LAKETRAILS
LAKETRAILS BASECAMP - PORTAGE RUNNER

Pass the Paddle - Sign up now & call for silent auction items

Sign up for tickets here:

https://givebutter.com/c/pass-the-paddle-2026-copy-rfzgsz

The silent auction will open on Sunday, October 11th.

Looking back at the summer

By Yuri Orth

When one hears a bell ringing, they may be confused about the source.

When Laketrailers hear the bell, they know that they are home.

The summer of 2026 went by as quickly as time does, docile and leaping, stretching out in moments of challenge, and flying by as campers reached their 3rd day of trail onward. The feelings of being in a place surrounded by constant curiosity, encouragement, and a drive to experience an adventure continued to be the leading motivation through diverse trips and groups. The songs belted and laughter cackling over paddles dipping into the water is what I picture immediately when I consider this summer.

However, I think my favorite moments this summer were the ones spent in silence. Sitting, listening, experiencing, truly being connected to nature and all the forces surrounding oneself. I think about this summer, and I picture the quiet moments on the rocks at Kevin Campsite (on Falcon Island), watching the sunset after a hard day of pushing against the wind and counting down when island cover was lost. Listening to the waves lapping against the shore, watching the colors in the sky reflecting over the waters, seeing the silhouettes of the campers sitting on the rocks, enjoying truly being in the moment.

The journal entry written on that very rock:

Day 4!

- 1 big snapper
- 1 deer in the water by a shore
- 1 frog (green) on a lilypad
- 6 baby ducks trying to fly away (one mom flying then coming back)

Without the quiet moments, paddling and thinking, observations like these wouldn't be possible.

None of the quiet moments were any less than loud ones; although we are no longer together during challenging crossings or quiet reflections, taking a piece of quiet through everyday makes Laketrails feel not so far away.

No matter the distance, though, Laketrails is never far in our hearts.

Another Successful Celebration of the Staff

By Joe Miller

Nick and I were thrilled to make it up to the island this Staff Appreciation Weekend just in time for the Middle School Session closing campfire. Even though rain moved the gathering inside the lodge, it didn't dampen the goofy energy that Middle School campfires bring.

Festivities for the staff started in the afternoon with swimming and tubing. It's always a toss-up over who enjoys it more: Nick piloting the boat or the staff skipping across the water. Later that evening, we celebrated the staff's summer of hard work with a hearty meal, staff gifts, and a luxurious sauna session led by Bridget Douglas.

A huge thank you to Scout, Jim & Steph Tikalsky, Sam Collette, and Nick Collette for making the trek up!

And thank you to the staff for the amazing summer!

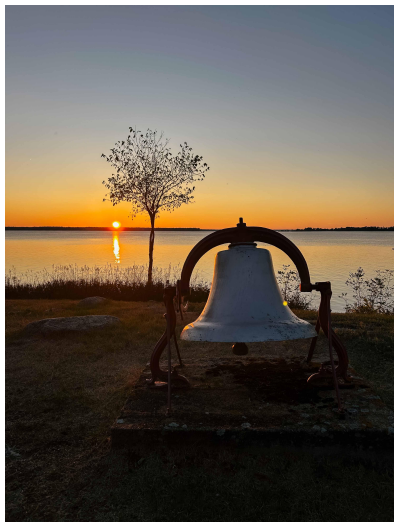
Sneak peek at the 2027 summer dates - Keep an eye on the website to sign up!

Session 1 (FULL)	June 18-26
Session 2	June 27-July 5
Session 3	July 6-14
Session 4	July 16-24
Session 5 (Middle School)	July 25-Aug 2
Session 6	Aug 3-11
75th Reunion!	Aug 13-15

Reflections from a Camper Worker

By Mundo

My name is Mundo. I'm 17 now, and I have been going to Laketrails for 3 years. This was my first year being up at camp for more than one session. Even though I had to (got to) leave my family for a month, it was the best decision I think I've made in a while. Laketrails has a loving community you can't find anywhere else. It allows people to take big steps out of their comfort zone and find who they truly are. On a personal level, Laketrails has solidified a very special place in my heart, since I wouldn't be the same without it. I'm not just saying that to "wow" people into coming here, or to overly glaze this camp. I love that place; if I could live up there year-round, I would. To share my story, the first year I came to Laketrails, my father, whom I hadn't seen for 7 years, had been shot and killed in St. Paul. I had a very weird childhood, which I won't get into detail about since I'd still like this to be happy and uplifting. To put it simply, I didn't like/know myself. When I went to Laketrails, I thought it would be a regular summer camp that would be fun. I wasn't expecting to be surrounded by people who didn't care how I looked, how I acted, or how weird I was. I was overwhelmed by amazing support and a beautiful community. I could go into a DEEP dive into how much this place changed my life, but I'd rather not write the Declaration of Independence, and I don't think anyone would want to read it.



When my good friend told me I could go up there for a month, I was so ready to do it. Up there, I was able to talk and bond with so many other people. Being on an island with people for a month really does something. I've made so many new friendships, people that I hope to see again for many years. Usually, when I'm in a big "production" or community, I'm one of the youngest people there, and as a Camper Worker this year, I got to be the role model. The first time I went to camp was the fourth session, so I knew people from my school. Now that school has started, these kids come up to me asking things like, "How was it up there for a month? Was it cool?" "What did you see?" "I want to go up there for a month as well!" These kids are so excited to come up next year, even though they've only been there once before, and it was so fulfilling to see the impact the camp had on them, as it did on me. The next session, I had these middle schoolers, which I didn't even go on trail with, write me letters. Saying how they couldn't wait to come back next year. One kid, who I won't name, was so shy and quiet, even before I knew I was going on trail with him. We were in the same cabin. That boy came back to the island with a massive smile on his face and was very talkative to a lot of people. And the session after that, the same thing. I had a fellow camper asking me how old they had to be to be a camper worker, and how to become one. Another camper said how heavily impacted their life was, making them more comfortable with herself in just a week.

