

In This Issue

- Great Lakes Loons Take to the Fields... 1
- WMFC Partners with Spring Hill..... 1
- Lion's Club Totem Pole Gift..... 1
- Dow COP Summer Adventure..... 3
- Otto Involvement Spans Decades 3
- Brooke Alba Joins WMFC Board 4

Great Lakes Loons Take to the "Fields"

On a warm morning in August, after many months of planning, the **Great Lakes Loons** baseball players and managers arrived on two charter busses and began working to transform the baseball fields at the **West Midland Family Center (WMFC)**.

"**Rebecca Rekeweg, United Way Director of Volunteer Engagement and Tina Queary, United Way STEM and Corporate Volunteer Manager** contacted me early in the year and explained that the Great Lakes Loons were interested in coming to WMFC

...continued on page 2



Great Lakes Loons demonstrate compassion at WMFC.

WMFC Partners with Spring Hill to Provide Camp Experience

Each summer hundreds of children attend the famous **Spring Hill Camp** in **Evart, Michigan**, where tuition is \$650 to \$800 per week. The camp fills up quickly, often resulting in a waiting list. That said, it is impossible for economically challenged children like those from **West Midland Family Center (WMFC)** to attend a camp like Spring Hill. That all changed this past summer when Spring Hill and WMFC worked together to offer scholarships to 26 of our first through ninth grade students.

WMFC staff provided transportation to and from camp and worked to

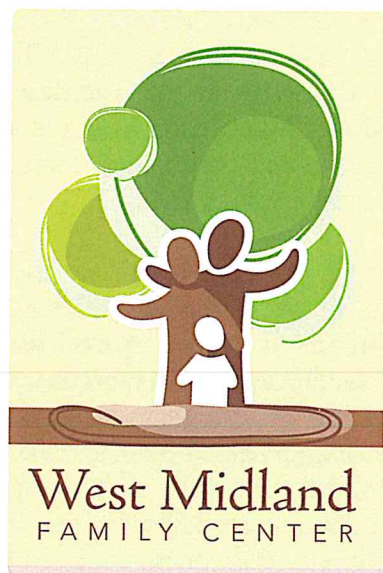
...continued on page 2

Lion's Club Totem Pole Gift Encourages Imaginative Play

Various types of totem poles have a long and rich history for people all over the world. They symbolize whatever their creator had in mind. The totem pole on the WMFC playground is only one year old and is likely to stand the test of time as it was carved from a recently deceased *Quercus velutina* (more commonly known as a black oak) tree. At the base of the totem providing strength is a lion (naturally!). Proceeding up the totem pole there is a bear, a fawn, a caterpillar and finally a honey bee capping off the top.

"There is supposed to be a monkey

...continued on page 2



P.O. Box 1985

Midland, MI 48641-1985

989.832.3256

www.wmfc.org

Great Lakes Loons Take to the "Fields" ...continued from page 1

to improve our baseball field as part of their **MiLB Initiative Community Engagement Program**," explained **Helen Roth, WMFC Connect and Serve Volunteer Coordinator**. "They brought enough man power to transform not one, but two baseball fields which they completed in only a few hours time."

After lunch the players signed autographs and took to the newly renovated field to play a kickball game against WMFC students before heading back to town to get ready for their game against the **Dayton Dragons**. WMFC Families were given free tickets to attend the game and cheer the Loons on to what would be a 3-2 victory.

"It was amazing to watch the fun

interaction between the players and the kids as they laughed and enjoyed a friendly game of kick ball together," shared Roth. "Later that night at the game I watched those same kids line up along the fence and chat with the players like they were longtime friends."

Earlier in the day the Loons players and the families were asked, "What does community mean to you?" "Community means a group of people coming together, to help each other and care for each other while trying to make a difference together," shared Roth. "And that was demonstrated here at WMFC on a sunny August day, out back on a worn out baseball field, as it was renovated into our own field of dreams," said Roth as her face lit up with a smile.

Special thanks also goes to the **Bullock Creek Blitzcreek Robotics Team** who volunteered during the day and brought their robot to entertain and educate all those in attendance.



"One more run for us!" yells Nicholas Giacalone as he crosses home plate in the kickball game that pitted the kids against the Loons.

Spring Hill ...continued from page 1

remove any barriers that might prohibit students from taking advantage of the week long adventure. Once at camp, students were housed in themed housing units such as wigwams, authentic restored train cabooses and even a **C123-K Bomber** that flew in the **Vietnam and Korean Wars** and now rests peacefully in the lush green forest that surrounds Spring Hill.

