



WIDJIWAGAN
YMCA WILDERNESS ADVENTURES

2010 Year in Review

From the Board Chair

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Did you know that there are two other places named Camp Widjiwagan, in Tennessee and Illinois? For me, and likely anyone reading this, there is only one Widji though. It is a place that evokes fond memories of time spent in the northwoods, on trips, and sharing great experiences with our peers. Widjiwagan is an Ojibway word that means comradeship or close, lifelong friend, which I may have

learned when I was a camper or staff member but rediscovered since I began serving on the Board. I see my contemporaries and sit on committees with my first year counselor. Widji runs deep in my life. I consider myself fortunate to be connected to this terrific community and I cannot say enough in support of the work of our Board and additional volunteers for what they do in giving of their time, talents, and treasures.

Widji recently celebrated 81 years of wilderness adventures and has been providing excellent environmental education for almost four decades. In that time, many lives have been touched by Widji. The past year has seen much activity as the Board has applied efforts of the past years and continued to enact our strategic plan as we worked in preparation for the launch of our endowment and capital campaign titled “Preserving Traditions, Building Legacies, Transforming Lives.” There are many projects and objectives encompassed in this campaign with an overall goal of maintaining the wonderful quality Widji has come to be known for as we serve our youth.

The programs at Widji are fortunate to have such a beautiful site nestled into far Northern Minnesota where our youth learn teambuilding, values, planfulness and respect for themselves, their environment and their communities. While an idyllic setting, the facilities and grounds of Widji are in need of work to ensure these good works can continue

at the high quality we have come to expect. The endowment component of this campaign is devoted to grow Widji’s endowment by one million dollars. This will permit us to respond to the rising costs of our programs and ensure they remain within reach of the populations we are called to serve. Primarily, the capital component of this campaign will be directed at repurposing spaces to support the quality of Widji’s programming.

There are some very exciting enhancements in the plan which will unfold over the coming 5 years, including a better-functioning ‘trail hub’, encompassed by the Trail Building, Tripping Center and Canoe structures, where campers are given the tools to venture into our wilderness and is the location ‘in camp’ where many memories are forged. Long range structural improvements will remodel cabins and housing to best serve all four seasons of the programming. An additional feature of the campaign is fondly being referred to as ‘Burntside Circle’: this will connect the venerable cabin row from one end of camp to the other; provide an outdoor gathering space fitted into the natural contours present in the hillside exposed following the removal of the former Sigurd Olsen Center and Burntside House for large gathering and small group activities; and make enhancements to the athletic field, a heavily-used, signature feature of Widji in all seasons. We are very excited as the campaign unfolds and we begin to see the results of our efforts. I give a heartfelt expression of gratitude to our generous community that has contributed to Widji over the decades and look forward to you joining us in supporting our efforts throughout this campaign.

In this age of consumerism and our ever-connected society, Widji provides kids settings in which they are given the opportunities to unplug, challenge themselves, and to think and live differently. It is in these settings that close, lifelong friendships are built. The board and our devoted volunteers are working hard to guarantee that Widji’s legacy remains strong. I am grateful to be able to serve you in accomplishing our goals of meeting our mission! —Mark Scott, Board Chair

From the Director

At Widjiwagan, success is often measured in numbers. As you read through this edition of the Year In Review you'll find that last year's numbers demonstrate how Widji continues to positively impact campers and students.

I believe what truly defines success at Widji lies behind the numbers. This success is more difficult to measure; however, it is evident year-round at camp in the stories told by campers and students about their experiences at Widji. It is heard in the stories excitedly told by groups who just paddled back to camp and are unloading canoes at the Trail Building dock. It is seen in the long hugs (and often tears) goodbye at the bus as it is readying to take campers back home. It is felt by reading the exuberant comments written by students who proclaim the best part of their week at camp

was *surviving* a day-long Eco Hike and jumping through a hole in the ice after a sauna on a cold clear January night.

Last summer Widji made a program change. Instead of skits following the banquet at the end of a session, family and friends were invited to join in Closing Campfire. During the campfire each group stood in front of the Kirby Dining Hall fireplace and shared a highlight from their trip or told everyone about a group or individual goal they achieved. The result was an evening full of magical stories that highlighted the impact of the Widji trail experience. Some of the most insightful comments were shared by first-year campers.

Widji continues to be successful (measured by stories and numbers), because of our committed board members, volunteers, donors, and staff. —Liz Flinn, Executive Director



Former Camp Widjiwagan executive directors Whitey Luehers, Bob Rick and Tom Kranz with current executive director Liz Flinn attending the 125th Anniversary of YMCA Camping conference in October 2010 at the YMCA of the Rockies. Photo courtesy of Skip Wilke.



YEAR-ROUND STAFF 2010

PROGRAM STAFF

Liz Flinn – Executive Director
Missy Huppert – Marketing Coordinator
Peter Johnson – Kitchen Manager, Canoe Master
Dan McConville – Wilderness Program Director
Tom O'Rourke – Summer Program Director
Karen Pick – Fall/Winter/Spring Program Director
Linda Ramacier – Financial Development Director
Connie Starns – Capital Campaign Coordinator
Jim Schwartz – Canoe Master, Fall/Winter/Spring Cook
Joe Smith – Property Manager

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Melody Hanks – Administrative Coordinator
Tracy Ryman – Administrative Coordinator
Jennifer Weinzirl – Administrative Coordinator

Hallmarks of Widji Experience Endure

BY TOM O'ROURKE

One of the things I like the most about Widjiwagan is the continuity of its programs. If one were to compare a black and white picture from a trail group in the 1950s to one taken last summer, in some respects it would be hard to tell which one was the most recent. You would see the telltale wood/canvas canoe, the bulging Duluth Packs, the same crystal clear lakes and pine studded shores. The way that Widjiwagan travels through the wilderness, the ethic of respect instilled in each camper, the time-tested small group size, are all still hallmarks of the Widjiwagan program.

A few things have changed from yesteryear to today; one of them is the urgency of our program offerings in the lives of young people today. There is a growing body of literature that identifies how young people are increasingly cut off from the natural world. They spend more time indoors, more time staring at screens, and less time tromping about in the woods and waterways. Researchers are just now becoming aware of the negative outcomes—on both physical and mental health—

associated with this disconnect from nature.

Widjiwagan bucks that trend, and provides kids the opportunity to establish a personal relationship with the natural world (when you are thigh-deep in muskeg, the natural world feels very personal, indeed). Campers get to unplug for a week or a month, and fall into a rhythm not governed by alarm clocks or chiming school bells, but one that is dictated by the rising and setting sun. Life becomes, for a time, both simple and elemental. The wilderness provides opportunities for reflection, teamwork, and leadership; these are qualities that transcend both Widji and the wilderness. They are skills that can be tapped into at school, in sports, and everyday life.

Another change in Widjiwagan over the years is the opportunities provided to kids who would otherwise not have the chance to go to camp. Widjiwagan has partnered with a number of community organizations to help “underserved” campers experience the “Widji Way.” Some of these campers have never traveled beyond the bounds of the city, much less set foot in the wilderness. At Widjiwagan they get to discover a whole new world—the call of loons across still water, stars that appear close enough to touch.

