



# Kern Family News

SUMMER, 2017

## From the pages of a book, to reality!

Quidditch tournaments, Light Sabers, and Knights in Shining Armor. In Camp Kern's Literary Themed Camp programs, these are no longer things of fantasy. For the past seven years, Camp Kern has been at the forefront of developing and running fully immersive themed camps which transport campers into their favorite literary and fantasy worlds.

Starting in 2010 with one week of Harry Potter literary camp, the idea was to give campers the opportunity to live out the adventures of their literary heroes by bringing their imagination to life. Everything about the program would be fully immersive; upon arrival they went through the sorting hat ceremony, counselors played the roles of their professors, and they would go to daily lessons such as potions or flying

(zipline) as opposed to the traditional camp activities. The camp is unique in that it provides an experience that is appealing to all different types of campers; each week we see a very diverse group of campers come together over their love of literary themed fantasy.

Since their early trial run, our themed camps have quickly become our fastest growing programs at camp. We now run eight themed camps a summer, and have devoted all of Wilderness Village to these programs. With new themes being picked each year based on whatever the next big adventure is, we predict to see even more growth from these one of a kind programs. Don't miss out...be sure to join us on an adventure of a lifetime this summer!

## Goodwill Easter Seals Job Readiness Program

As we continue our focus on growing camp's community engagement, we are proud to announce a recently formed partnership with Goodwill Easter Seals of Miami Valley. This non-profit organization's mission is to empower people with disabilities and other disadvantages to achieve independence and improve their quality of life. Their "Job Readiness Program" is a great example of their work, and we are happy to provide some of their participants with a chance to gain experience in a workplace environment, helping with numerous tasks around camp every Wednesday. They are fast becoming a part of our Camp Kern family and we hope the partnership grows into further collaborations.

We are now expanding the program to include working with local volunteer teens every Tuesday and Thursday this summer. The teens will have the opportunity to experience the wonder of Camp Kern.



## The Passing of a Kern Legend



Funds collected in memory of Jack have been used to set up a scholarship for kids in need to come to camp. Every year, one child will experience camp because of Jack and his family and friends...a fitting tribute.

November 22<sup>nd</sup> last year was a sad day in Camp Kern's history as we all said a fond farewell to 'Mr. Camp', Jack Singerman. Jack's commitment to kids, contagious enthusiasm and legendary story telling will be sorely missed by all those fortunate enough to have known him.

Jack's career with the Y began in Alliance, OH as a Physical Director in 1950. In 1961, despite having little camping experience, Jack's enthusiasm and dedication to the Y led him to Camp Kern as the new Camp Director. After observing the 1961 summer, Jack set to work, and with the support of an exceptional board, he took camp to a new level based on a 'kids-first' philosophy. Through sheer determination and force of will, Jack was able to launch Ranch Camp,

our Outdoor Education program, install a trampoline center, and construct: Sugar Woods Village, Elk Lake, Poppe Farm, Elk Lodge a new swimming pool, alongside programs such as Paul Bunyan Day, Vespers, riflery, out-trips and order of the oar. Jack was promoted to Director of Camping Services for the Dayton Y in 1973, before becoming the Director at Countryside YMCA upon its opening in 1976.

Alongside Jack, the Singerman family have been faithful supporters of Camp for more than half a century, and their guidance and encouragement has always been appreciated. Jack will be remembered fondly; with a smile on his face a twinkle in his eye and an unerring devotion to the magic of camp; as Jack would always say, 'It's for the kids...'

## Bathroom Renovations Across Camp

Summer camp bathrooms and shower houses have long had the immovable stigma of being dark, dirty and full of all manner of flying monsters! Camp Kern is trying to change that image with a complete overhaul of some of our most 'in need' bathrooms. Earlier this year, the Lower Bathroom was expanded and upgraded to meet our expanding guest population, by doubling of the capacity of showers and renovation of the existing showers. Continuing our environmentally friendly approach to facilities, we have also upgraded our water heaters to super-efficient "tank-less" heaters, installed newer, more efficient toilets and updated all the sinks and faucets. The result is a brighter, cleaner and more efficient bathroom awaiting our campers this year at Traditional Camp!

Our second project, currently underway, is the rebuilding of our Brisben Teen Center bathrooms. This village can host up to 91 guests, but the facilities were designed to

hold less than half that number... something had to be done! Luckily, we have an amazing Golf Outing Committee, and with a matching grant from the YMCA of the USA, the Golf Outing funds are being used to modernize and expand these bathrooms. Four old and grim showers will become ten brand new showers with changing areas. Six toilets are becoming twelve and along with new flooring, a new roof, 'tank-less' water heaters and water saving toilets and faucets, this new facility is finally one that we can be proud to call our own. This project is being completed by our very own Maintenance department and will be ready in time for the first summer campers on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Our future plans include upgrades to the Moore building and Elk bathrooms, so slowly but surely we are reinventing the definition of summer camp bathrooms!



