comb, canoe builder and restorer of Stewart River Boatworks in Knife River, MN. Over the next 18 months these canoes will be restored to the point of being back on the water and helping extend Widji’s mission of respect.

2017 Contributors:
Judith Gavin
Bruce Casselton and Linda Wainio
Wooden Canoe Heritage Association
Morris Canoe Restoration Project
in memory of William Bjostad
Marlys and Phillip Engh

Bella Sverdlin was a great addition to Widji Leaders during the 2016-2017, Widji’s academic year service learning club. Bella has attended nearly all of our events and brings with her a positive attitude! Bella’s leadership, like Bella herself, is understated and motivated. Her can do-attitude and dedication quietly inspires others to participate to their fullest. Bella also is a master at raising the group’s mood with her dry sense of humor!! Bella would describe herself as a “Motivated Leader” and someone who “works hard to excel.” She attends Southwest High School. We have been so grateful for her leadership this year!
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2017 GIFTS IN KIND:
1969 Old Town Wood Canvas Canoe, Tom and Barb Elliot
Camping Equipment & Supplies, Judith Gavin
Steve Hill for his work on restoring W.51
Cindy and Jamie Gardner – Support towards the purchase of new cross country skis for the Outdoor Learning Winter Program.

STAFF TRAINING VOLUNTEERS
Mark Bixby, Amery Robinson, Peter Murray, Kurt Simer

GARAGE SALE VOLUNTEERS
Numerous and dedicated volunteers drove the garage sale to success once again last year. Sale proceeds benefit Camps Widjiwagan and du Nord Garage Sale Endowment Fund to support scholarships.

2017 HEALTH PROFESSIONALS:
Jean Bentley
Peter Currie
Pat Dooley Eid
Kevin Lagos
Karen Loewenson
Bob McVieen
Sharon Svivertsen Modriyan
Susan Nordin
Phyllis Maritz
Valerie Mauney
John May
David & Sheria Mayer
Peter & Rebecca Mayer
Sean McCauley & Joselyn Raymundo
Elspeth & F. William McClelland
Daniel McConvile
Polly & Robert McCrea
Margo McCreary & Peter Doughty
Mike & Nikki Vars McCullough
Timothy McGree & Patricia Curtner
Randall & Anita McKeean
Charlotte McVieen
Robert McVieen & Ellen Jones
Kevin P. McNellis
Jennifer Mehmel & Sixto Guiang
Mercer Foundation
Merjent Inc
Howard Mielke
Jeanette & E. Keith Mielke Gerritz
David & Kathleen Miller
Vretta Miller
Elizabeth & John Miller
Judith Miller
Margery Miller
George & Rita Mills
Ranlet & Beth Minier
Betsy & James Moore
Martha & Jonathan Morgan
James & Nancy Mulvey
Chris & Shannon Murray
Emily Myhre
Kenneth & Marnie Myhre
Theodore & Ann Naegeli
Philip & Katherine Nason Fund of the St Paul Foundation
Joseph & Kathryn Nasvik

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ANNUAL CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

The 2017 Annual Campaign surpassed our goal of $213,500 in donations. Camp Widjiwagan is fortunate to have dedicated volunteers who donate time every year to contact our alumni, campers, staff, family members and friends to raise money for this important campaign. The funds raised support camperships, which helped 119 summer campers fund their 2017 summer trip. In addition 508 participants received assistance through the Outdoor Learning Program during the fall, winter, and spring. This annual campaign also supports staff training and development, repairs and replacement of trail equipment, wood canoe maintenance and funds to purchase safety equipment.

The campaign to raise funds for 2017 was chaired by Megan Klabe-Holleran. Many thanks to the dedicated team of volunteers that helped Widjiwagan reach our goal. Annual Campaign Team: Megan Klabe-Holleran, Cindy Gardner, John Saxhaug, Tom Hiendlmayr, David Lauth, Ned Patterson, Sandra Samuelson, Dave Mayer, Court Storey, Marjorie Fedyszyn and Amy White. A special thanks to all of those who helped call and connect during our general and major gift campaign.
Each year, as we review the financial picture of Camp Widjiwagan, we are astounded by the continued support from our community—from you. Your contributions and the earnings from our endowment funds made up 16% of Widji’s revenues in 2017.

That 16% helped to make camp possible for 119 summer campers, including 51 participants in the BOLD and GOLD program and other organizational groups, as well as 508 participants in the Outdoor Learning Program through school or other group programs.

That’s 627 young people who had the chance to hike, paddle, ski, sing, learn about the night sky, and cook over an open fire—thanks to your support.

As an organization within an organization—the Y of the Greater Twin Cities—Widji’s financial picture is unique. Our finances look different than those of other nonprofits since we do not cover the general costs of overhead (payroll, marketing, communication, etc.). Our financial relationship with the greater association is another important factor that helps to provide us with financial strength and resilience through the years.

Each year we review a snapshot of camp’s revenues and expenses (see charts below) in order to highlight the factors that keep our financial picture strong. The contributions and endowment earnings that come from your generosity boost revenues from camper fees—together this creates a strong, reliable, and consistent financial base that allows the Widji Way to thrive.

The Widji community is what makes the camp experience possible year after year. With sincere thanks for your support, The Widjiwagan Financial Development Committee