The Widjiwagan experience is timeless, and plays an increasingly crucial role in the lives of young people. May the next eighty years be as fruitful as the first eighty! 



ENROLLMENT HISTORY

Camper	2010	2009	2008	2007
Camper	2010	2009	2008	2007
Summer Session Campers	647	646	670	704
Organizational Group Campers	24	27	39	30
Fall/Winter/Spring Campers	1,491	1,643	1,345	1,508
Year Round Total	2,162	2,300	2,054	2,242
Camper Days	2010	2009	2008	2007
Summer Session Campers	13,176	13,085	13,758	14,272
Organizational Group Campers	174	125	449	331
Fall/Winter/Spring Campers	4,584	6,383	4,141	6,227
Year Round Total	17,934	19,593	18,348	20,830

A Week In The Winter with Jefferson Community School

BY KAREN PICK

The bus rolled into camp on a chilly February afternoon and 45 7th grade students from Jefferson Community School, a Minneapolis Public School, climbed off looking nervous and excited. As they headed into Kirby for their official welcome and orientation talk, the students peppered the Widji staff with questions about what the week would look like. “When do we go skiing?” “How do we walk in such deep snow?” “Are there wolves around here?” “Are we going to go outside even if it is really cold?”

While the orientation and welcome answered many of their questions, it wasn't until the week really got going that the students settled in. By then, their nervous looks changed into full blown enthusiasm and they dove head first into the activities.

Upon their arrival, the teachers from Jefferson explained that their goals were for the students to have fun, learn to enjoy outdoor winter activities, and have their class come together more as a team. Consequently, we spent the next four days with these wonderful students letting them explore the northwoods, helping them bond more as a class and showing them how to enjoy a Minnesota winter. As the students spent time learning to ski, snowshoe, use a map and compass, and learn the art of fire and shelter building, they worked together, encouraged each other and enjoyed a side of winter they had never before experienced. On Thursday, most of them couldn't wait for the opportunity to try a winter sauna! By all accounts, it was a terrific week.

The teachers commented on their evaluations that, “Our students learned to trust each other and have loads of fun outside.” “It was a wonderful experience for our students. Your strong staff, the organized outdoor program, small group structure, welcoming camp atmosphere and the beautiful setting all contributed to helping us achieve our goals.”

As the students completed their program evaluations for the week, their comments included, “It was the most fun I've had outside and the dip-sauna-dip was awesome!”

“Our counselors made everything fun all the time.”

“I had fun at Widji because everything we did was unexpected, fun and my counselors were adventurous and exciting. It exceeded my expectations.”

GROUPS PARTICIPATING IN WIDJI'S FALL/WINTER/SPRING ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM • 2010

Blake School	Marshall School
Boy Scouts	Montessori School of Duluth
Carondelet Catholic School	Oak Hill Montessori
Centre Pointe School	Olson Middle School
Dugsi Academy	Project Venture
Ely Girl Scouts	Seward Montessori
Expo Elementary	Shakopee Area Catholic School
Fall Women's Weekend	Simley High School-German Student Exchange
Fiddle Camp	St. Francis-St. James United School
Free At Last	St. Paul Academy
Friends & Family of Anne Murphy	St. Paul Lutheran School
Groveland Park Elementary	St. Therese School
Harding High School	University of Minnesota ICD Group
Highland Park-AVID	Valley View Middle School
Jefferson Community School	Widjiwagan Board
Kenny Community School	Widjiwagan Leaders
King of Kings	Winter Women's Weekend
L'Étoile du Nord French Immersion	Yinghua Academy
Lake Country Montessori	Youth MEA Retreat
LSS Youth Services-Oh No 18!	



Joe Smith: Widji Caretaker for 25 years

BY KEVIN CHARLES REDMON

Let's dispense with some facts: Joe Smith is closer to sixty than fifty, ambles rather than walks, once killed a bear with an axe, and struggles like the rest of us to remember all the details he reads in his birding books. He went on an Intro trip in 1968 and stopped at Dorothy Molter's for root beer. He went on a Voyageur trip in 1972 and brought blue jeans.

Joe Smith collects hobbies like a nine-year-old collects baseball cards. His last thing was falconry, with a red-tailed hawk named Gusto. His latest thing is barefoot running, and he's never looked trimmer as a result. He plays a respectable fiddle, finally has enough time to practice and feels he's quickly getting better. He loves ice hockey like he loves his daughter, and he's a ringer in the Ely men's league.



Joe Smith is on Facebook. He has 206 friends.

Joe Smith is, like many autodidacts, an uncommonly voracious reader. The walls of his low-slung home, tucked in the woods on the edge of camp property, are insulated with books. (As a camper, I grew up believing the standard counselor line that if, while making

the nighttime dash from the sauna to the water, my group mates and I yelled too loud or splashed too much, Joe would wake up and come down to the beach with his bearish dog, Thor, and

then oh-boy-would-there-be-trouble. It kept us quiet, floating on our backs, staring at the stars, straining to see a glimmer of the northern lights.) Among life's little injustices he counts the fact that "A River Runs Through It" is the only one of Norman Maclean's stories that anyone ever reads, and he has read the entire Tolkien saga—1,800 pages, give or take—out loud to his son, twice.

Joe Smith has been a tracker, trapper, field biologist, logger, homesteader, father of two, and, for the last twenty-five years, Widji's resident jack-of-all-trades. He is the only member of the administration who can explain how a grapple skidder works, much less drive one.

Joe Smith is the northwood's adopted son. He grew up in the fifties in rural Missouri, on a farm owned by his grandfather, where his uncle raised show horses. "There was no one my age, so I spent a lot of time outside playing by myself," he recalled. With no television, either, and just an older brother for entertainment, one gets the sense Joe caught a lot of frogs as a kid. His father was a successful salesman, peddling motivation plans to corporate managers, and as an upwardly mobile family the Smiths moved around a lot. By 1968, the year Joe started high school and first came to Widji, the family had settled in Detroit. In those days, sessions were a month long and ended with Lumberjack Days, a kind of intra-camp competition. Parents were asked to check a box allowing their sons to smoke on trail, and cans of Spam and Campbell's soup were de rigueur. There was less dogmatic emphasis the well-rounded camper, and each boy was assigned a role by his counselor, according to his strengths: food pack carrier, cook, firewood collector. "I was always the tent setter-upper," Joe said.

In 1974, Joe returned to Widji, but not as a counselor. Instead, he worked maintenance, and took off weeks at a time to paddle. He bought a kayak and took it on long, meandering routes through the borderland wilderness. In 1975, he applied for staff but didn't get hired. Instead, camp offered him a job

driving trucks. By the time Joe arrived, though, it was clear that not enough trail staff had been hired for the summer, and he was promoted the moment he walked in the door. Joe had such a good time that he stayed through the fall and winter, and worked for the nascent environmental education program—though not before trying to sign on to a tramp freighter. (“I wanted to give it a try,” he said wistfully.)

