**119th Convention of the Diocese of Utah – Camp Tuttle Report**

***Submitted by Ingrid VanZanten, Camp Tuttle Director***

Members: Ingrid VanZanten, Karen Gleeson, Christine Jenkin, and other trained seasonal staff members.

*Camp Tuttle’s mission is to provide a positive and inclusive learning environment that celebrates spiritual enlightenment in the outdoors. Campers and counselors work to create a safe place to challenge comfort zones, societal norms, thinking patterns, and understanding of the life and world around them. Through this work, we provide abundant opportunities to connect with self, others, nature, and the Divine.*

The snow-pocalypse of the 2022-2023 season (900+ inches of record-breaking snow) left the physical structures of camp in pretty poor condition heading into the 2023 summer season. On May 3, 2023 the camp director was on a regular winter camp check when she found that a large snow cornice had fallen from an eave of the lodge, severely damaging the large, iconic west-facing lodge windows. After many hours of cleaning up snow and glass, the windows were left covered in plastic tarps, awaiting the insurance adjuster’s visit. In addition to the lodge windows, many roofs around camp sustained damage, as did the infamous Camp Tuttle archway sign. Fortunately, camp’s insurance will cover a large portion of the cost associated with construction, and the remaining cost was either fundraised during the summer or were available within the yearly budget. The lodge windows are set to be finished in June this year, along with the other projects that were delayed due to summer programming and early snowfall last autumn.

Despite the backdrop of broken and tarped windows, Camp Tuttle participants enjoyed a summer full of connection, challenge, and creation! Camp’s summer theme was Wonder, and it was no surprise that nestled in the majestic spruce trees of Big Cottonwood Canyon, wonder was a pretty easy thing to come by.

The three main programmatic goals of the 2023 summer were:

* Host a successful first annual Pride Family Camp
* Expand and sustain the Mental Health Advocacy Program
* Camp staff retention initiative

A surprising dip in camp registration numbers was distinctly noted at Camp Tuttle, but also across the summer camping industry for a variety of suspected reasons including a post-COVID travel surge and financial burdens on the typical summer camping demographic. Despite a smaller camper population than the 2022 summer, we carried on with programs that provide participants the opportunity to connect with themselves, others, nature, and God.

Our first annual Pride Family Camp was advertised in June at the Utah Pride Parade and Festival and was well attended for a first-year program. We were honored to have Bishop Phyllis in attendance. Participants from a variety of backgrounds within the LGBTQIA+ community experienced a summer camp program designed specifically with them in mind. It was truly an historic weekend and a big step for summer camp inclusion in Utah. We are looking forward to our second annual Pride Family Camp this summer and invite you to attend. Summer camp is for Everyone!

Camp Tuttle’s Mental Health Advocacy Program continued to grow and gain traction in reach and effectiveness. University of Utah PhD candidate, Carina Terry, joined us this summer in the role of Mental Health Advocate. Carina was truly an asset to our program and led many hours worth of meaningful mental health programming for youth and adults at camp. Thank you, Carina, for your thoughtfulness of your programming, and care of the individuals in your care this summer. This MHA program continues to inspire summer camping professionals from around the country within and without the Episcopal Church to implement the important work of mental health care at camp.

It is well known in the summer camping industry that staff retention is one of the toughest on-going challenges that directors face year to year. This year, the camp director planned and hosted five different events to keep Tuttle’s camp counselors supported and connected throughout the school year. The initiative was successful to the degree that 17/21 staff members from the 2023 season will be returning to camp this summer! The benefit of returning counselors is invaluable to our program and will certainly be felt in the coming season.

It should be noted that Ingrid VanZanten was elected to the board of directors for Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers. She will work with the board to support the vitality of all camps and conference centers and continue to present relevant and up-to-date content at their Annual Conference, while learning and wading into the waters of camp consultancy and development.

Notable on-going and upcoming projects and goals for facilities and programming for the spring and summer of 2024 include:

* Repair of snow damaged buildings
* Camper and participant retention
* Increase Camp Tuttle rental group revenue
* Rock climbing wall renovation and route setting
* Major pump house plumbing repairs
* Provide youth with space and time to stay connected, challenged, and engaged
* Collect an annual pledge from donors after weekly summer camp updates
* Engage camp staff in meaningful and intentional anti-racism work and restorative justice practices

Camp Tuttle supports the work of the Diocese at large by giving participants the opportunity to be in community and to explore nature and their connection to God.