Laketrails has let me express myself more than any other place I've been. This past summer has shown me that I want to be a guide. To impact the kids' lives positively and give them a community where they can be themselves. I wouldn't be the same person without this camp, and I thank God every day that I was sent there 3 years ago. I love Laketrails, Ping!

Eureka! No more.

By Scout

LakeTrails is finally retiring the old Eureka Timberline tents, and it's worth pausing on how much life they had in them and just how many summers of use these legendary tents got.

I first came to LakeTrails as a camper in 1991, came back a few years later as a camper worker, and guided canoe trips until 2000. The green Eureka was the only tent we used.

One year in the mid-1990s, during the first two sessions of the year, we grabbed gear straight off the shelf in the wilderness room and headed out. At our first campsite, a camper hollered across the site, Scout, we're missing a macaroni. Eureka officially calls it a Junction Tube, but when you're hungry it looks like a big macaroni. It's a short pale yellow tube with three holes, two for the corner poles and one for the center ridge pole. Without it, that corner has nothing holding the tension. We rigged it that night with some parachute cord tied to a tree, pulled tight enough to make it through the night. At the fire that night, I whittled a replacement out of a soft pine branch, boring three holes with my Leatherman to match where the poles needed to seat. By the next day it was in service, and it held for the rest of the trip.

The next session, a different tent was short its whole rain fly. We slung a tarp up and over it each night for the rest of that trip. With two added challenges like that, we figured the tents were testing us on purpose. That got raised at the staff debrief, and out of it came a real fix. Tents got pre-set up and checked before heading out, and every bag got a big number in permanent marker so we could track it down if something went missing or needed repair.

These days, whenever I'm back at LakeTrails, I still spot my handwriting on the tent bags, big permanent marker numbers, still legible after all these summers. It's wild to think how many nights those tents stood between us and the rain, wind, and bugs, and how many kids slept like rocks after a full day on the water.

Those tents outlasted a lot of us. New ones are overdue, but they've got a high bar to clear. Can they be field repaired with a Leatherman and a pine branch? Only the next generation of guides will have to figure that out. Something will go wrong out there, and the new guides will handle it, same as every generation before them.

Come see our new tents at Pass the Paddle!

Announcing Laketrail's 75th Anniversary!

Come one, come all! Calling all Laketrailers home for a reunion like never before. Reconnect with old friends, make new memories, and share with loved ones the little island that has become such an important part of your story.

August 13–15, 2027

This will be our first reunion without Fr. Bill. While we know he has joined quite the crew of Laketrailers, paddling through the heavens, his absence has renewed our commitment to legacy. His vision, leadership, and unwavering belief in young people helped shape Laketrails into far more than a summer camp. He helped create a place where people learned, not only how to paddle a canoe, pitch a tent, or read a map, but also how to care deeply, lead with compassion, and live with courage.

For 75 years, Laketrails has been a place of transformation. Generations of campers and staff have stepped onto the island carrying excitement, uncertainty, homesickness, curiosity, and hope. Somewhere between early morning paddles, campfire songs, trail meals, rainy portages, and late-night conversations, something lasting takes root. Laketrails has always offered more than adventure, it offers belonging.

There is something sacred about returning to a place that helped shape who you became. The lake remembers. The trails remember. The docks, the canoes, the wind through the pines, the quiet water at sunrise, all of it holds the echoes of the people who came before us. Every paddle stroke, every shared laugh, every challenge overcome together becomes part of a story larger than any one person.

As we gather for this milestone reunion, we invite you to reflect on the legacy you carry forward. What did Laketrails teach you? Who were you when you first arrived and who did you become because of this place? How have the lessons of community, stewardship, resilience, and wonder continued to ripple through your life?

The experiences we have at Laketrails ripple outward in ways we may never fully see. They show up in the way we lead teams, raise families, support friends, serve our communities, and care for the natural world. They live in our instincts to help carry someone else's pack, to encourage one more stroke when the wind turns against us, and to find joy even when things don't go according to plan.

This reunion is also an opportunity to preserve our shared history. We are asking all attendees to bring memorabilia, photographs, journals, letters, trail maps, songs, artifacts, and stories—or simply your memories—to help us document and archive the Laketrails experience. Every generation has something valuable to contribute, and every story helps paint a fuller picture of our collective history.

We want to hear from all generations of Laketrailers. Whether you attended decades ago or just recently completed your first summer, your perspective matters. Throughout the weekend there will be opportunities to record oral histories, participate in storytelling sessions, and connect across generations in meaningful conversation.

Of course, no Laketrails reunion would be complete without time to play. There will be plenty of opportunities to paddle, swim, explore, fish, laugh, and participate in your favorite Lake of the Woods traditions. Whether you're eager to launch a canoe, revisit beloved camp activities, or simply sit by the water and soak in the beauty of the place, there will be space for both adventure and reflection.

This reunion is a homecoming. It is a celebration of 75 years of courage, friendship, growth, and community. It is a chance to experience the magic of Laketrails once again—to rekindle wonder, renew connection, and remember what brought us here in the first place.

75 years of stories. 75 years of community. One unforgettable weekend.

Registration for the weekend is open now. Stay tuned for a finalized schedule, reunion merchandise, and additional opportunities.

We can't wait to welcome you home.

Sign up here: https://givebutter.com/LTReunion