Fear not, anxious parents of wayward students—Joe’s college education was an obstacle course of distractions, too. He spent a year at the University of Arizona, and then a year at the University of New Hampshire, where, on the lumberjack team, he first learned logging. When he still felt listless, he dropped out again, worked another summer and fall at Widji, and began following wolves around, looking for kill sites. He volunteered for Minnesota’s wolf project, and his boss told him that if he finished his degree he could have a job. “So I quick went back to UMD and got my biology degree.” Summers, beginning in 1978, Joe worked for Fish and Wildlife, trapping, collaring, and tracking wolves. Soon, he was hired by the University of Montana to look for wolves and, not long after, he caught the first wolf to be radio-collared in the Rockies. He added grizzlies to his research portfolio.

After one final summer—Joe’s third—of leading trips, and one more season spent with the grizzlies out west, Joe and Lindsay (whom he had met in 1980 when she was the cook for Widji’s winter program), settled in Hovland, on the north shore. “Earlier, on a whim, I’d bought forty acres up there. I decided the thing to do was quit working for the government, go build a little cabin up there, and start logging.” The couple lived in the back of a pickup truck while they built. “I’d fell the trees right there, peel them,” Joe said. With a roof over their heads, Joe went to work, first for logging crews in Grand Marais, felling both saw logs and pulpwood, and eventually set up his own business. Lindsay became a Teamster bus driver for the school system, and her paychecks saw them through the lean early years. Molly, their eldest, was born in 1983. Joe loved logging, but prices were falling fast due to international supply. Bob Rick called in 1986,

asking Joe to come be Widji’s caretaker and he and Lindsay agreed to try it for two years. They had a son, Scott, on the way, and the Canadian lumber mills were threatening to strike. The winds of change were blowing west, toward Burntside.

That was a quarter-century ago. Joe doesn’t spend a lot of time reflecting on his tenure at camp—he’s too busy changing tires, shoring up old cabins, and dreaming up heavy-lifting projects for errant, first-year male staff. (At eighteen, I moved a lot of rocks from the gravel pit to the Trail Building dock.) He points out that the continual reward of working at camp comes in the form of the company it allows him to keep. “You look at Dan Sinykin, for instance, and at first all you see is a goofy counselor. And then you find out that he’s a Ph.D. candidate at Cornell. And then you find out he was the pie-eating champion at Macalester.”

“When I first started as the caretaker, I was thirty-two,” Joe told me. “I was kind of like the older brother. And then, especially when Molly became a counselor, I went from being the older brother to being the dad. And now—I wouldn’t say I’m the grandfather, exactly, but I’m getting beyond the dad thing.”

When Joe Smith finally takes some time off this summer, it won’t be to re-shingle his roof or skid old telephone poles out of the power cut. Joe is going on vacation—to fiddle camp. There’s a group of old Widji souls making music these days, HamDog, and Joe’s been thinking that, when he’s good enough, he’d like to join in. It won’t be long. Wish him well. 

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There is The Right Way, The Wrong Way,

BY JOE SMITH

I like cutting the sauna hole. I like how kids jump through it as a rite of passage after taking the sauna that celebrates a week of new experiences during our Winter program. In the beginning of January I am asked to cut the first hole so that it is located correctly. I am suspicious that it being the most difficult hole to cut with the thickest ice has something to do with the request. That's ok, I like doing it.

I won't use a chain saw. The reasons I give are that it pollutes the lake and that the water spray hurts the engine. Perhaps these are good reasons, but mostly I feel the art of cutting a hole with an ice chisel is good for me to practice.

An ice chisel is a steel bar about four feet long with a cutting edge about one inch wide. It must be sharp. To be used efficiently requires the right technique and strategy. Most folks will try to cut keeping the edge of the chisel parallel to the line of the hole. This creates a valley into which the chisel will jam, there being no place for the cut ice to fall. It is best to make a crater at one corner of the intended ice hole (a rectangle about three by six feet) and then to cut with the blade perpendicular to the line of the hole, chipping ice into the crater, extending the line, so that eventually you circle back to where you started. I usually gain about two inches of depth with each lap. I want to keep the depth consistent because as soon as I break through to water the trough fills and the cutting gets a little messier (though when using a chisel its not as bad as using an ax which sprays the water back into your face with every hit).

The first hole in January has to go through from 10 to 20 inches of ice so I get many laps. I like the final cuts through hard black ice, which is the newest ice at the bottom. It is very pretty and very satisfying to cut through. Seeing the black ice makes me think of stories from Bob Binger about how years ago the Widji staff would come up in the winter to help Wilbur Jeffrey, the first Widji Caretaker, cut ice blocks for the

root cellar. The hard black ice would last much longer through the summer so the hope was for cold weather with little snow, conditions that make lots of new ice.

Widji was founded the year the stock market crashed and the world moved into the Great Depression. An ironic fact of the Depression era economy is that fur prices were very high, partly because it was illegal to trap beaver, which led to "outlaw" beaver trappers. One day while cutting ice blocks the work crew saw a man on snowshoes running toward them from the Slim Lake Portage. It was Floy Spurlock, a nice person but outlaw trapper nonetheless and behind him was the game warden also running on snowshoes. Floy ran right into the group of ice cutters weaving around to confuse his trail with theirs and then took off into the woods by cabin row. The game warden soon was weaving around the crew following Floy's trail and he too took off into the woods. Several times Floy would reappear to weave his track once more, always followed by the game warden. The suspicion is that Floy got away, but no one knows for certain. I admire their endurance.

This happened before Kirby Lodge was built, which brought electricity and refrigeration to the Widji Dining Hall making it no longer necessary to cut ice for the root cellar. Kirby was built by Robert Zimmerman in 1949. He and his crew were from Grand Marais on the North Shore of Lake Superior.

Before becoming the Widji Caretaker I worked for several years as a logger near Grand Marais and got to know two old-timers, John Henry Eliason and Lloyd Larsen, who helped build Kirby. They were proud to have been part of that crew and liked the fact that I would be looking after what they had built. Once a year I clean the log walls, top to bottom, inside Kirby. The nature of this job, wiping each log with a damp cloth, brings back memories of the guys I knew who helped raise those logs into place.

John Henry ran the salvage yard for heavy equipment. You went to him for parts and repairs. I had just bought my first skidder, a machine used to drag cut trees out of the woods. I decided it would be good to change the transmission fluid and was dismayed to discover chunks of gears coming out with the old fluid. I went to John Henry for help. John Henry said he wanted me to be a success which meant I would have to learn to deal with



and The Widji Way

challenges like that. To help me along, for \$100 he would let me use his shop and make sure I rebuilt the transmission correctly.

Lloyd was a logger I worked in the woods with. I went to his memorial last spring. One day in winter I was cutting trees to length when Lloyd asked me to move his pick-up from one side of the landing to the other to make room for more trees coming in. When I reached the other side and put my foot on the brake pedal I discovered there were no brakes at all. I put the front end into a snow bank. I worked with Lloyd for several more years with the reward of getting many lessons about life. The first lesson I heard from Lloyd was “Never assume a vehicle has brakes.” That is now part of Widji driver training.