## Alumni Spotlight—Bill Pees

Bill Pees first started his adventures at Camp Kern in high school, back in 1963, when he came on summer retreats. Bill fell in love with the place.

Around 1984, Bill joined the Board of Management and really got involved. He took his son to camp, starting with Indian Guides and then Trailblazers and his daughter went to Ranch Camp.

Bill believes that once you experience Camp Kern you become “infected with the Camp Kern blood.” It becomes a part of you and you are forever a part of camp.

His children got infected with Camp Kern blood and then they sent his grandchildren to carry on the family tradition.

In the late 1980’s, Bill became Board Chairman and worked with Larry Maxwell. He helped start the ropes course and stayed involved with that. Around 1987, Bill worked with Stuart Weinberg and Jack Singerman establishing the Kern Fund to send kids to camp. He loves to see how kids change and grow while at camp. Bill sees the changes in them after they experience being away from home, trying new things and meeting lots of other kids.



Bill’s favorite part of Camp is Main Camp and the Sugar Woods cabins. He spent Christian weekends at camp and worked with other board members to paint the bath houses and camp offices.

Bill loves Strawberries and Ice Cream and attends every year. He loves to see the new campers and counselors, the new people with Kern blood.

## Staff Spotlight—Craig Haines

Craig Haines took over as Camp Kern’s Maintenance and Property Director early this year. Since saying an imprudent yes to the job, Craig has been inundated with innumerable tasks and unsympathetic task masters, relentless coworkers with an interminable stack of maintenance request slips and a fiendish proclivity for breaking things. We are fortunate that he carved out a bit of valuable time to answer a few questions about himself and his new job.

Craig, what brought you to Camp Kern?

“My adventure here at camp started seven years ago. I started as a part time groundskeeper and then the opportunity presented itself to be a full-time maintenance guy. I didn’t even have to think twice about it. I love everything about

camp and what it stands for. To see the impact we have on thousands of kids speaks for itself. When you drive through the

gates out front you feel this warm feeling of being home. That is what brought me here and what has kept me here.”

How do you describe the job of Maintenance Director?

“Being the maintenance director definitely comes with its struggles and stressful times. But I see this position as a caretaker, someone who leaves camp in a better place every day. Kern has been here for a long time and has been changing lives of children since the day it opened. Being responsible for keeping this place together and keeping everything in working order is an honor of mine. My goal is to provide the best facilities and grounds for all our guest and staff. I am grateful for this opportunity and responsibility.”

How long have you and your beard been together? What magical powers does it possess?

“My beard and I have been together for 3 years now. If it has any special powers I would have to say its ability to help keep my shirts clean. I am a very messy eater and it helps catch anything that misses my mouth.”

Tell us something about your personal life.

“I grew up in this area my whole life and I graduated from Little Miami High School. I have an amazing girlfriend Courtney and we have 4 boys between the two of us. Carson will be 9, Creo will be 6, Leo will be 5, and Cole is 3. They are all blond haired little boys and 110% boy. There isn’t a day that goes by that they aren’t covered in mud or breaking something. But that’s what little boys are supposed to do. I was supposed to share something embarrassing but instead I want to share that recently I decided to have a relationship with Christ and surrendered my life to Him. I am excited about this new adventure in my life and determined to become a better father for my boys and become a better man for all the people I love and everyone who loves me.”

*Con’t on back...*



# Upcoming Kern Events

## 2017 Events

Alumni Pool Party  
Sunday, August 13

Alumni Work Project Day  
Sunday, September 24

Pre Thanksgiving Feast  
Sunday, November 19

Arctic Dash  
Saturday, December 2



## Staff Spotlight—Craig Haines *Continued...*

Imagine the Camp Kern staff in an episode of survivor. Who would you vote off first and who would ultimately win?

“It would have to be Kev Thornton because he is a fierce competitor and he would be some serious competition in the challenges. And I would have to say Loretta would win it all because she is the reason why everything runs so smoothly here at camp. If anything, she is the one who deserves to win.”

What is your favorite thing about Camp?

“My favorite thing about camp is how all our staff feels like a family and seeing all these dedicated people here to help kids experience this magical place. This world has become so digital and technology is taking over these kids’ lives. Camp offers kids a place to escape their everyday lives and help them just be kids.”



### **Kern Family Committee**

Kara Barton  
Erin Crosby  
Traci Hale Brown  
Andrea Kaercher  
Michele King  
Natalie Schiavone  
Curtis Wright  
Chris Addison (Kern Staff)  
Dave Moran (Kern Staff)

### **Volunteers Needed:**

In an effort to build a strong committee, we are seeking additional volunteers to help us with are various positions. If you are interested in joining the committee, volunteering at events, assisting with the newsletter, donating, or anything else, please contact us at:

[campkernalumni@gmail.com](mailto:campkernalumni@gmail.com)