Kirby Lodge was built as a summer use only dining hall. Now it is in use all year. There was a cabin called Kirby Lodge before the building we now know as Kirby was built, the cabin we now call Loon. Built in the ‘30s it was used for campfires and programs. I remember during a reunion a person wanting to see “the old Kirby;” he stepped inside to some good memories. There was another person whose primary quest was to find the pines near Chapel Point that had the chin-up bar when he was a camper. (I’ll bet he was good at chin-ups). We found them. It is rewarding to see people able to reconnect with Widji after many decades and much change.

Widji is a meaningful place to many people from many eras. Memories can be attached to many things in many ways. Any change has the risk of altering a memory. An old counselor of mine liked to go inside the Trail Building for the smells from the food and equipment that brought back memories of packing out. Many people look for that special commemorative paddle or mountain in the Voyageur Room of the Trail Building but for Bill Noyes it was the smell of packing out that brought back happy memories.

I have wondered if there will be a certain place or thing I will look for when it comes my time to visit Widji. I have decided I will be looking for the “Widji Way” that has kept this place familiar through the generations. I will look for work crews pitching in to get things done that were not necessarily listed in the job description. I will look for counselors giving demos before the trip to develop an ethic on how to travel and developing skills and

appreciation for equipment and one another. I will look for happy campers. I might have to hop in a truck and drive through camp on a garbage run so I can look for these things. I am glad to have met Wilbur Jeffrey when he came back to visit in 1976 during a banquet. I was a counselor then and he wanted to hear about my trips. Watching him hear my stories of working with kids, I could tell what made him happy about the place.

1999 was a significant year at Widji. It was a reunion year to celebrate Widji’s 70-year anniversary. Plans had also been made to start that fall on a project to enable Kirby Lodge to be used year round with a kitchen addition, new entry, remodel and heat system. That is a lot of modification to the building that had become central to the Widji experience and memories of many.

Some change occurs because of decisions that are made after much deliberation and debate. Other change happens in response to events unforeseen. On the 4th of July that summer a wind storm hit our area at 90 miles an hour. Lots of trees went down. Some cabins were damaged. When folks showed up at the end of August for the Reunion there was a lot of concern about how the storm impacted Widji; would we recover? I was with Armand Ball on Cabin Row, looking at the damage and assessing the situation. I was daunted by having to repair from the storm as well as accomplish the goals for Kirby Lodge. Armand said “There will always be challenges that come along like this 4th of July storm. Widji’s success and strength is learning to deal with it.”

Instead of John Henry looking over my shoulder as I rebuilt a transmission, this time it was the same Widji staff who used to help Wilbur Jeffrey cut ice that came back again to take the first shovels of dirt for the Kirby Dining Hall addition. It was a lot of current staff and alumni who gave extra that year to help. The damage from the storm was repaired. Kirby is now used all year and it is surpassing any of my expectations on how well it would serve. In October, when the leaves have fallen but the lake has not yet frozen, the sun light hitting the waves of Burntside casts a dancing reflection on the ceiling of Kirby that kids would not have seen but for the work done; more stories and memories. /



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Reflections from a Voyageur

BY LEIF VANDERSTEEN

My Voyageur trip last summer on the Anderson River was the experience of a lifetime. I realize that I am only 18, so perhaps that statement is a little premature, but it has affected who I am greatly. I hope to convey the importance Widjiwagan has had on my life through my following journal entries.

Day 4

Today I was humbled like never before and reminded just how human I am. Among my life, I feel it will remain one of my most memorable days.

We found ourselves paddling in a thick fog with the shore out of sight. A purple sky and the moon made up most of what I could see. We sat there silently and floated. My words cannot come close to describing how I felt. But my eyes began to water and my hair stood on end. I am not religious, but I am spiritual; my entire life was felt in that moment. Because I am me, I began to sing. It was beyond moving. My voice reverberated for at least ten seconds off the land and ran chills down my spine. I have sung in Carnegie Hall; it was nothing compared to this. No human creation could rival that which I experienced.

Day 28

Thinking of trips in terms of time and fractions is hard. This is the longest I've been gone and it has flown by. With the absence of time awareness, comes a wonderful feeling for simply being, seeing, smelling, hearing, and growing.

*If for but a single day,
I could sit tall, open my eyes,
And breathe deeply in the mist and
dew and be no where but
where I am,
Only then would I have mastered
Enjoying the simplicities of
Life.*

This trip was an investment in me on behalf of my parents. One in which they can nourish my desire for adventure and exploration. One in which they hope I can have time to reflect and grow, and one that will benefit and affect my way of thinking for the remainder of my life.

I don't expect to come back a different person, but an expanded individual who is efficient yet relaxed, understanding, respectful, and someone who is able to step back from the everyday rush of everyday life.

August 11, 2010

(Ten days after leaving the Arctic and my first night home)

After helping one of my closest friends move past traumatic memories, I thought to myself, "five days ago there was no other place I would rather be than canoeing here



in the Arctic." But right then, there was nowhere else I would rather be, and nobody else who I would rather be with.

On trail I was able to enrich my own life and that of my group, but the application of my growing was not clear until I stood in a puddle with one of the most influential and important people in my life, whose life I had helped improve, no matter how large or slight. //

Leif paddled the Anderson last summer with fellow Voyageurs Nate Blumenshine (counselor), Jonathan Bruns, Jake Cahill, Mike Haberman and Adrian Wackett.



STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSE

For period ending December 31, 2010

REVENUE 2010

Summer Program	\$1,622,367
Financial Assistance – Summer.....	(\$95,752)
Fall/Winter/Spring (FWS) Program.....	\$214,232
Financial Assistance - FWS.....	(\$24,861)
Other Revenue	\$12,079
Y Partners	\$242,858
Grants and Other Contributions	\$74,105
Endowment Earnings	\$153,972
TOTAL	\$2,199,000

EXPENSE 2010

Salaries/Wages/Benefits	\$832,537
Contracted Services/Bank Fees	\$28,718
General Liability	\$25,656
Program Supplies	\$250,800
Telephone.....	\$14,255
Postage.....	\$7,535
Licenses/Permits.....	\$39,126
Utilities/Building Maintenance	\$80,831
Vehicle and Equipment	\$293,440
Printing/Promotion/Web	\$21,493
Staff Training.....	\$15,781
Professional Dues	\$1,652
Depreciation	\$163,182
Miscellaneous.....	\$4,720
Interbranch Transfer	\$332,088
TOTAL	\$2,111,814

Distinguished Leaders



YOUTH SERVICE AWARD – SARAH ALEXANDER

Sarah has been a Widji camper for seven years. She went on a 40-day Voyageur canoe trip in the Arctic in the summer of 2010. Sarah has been a very active member in the Widji Leaders group, participating in the steering committee organizing volunteer events and activities. The most impressive event she organized was the Simpson's Woman's Shelter dinner. Here she led a group of campers in cooking for 25 people at the homeless shelter. She independently planned the meal and worked with the shelter staff to satisfy everyone's needs. Sarah is an organized and effective leader. She is responsible and dependable. She is very hard-working and driven to succeed, and shows a great deal

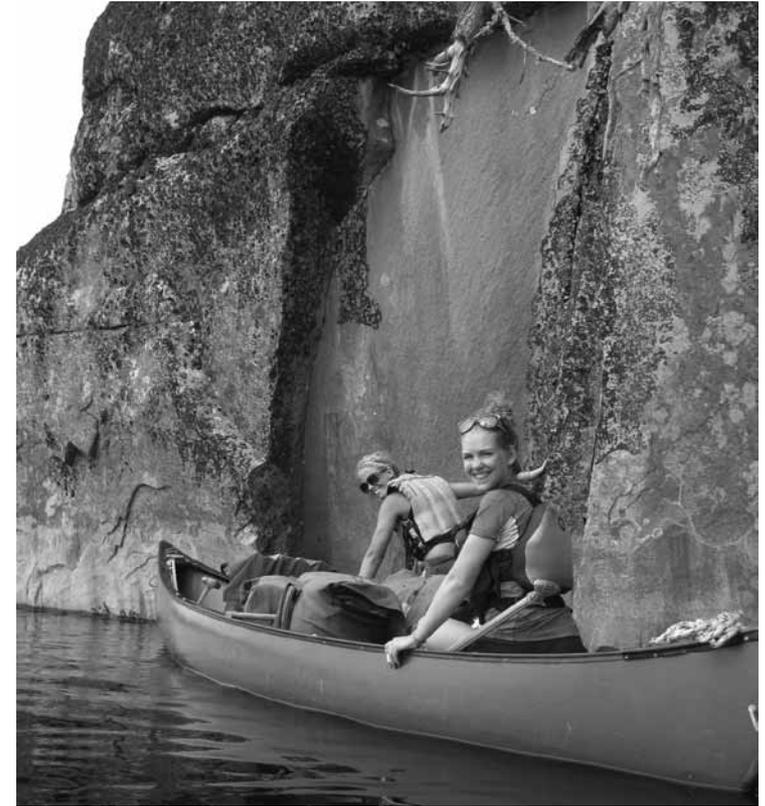
of commitment in all of her pursuits. In high school Sarah was a member of the Mounds View High School Student Council, the National Honors Society, and participated in Tennis and Cross Country. Sarah is a great role model, and leader. She is an optimistic and enthusiastic person, and is a pleasure to work with. //



ADULT SERVICE AWARD – DAVE JERDE

Dave is an exemplary volunteer. He came to be a part of the Widji board through the experiences his son Eric had at camp. He embraced serving on the board whole-heartedly by making a tremendous commitment of time. Dave served as the board chair and was a thoughtful leader who championed Widji's mission and always led by example. He encouraged and empowered volunteers and motivated them to support camp with their time and financial resources. Dave served on the Widji board for nine years. During that time he served on numerous committees including Finance, Financial Development, Buildings & Properties, Diversity Task Force, Strategic Planning Committee and the Capacity Task Force.

Mark Scott, Widji's board chair, said "Dave embodies the example of the camper parent who sees the impact of Widji on his child and is moved to devote his time and talents to make Widji a great place for all our children. His devotion has positioned him as a role model and he sets the bar high for the rest of us by stepping up and joining in when called to serve. I appreciate Dave's experience and perspective and turn to him for advice on how to proceed in my own service to the Y." After his years of service to Widji, Dave took a break. However, he has now returned to Widji to volunteer on the Financial Development Committee and as co-chair of the Capital Campaign. Dave is a tremendous advocate and ambassador for Widjiwagan. //



2010 LEADERS:

Voyageurs

Kendal Bergman – Coppermine River
Nate Blumenshine – Anderson River
Dave Hibbard-Rode – Coppermine River
Kate Lauth – Anderson River
Carl Peterson – Coppermine River

Mountaineers

Nancy Brittain – Wrangell-St. Elias National Park
John Bussey – Ogilvie Mountains, Yukon
Kevin Redmon – Wrangell-St. Elias National Park
Anna Shepard – Ogilvie Mountains, Yukon

2010 Y Partners Campaign Success

The 2010 Y Partners campaign reached a total of close to \$240,000 in donations with a goal to achieve \$260,000. Camp Widjiwagan is fortunate to have a great group of 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 support camperships, which helped 107 summer campers fund their trips. In addition, 203 students received assistance to the Environmental Education program during the fall, winter or spring. The annual Y Partners campaign also supports staff development and repairing and replacing trail equipment, wood canoe maintenance and other important projects.

The campaign to raise funds for 2010 took place in the fall of 2009 and was chaired by Mark Scott and Lynne Meyer. Many thanks to Mark and Lynne, all the volunteers and the following chairs of the individual teams:

General Calling: Lynne Meyer and Erin Walsh
 Board Division: Tom Pritzker
 Major Gifts: John Saxhaug and Tom Hiendlmayr
 Team Leaders: Matt Bailey, Anne Cowie, Tom Hiendlmayr, Keelin Kane, Bill Kellogg, Martha Naegeli, Court Storey and John Saxhaug

Administrative Support: Elizabeth Miller and Anne Murphy

A special thanks to the 96 general call night volunteers and to the 44 major gift campaigners who dedicated time and energy to support experiences for Youth at Widji. /

In Memoriam

Kenneth Boehmer

Kenneth Boehmer served on the Widji Board in the 1980s and truly enjoyed being a part of the Widji community. He dedicated his time to the Y Partners campaign and returned to help with the campaign for years after his involvement with the Board. It was the sense of community and the coming together around the mission of sending campers to Widji that retained his volunteer commitment.

Kenneth died on October 20, 2010. He spent his entire career in the lumber industry but it was his love of the outdoors that is remembered by so many of the people who were impacted by his life. His son Mark remembers so many experiences that involved fishing and hunting, some with much amusement. They were fishing for salmon in Alaska just a few weeks prior to Kenneth's death. His daughter Sara attended Camp St. Croix and his son, Mark attended Widji. His children's involvement in the camps is the reason that Kenneth volunteered his time with Widji and it was through the outdoor activities that Kenneth instilled his basic motto in the children and grandchildren— "family first, treat others fairly and with respect, try your best, do the best job you can and work hard. Life owes you nothing."

The children and grandchildren are now carrying on his legacy of love of the outdoors and take as many opportunities as possible to live out his motto. /

Charles "Chuck" Adams Doerr

Influenced by the Widji experiences of his

St. Paul cousins, the Von Bergens, White Bear Lake friends, the Shanks, meeting Sigurd Olson, and the example of his older brothers, David and Henry, Chuck was bound to enjoy being a camper in the 1960s. Later as a married man with wife and toddler, he returned to become a staff member, a counselor, cook, song leader and maintain the wooden canoes. The lessons learned at Camp Widjiwagan rang a deep chord in Chuck's life, his passion for canoeing, camping, conservation, carpentry, teamwork and singing — all nurtured there. Raised on Lake Minnetonka, he graduated from Blake School, attended the University of Pennsylvania and the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina.



Not only was Chuck artistic: a painter, potter and a carpenter, but he was musical: a self-taught guitar, violin, mandolin, and piano player, who brought "May the Long Time Sun Shine on You" to Widji. He and MaryEllen raised their four children on a small farm in Viroqua, Wisconsin, as part of a Waldorf School community. Eventually all his children and his nephew, Andy Jopling, became Widji campers: Edward, AnnaJo, Reed, Georgia and Colter. Two became Voyageurs, one a Mountaineer, and Counselor. Chuck introduced his niece Rachel and the children of his second wife, Denise Hodges, to the "Widji

2010 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

	Summer	Organizational	School-Year	Total Campers
Number of Individuals	78	29	203	310
Dollar Amounts	\$92,816	\$16,464	\$10,583	\$119,863
Total Campers	647	29	1,491	2,167

In Memoriam



Suzanne Elizabeth Flinsch

Suzanne Flinsch (1940-2010) grew up in St. Paul. She was a ground breaking female attorney and spent the latter half of her career as a public defender.

Suzanne supported her children, Montgomery, James, and Elizabeth's interest in Widjiwagan and eagerly awaited the stories upon their return from camp. She and her husband James thoroughly enjoyed the tales of thrills and challenges of their wilderness experiences, but the self-reliance, respect and understanding of teamwork that she saw grow in her children were what instilled in her the belief in the power of the Widji experience.

As a public defender she worked with many people who had encountered immeasurable hardship as young people. She truly believed that many of her clients' lives could have been changed by going to Widji. It was her belief in the life-changing power of the Widji experience for all young people that inspired her family to honor her memory with an endowment in her name. //

Waid Johnson

Waid Johnson had a long history with Camps du Nord and Widjiwagan. His grandfather, Alfred Johnson, scouted the land for Julian Kirby on which Widji was built, and led what could be said to be the first trip of what was to become the camp. Waid's parents, Lyle and Corky, were the resident directors



at du Nord when he was in grade school, where Waid began his romance with the trail. Camper and counselor in both summer and winter programs, he eventually served on the du Nord board. He continued his life in camping, attending NOLS and Outward Bound, where he also led groups. Later, he worked for the Fresh Air Fund's camps, serving troubled youth from New York City.

Waid was deeply attracted to working with challenged youth, and devoted his career to doing so. Himself a long-distance runner who graduated from Drake University on a track scholarship, and later earning a Masters Degree in Experiential Education from the University of Minnesota in spite of severe dyslexia, he well understood overcoming obstacles and challenges. As a social worker long employed by the Northwest Youth and Family Services, he used that knowledge and his ebullient approach to life to serve his clientele. The end of his career was devoted to working as a Meeting Facilitator through his company, Paint the Elephant. His work was recognized by the Minnesota Technology of Participation facilitation network with their ToP Champion of 2011 Award. To honor his efforts, his colleagues created an endowment fund at Camp Widjiwagan to perpetuate his legacy.

Waid was a world traveler and adventurer his entire life. As a child he lived in Tanzania with his family for a year, returning there to create a program for distributing soccer balls to local clubs, schools and youth organizations. He traveled by indigenous dug-out canoe up the Amazon and by dog sled into Greenland. His travels took him throughout Asia and Europe as well. Ever gregarious, even during his illness, he was known to meet strangers with the greeting, "What can I do for you?" He never met a stranger or a dog he didn't like. //

Way," including Maya, Hadley, Kiva and Liberty Hodges. How many final banquets he attended, each an excuse for camping and revisiting Widji! He loved traveling with the leaky "Barnard" tent invented by his great-uncle Tom and a wooden canoe his brother David built to show his children the glory of the outdoor life and physical activity, collecting poetic snippets and Bob Dylan songs.

Besides his busy family, his farm, and his carpentry, Chuck's commitment to his ideals led him to help start a Co-op and a youth hockey program in Viroqua, to push for recycling, organic farming and alternative energy sources and to organize resistance against a dangerous landfill and a coal ash dump. His musical talent found expression with an Irish String Band and as an enthusiast of the arts, in coffee houses, artists' studios, theaters, homes, and church congregations. Chuck was an unusually devoted father to his children, their education, travels, and accomplishments. When he was diagnosed with ALS last July, family and community became his support team, taking loving care of him at home until he died on March 7, 2010 at age 59. Humble and generous, Chuck made deep personal connections, was a dedicated leader and lived with mindful convictions. A Memorial Fund for his brother David to benefit Widji campers began in 1988 and Chuck's name has been added to this Legacy. //





Foundation Support

Anderson Corporate Foundation-Summer Wilderness Outreach & Environmental Education
 Hugh J. Anderson Foundation- Summer Wilderness Outreach & Environmental Education
 Armand and Beverly Ball Family Foundation in Raymond James Charitable Endowment Fund-Y Partners
 Roger and Ronnie Brooks Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation-Y Partners
 Brown Family Foundation-Y Partners
 Charles E. & Edna T. Brundage Charitable Scientific & Wild Life Conservation Foundation-Y Partners
 JAPAJAP Foundation in honor of Reuben Henriques-Y Partners
 Ann Carpenter Kay Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation-Y Partners
 Knox Foundation - Susanne and Zenas Hutcheson-Y Partners
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 The Philemon C. & Barbara Blanch Roy, Jr. Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation-Y Partners
 Terhuly Foundation-Hugh Schilling-Y Partners
 Troutman Blumenshine Family Fund of the Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program-Y Partners
 Donor designated funds of the United Way of the Greater Twin Cities
 The William & Barbara Welke Charitable Fund of the Vanguard Foundation-Y Partners

Gifts from the Heart



Special Gifts:
 Brian Ensign - Summer staff training
 Mark Scott - Summer staff training

Garage Sale Volunteers:
 Numerous and dedicated volunteers drove the Spring and Fall Garage Sales to success. Sale proceeds benefit both Widji and du Nord camp programs.

Gifts in Kind:
 Kendal Bergman - Widji Leaders Coordinator
 Rollie Brusseau - Temporal thermometers, AED & professional medical services
 Kathy Clock - Creative writing
 Ginna Curry - Widji Leaders Coordinator
 Gilles Family - Boots and dry bags
 Paul Gustad - Old Town Otka canoe
 Arlin Melgard - White pine benches and coat racks
 Elizabeth Miller - Bandanas
 John and Judy Miner - Hobart kitchen mixer
 Marty Ruddy - Construction consultation
 Nancy Smolick - Canoe yoke
 Terra Firma - Biffy construction
 Wellington Management - Steve Wellington - Storage space
 Arlene West - Graphic design
 Jim Wheeler - White pine benches and coat racks
 Skip Wilke - Photography
 Skip Wilke - *Canoe Paddles: A Complete Guide to Making Your Own*, by Graham

Non-board Committee Members:
Risk Management Committee - Mark Bixby, Mike Grace, Ned Patterson, Peter Wilson
Financial Development Committee - Dave Jerde
Campership Committee - Jean Currie, Dave Mayer, Caroline Schultz
Capital Campaign Steering Committee - Dave Jerde
Buildings and Property Committee - John Saxhaug

2010 Endowment Gifts

Kevin Burke Memorial Fund

Anonymous

Bussey Family Endowment Fund

benefiting YMCA Camps du Nord, St. Croix, and Widjiwagan

Mike and Marcia Bussey

Patrick Butler III Memorial Fund

Patrick and Patricia Butler
Peter K. Butler

Charles and Michael Cheney Memorial Endowment Fund

in memory of Chuck and Mike Cheney
Louise and Rich Routhie

in memory of John M. Baker

in memory of Laurie Snow

in memory of Ralph Johnson

Arta Cheney

Doug and Kathy Clock Advanced Trip Endowment Fund

Doug and Kathy Clock



Kelly Davis Advanced Trip Endowment Fund

in memory of Kelly Davis
Gary and Jane Clements

Jacqueline DeLong Family Endowment Fund

in memory of Jacqueline DeLong
Peter DeLong and Berry Farrington

David W. and Charles A. Doerr Memorial Endowment

in memory of David Warren Doerr
Charles A. Doerr

in memory of Charles A. Doerr

G. Stuart and Ann Ackman

Henry Doerr

Lynne Meyer

Gregg Peterson

Carla Smith

Suan Weil and Todd Warner

in memory of David and Chuck Doerr

Mairi Doerr

Steve and Jayne Quehl Dumas Memorial Fund

in memory of Steve and Jayne Quehl Dumas
Denis and Phyllis Bakke

in memory of Edward Lavigne

in memory of James Traynor

in memory of Arnold H. Weber

in memory of Marlys Rose Weber

Earl and Mary Jo Quehl

Suzanne Flinsch Endowment Fund

in memory of Suzanne Flinsch

Anonymous

BenchmarkQA, Inc.

Bruce and Nancy Berry

Caroline and Robert Bruce Binger

Mary and Raymond Dick

James Dorsey

Michael Finnegan

Carol Fuller

Kandise Garrison and Paul Fish



Mark and Norah Garrison

Terrence Garvey

Juan Hoyos

Jon Kingstad and Anne Dimock

Joan and Richard Meierotto

Debra and Daryl Schmidt

Martin Schneider and Janet Schaefer

John and Linda Schroeffer

Shelly St. Martin

Nancy and Bruce Thomson

Richard and Lucy Wilhoit

Otis Godfrey Endowment Fund

in memory of Jean Gehan

in memory of Ruth Momsen Quast

Jean Godfrey

Greenberg Family Endowment Fund

Sue and Bob Greenberg

Ju-Ka-Lin Gustafson Endowment Fund

Karen and Alan Crossley

Rose Gustafson

in memory of Rosemary Bixby

Karen and Alan Crossley

David E. and Judy Jerde Endowment Fund

David and Judy Jerde

in honor of David Jerde

Minneapolis Otolaryngology, Donna Vaughn

Herbert O. Johnson Memorial Fund

in honor of Kirsten Johnson and Alissa Johnson

Judith Miller

Waid Johnson Endowment Fund

in memory of Waid Johnson

Gary and Jane Clements

Jane P. Katter Memorial Fund

Jack and Susan Cornwell

Bruce Koci Memorial Wood Canvas Canoe Fund

Robert and Margaret Baker

Ann Guhman

Dorothy Lundahl Endowment Fund

Dorothy Lundahl

Rodger and Katherine Lundberg Endowment Fund

in memory of Rodger and Katherine Lundberg and Mary Lundberg

Sue and David Johnson

in memory of Mary Lundberg, Zach McArthur's mother

Phyllis Ann and David Quay

2010 Endowment Gifts, continued

Dave and Sherla Mayer Family Fund

Dave and Sherla Mayer

Anne and David Murphy Family Fund

Anne and David Murphy
John Murphy, Jr.

Frank and Laura Nelson Memorial Fund

in memory of Mary C. Gray and Edward W. "Ted" Gray
William Gray
in honor of Melinda & Jason Hight, Laura & Frank Sullivan, and Steve & Lisa Mattson
Sandra and Merle Mattson

Harold C. Nicholls Memorial Fund

Nedra Nicholls

Bill Noyes Endowment Fund

in memory of Bill Noyes
Thomas Noyes



Harry and Shirley Nye Endowment Fund

in memory of Harry and Shirley Nye
Penelope Maines and Knute Johnson

Robert Olander Ecology Fund

in memory of Robert Olander
Olander Family Fund

Ormasa Hiendlmayr Family Endowment Fund

Thomas Hiendlmayr and Jan Ormasa

William and Nancy Priedeman Fund

in memory of Bill Priedeman
Nancy Priedeman

Racciatti Family Endowment Fund

in memory of KC Racciatti
Thomas Racciatti

Linda and Dominic Ramacier Endowment Fund

in honor of 50th Wedding Anniversaries for Mary & Bill Cunningham, Bob & Sue Hengelfelt, Deanna & Gary Sande, and Bob & Mary Meffert

Linda and Dominic Ramacier

Rick Family Endowment Fund

Bob Rick

in memory of Waid Johnson
in memory of Howard Olson
in memory of Jay Rochlin

Bob Rick

Winthrop and Barbara Rockwell Endowment Fund

Win and Barbara Rockwell

Rob Runyon Endowment Fund

in memory of Rob Runyon
Linda and Don Branch
Donald and Sharon Fleming
Donna Fleming
Mary Fleming
Lois Runyon Kadlec
Louise and Rich Routh

Saxhaug Family Endowment Fund

John Saxhaug

Kenneth W. Scully Advanced Trips Endowment Fund

in memory of Kenneth Scully
Kenneth Scully Fund of the Catholic Community Foundation



Kenneth W. Scully Wood Canoe Endowment Fund

in memory of Kenneth Scully
Kenneth Scully Fund of the Catholic Community Foundation

Nora and Joe Seliga Wood Canoe Fund

in memory of Joe and Nora Seliga

Anonymous
John Bell and Lauren Bern
Gary and Jane Clements
Deb Sussex

Margaret and Edward Therrien Endowment Fund

Jennette Wasmund

YMCA Camp Widjiwagan General Endowment Fund

Paul and Sheryl Bolstad
Meredith Fund of the Women's Foundation of MN

Mary McNellis
Christine and Annop Tantisunthorn

in memory of Rosemary Bixby
Richard and Helen Bumgardner
Keelin Kane and Mark Bixby
Sallie and John Douglas March
John and Janet Sage
Mary and Michael Sage

in memory of Ben Storey
Armin and Ginny Luehrs

Widji Heritage Club Members

Anonymous	Mairi C. Doerr	Linda Brown Harris
Jim Andre	Cynthia & Charles Driscoll	Tom Hiendlmayr & Jan Ormasa
Walter & Ginger Bailey	Sharon King Erickson	Christy & Doug Hlavacek
Armand & Beverly Ball	Ann & Dwight Ericsson	Lucy Hollinshead
C. Robert Binger	Betty Felix	Mary Horak Binger
Sandra Bjorndahl	Elizabeth Fesler	Ruth & John Huss
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Linda & Dominic Ramacier	Robert R. Wilke
Margaret Boulware Rarig	Dan & Ruth Willius
Katie Reed	Emily Wilmer
Gary & Gale Rick	Richard A. & Lou Ella Wood
Bob Rick & Joanne Oyen Rick	

HOW TO HELP SUSTAIN WIDJI

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.
- /// For information on establishing a named fund, please contact Linda Ramacier at 612-465-0454 or linda.ramacier@ymcastpaul.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
 Attn: Linda Ramacier, Development Director
 2125 E. Hennepin Ave., Suite 150, Minneapolis, MN 55413

Meet John Bradford — Voyageur, Business Owner, Legacy Builder

BY KATHY CLOCK

Any way you measured it, the Voyageur trip led by John Bradford in 1996 was a success. John and his five campers had canoed three storied rivers — the headwaters of the Back, the Mara, and the Burnside — completing their trip at Bathurst Inlet. His Voyageurs' lives had been changed in the arctic wilderness, and they returned to camp full of strength and confidence, with stories to tell. Their banquet might have marked a splendid end to the story of John's relationship with Camp Widjiwagan.

But it wasn't the end of the story at all — it was actually the start of a new chapter.

John had a history with Widjiwagan long before that Voyageur trip. It started, in fact, even before he was born. John's father, John D. Bradford, had been a Widji camper, though only for a year,

and his grandmother, Alice, had served on the board. John's uncle, Fred P. Bradford, had been part of an early Voyageur trip, tracing a segment of MacKenzie's route through western Canada. His were the stories that captivated John, who loved camping from the moment he started at the Northeast YMCA day camp. When John "graduated" to Camp St. Croix he took part in everything he could, and by the time he was twelve he could hardly wait to go on a Widji trip.

It's a huge commitment to complete the full Widji wilderness tripping progression, and even more so to continue the progression as a counselor. By the time John had finished leading his Voyageur trip, he'd committed thirteen of his twenty-four summers to Widji. He doesn't hesitate to say that Widji helped shape the person he is today.

Summers at Widji helped John discover strength and confidence at a time when he didn't always feel that way at school. But it was a winter Environmental Education week at Widji that had the most powerful impact on John's young life. "It was during that winter week at Widji, with the kids in my class, that I was able to connect who I was at camp with who I was at school. I felt like I'd been struggling socially, and that week gave me so much more confidence with my peers."

John found his life transformed again when he took part in Widji's first mixed-abilities trip. John was 14 years old at the time, and school was a struggle for him. Widji's mixed-abilities trip was a collaboration with Wilderness Inquiry, pairing campers with disabilities and able-bodied campers. "I thought I'd just be there to carry gear and do the heavy lifting for the disabled campers. Was I ever wrong! The camper I was paired with was not only disabled, he was overweight and in poor physical shape. But he made up for it with incredible determination. There was one long, really difficult portage. I thought I would carry a load, and then come back to carry his. But my fellow camper wasn't going to be stopped by his disabilities. He took on a pack and the counselor's high-performance paddle, and did the portage himself. Sometimes he fell. Sometimes he crawled. But he always got back up, and when he made it to the end of the portage, my life was transformed as much as his. His 'bring it on' attitude taught me about persevering through a challenge and striving for success."

Widji counselors often leave a lasting impression on their campers. It was that way for John and his Voyageur counselor, Brad Brunner. "I watched Brad on our trip," says John. "He managed a difficult group by letting us make our own decisions. He was leading by making us step up into leadership roles. He managed my youthful exuberance and brought us back in one piece. The only time he really had to put his foot down was on a set of rapids I wanted to paddle, and we found out later



John doesn't hesitate to say that Widji helped shape the person he is today.

someone — not from Widji — had died in that set. Balancing that eagerness with responsibility is something a counselor has to be able to do. I tried to take on a similar style when I became a counselor, and I realized how hard it was. You have to have enough confidence in your campers to risk letting them make some mistakes. Because that's real growth — if you can fail and pick yourself back up, and still find a way through."

John loved being a Widji counselor more than being a camper. "It was the best job I ever had. I loved canoeing and being in the wilderness," he says, "but I loved it even more by seeing it through the eyes of my campers."

John's connection with Widjiwagan has continued long beyond his counselor years. He worked in camp, continues to be a dedicated volunteer, has been an active board member, and is a donor and Heritage Club member. Members of Heritage Club are people who have made, or plan to bestow, an endowed gift to Camp Widjiwagan. It's a club that is both honorary and social. "That's another special thing about Widjiwagan," says John. "It's the friendships you make. You experience it on trail and in camp, between campers of different ages, counselors, and staff. I took my wife, Jill, and my business partner, Bob Larson, on their first canoe trip, along with Amy White and Nick Johnson, past Voyageur and Mountaineer leaders. It was Bob's and Jill's first Canoe trip, and it was on the Back River."

"Later you can connect as a volunteer. I had a great time organizing Canoe Galas. And you wouldn't believe the fun volunteers have at the Garage Sale. At Widji you make friendships that last a lifetime. When I look at my own situation, I see so many. Brad Brunner is godfather to my first child. I've gone to the weddings of my own Voyageur campers. My Widji friends and I get together socially a lot. We're older now, with spouses and families, and our get-togethers often include them, too. My wife has a bond with the other Widji spouses. We have three

kids, ages six, four and two, and it was great to be able to take them to duNord this summer with some other Widji alumni families. It was a way for us to reconnect and introduce our families to the places and activities we love. It's hard to believe, but in six more years, I'll be a camper parent."

"What Widji does is so important," John stresses, "I want to make sure it continues — for my own kids, of course — but also for others. The campers change; some things at camp have changed; but two things don't change, and they're the point of it all — teens meeting challenges, and experiencing the wilderness. That's the reason Jill and I included a bequest to Camp Widjiwagan when we created our will."

And, John points out, it's the reason his mother, Sally Bradford, recently included Widji in her will, too. "My mother knew it was good for me, and my sister, Explorer backpacker Kate Bradford Rodbro," says John. "But it was the impact on my niece that really convinced her. My niece, Nerina Disomma, really found herself at Widji, too. I convinced my sister and my mother to send her. It transformed her. She found her strength and gained that confidence that Widji women get. Her Voyageur banquet was a highlight in all of our lives."

Transformation — that's what a Widji experience is all about, and it's a powerful legacy. John went from being a student who struggled academically and socially, to finding his gifts for leadership and resourcefulness. He became a counselor, a teacher and now a husband, father, and business owner. His nieces discovered, and are discovering, their gifts at Widji, too. Nerina is now a pre-med student at Dartmouth.

"It's important to perpetuate the Widji experience. Widjiwagan is part of my legacy," says John. "and it's important that people know that about me. By including Widji in my will, I'm making a statement about my values that will last even after I'm gone." 

The campers change; some things at camp have changed; but two things don't change, and they're the point of it all — teens meeting challenges, and experiencing the wilderness.



Voyageurs, 1996: Jonah Kinne, Jason Hughes, John Bradford, Matt Bussey, Mark Holloway and Peter Yanz

YPartners

HUDSON BAY \$5,000-\$9,999

Anonymous
Ruth & John Huss
Kas Kinkead & Marty Babcock
Keo Rubbright Lukefahr &
Robert Lukefahr
Mark & Nancy Mammel
Ted Naegeli & Sue Tesmer
Philip & Katherine Nason Fund of
the Saint Paul Foundation

ADVANCED EXPLORER \$2,500-\$4,999

Brown Family Foundation
Mark Dayton
Susan & Robert Greenberg
Alida Messinger
Tom & Sally Patterson
R.C. Lilly Foundation
Tom Racciatti
Hugh Schilling - Terhuly Foundation
Robert "Skip" Wilke

EXPLORER \$1,500-\$2,499

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