The camp experience is unique and powerful in the lives of children. According to a recent **American Camp Association Youth Outcomes Study**: 96% of campers surveyed stated that camp helped them to make new friends, 93% said that camp helped them to get to know kids who were different than they were and 92% of campers noted that camp helped them to feel good about themselves. Additionally, 74% said that while at camp they succeeded at things that they were initially afraid

...continued on page 3

Lions Club Gift Encourages Play ...continued from page 1

but she must be hiding somewhere on the playground," explained **Greg Dorrien, WMFC Executive Director**. "The totem pole helps children access pretend play."

"Pretend play is much more than simple play activities; it requires advanced thinking strategies, communication, and social skills. Through pretend play, children learn to do things like negotiate, consider others' perspectives, transfer knowledge from one situation to another, delay gratification, balance their own ideas with others, develop a plan and act on it," notes **Dr. Scott Kaufman** who emphasized the value of pretend play in his 2012 article in *Psychology Today*.

There would be no totem pole on the playground at all if it wasn't for the **Midland Lion's Club**, who commissioned the piece in honor of the **Lion's Club International Centennial Celebration** in 2017. In

addition, a beautiful wood plaque made by members of the **Bullock Creek High School Wood Tech Class** commemorates the gift.



"Careful Miss Karann, I think the bee is guarding the honey!"

Summer Adventure is Unforgettable Experience

This summer, the **Dow College Opportunity Program** Freshmen and Sophomore classes traveled to the Upper Peninsula for their adventure trip. Activities were planned with the goal of helping students learn how to overcome obstacles, rely on themselves and each other, and learn to keep moving forward. Learning these lessons can take many forms. On this most recent trip, the students were traveling to **Miners Falls** outside of **Munising**, when they ran into a road block due to construction.

"The initial response was to turn around, head home and cut our adventure short because there didn't appear to be a route around. However, that's not how we work in COP" explained **Mike Sobolewski, Dow COP Director**. "Instead, we decided to drive in the general direction of our destination, taking side roads

back tracking towards our goal and eventually we found the detour," continued Sobolewski. "Hiking out to the falls was great, but exploring behind and around the waterfall made the trip an unforgettable experience! Students learned first-hand that giving up is a sure way to lose out on opportunities, and that there is always another way to achieve your goal!"



COP Students take a selfie at Miners Falls as a reminder to always follow through and pursue ones goals, even if it means having to overcome roadblocks along the way.

WMFC Partners with Spring Hill *...continued from page 2*

to try. In the same survey 70% of parents shared that camp instilled a new level of self-confidence in their child.

"My two oldest children got to go to Spring Hill and absolutely loved it! They came home singing the camp-fire songs they learned and they still play many of the games they learned there," shared **Kerry Tungiyen**, a WMFC mother. "Being at Spring



WMFC camper spends time with new camper friends playing in the Spring Hill Spray Park.

Hill was a great experience for them as they had never been to camp by themselves, let alone away from the family. Camp helped them in dealing with their peers, improved their social skills and helped them to overcome their fears. They are no longer afraid of standing out in a crowd," continued Tungiyen "and my daughter, who has a terrible fear of heights, faced that fear and went on the zip line!"

While at camp WMFC students "unplugged" for a week and spent their days doing all kinds of outside activities such as swimming, tubing, horseback riding, zip lining, archery, fishing, canoeing and paintball. They also spent time at the skateboard park and the water ropes and high adventure courses.

"My daughter had so much fun trying out new things that she'd never done before. She made many new

Otto Family Involvement at WMFC Spans Decades

The **Otto Family** has been part of the fabric of West Midland Family Center (WMFC) for decades. Through the years, Otto children and grandchildren have attended WMFC preschools and summer programs, and family members have volunteered in many of the WMFC programs. The last time that the Otto family attended **WMFC Family Camp Neyati** was over 20 years ago. When they returned to camp this summer to join the family fun planned by the **WMFC Family Services Department**, it was a special surprise for staff members.

"Things have changed a little bit since anyone in our family attended

...continued on page 4

friends and she really liked her counselor. She would definitely go again if given the chance," shared a parent.

The good news is that summer 2018 was only a beginning. Both Spring Hill and WMFC plan to work together for many more summers to send kids to camp free of charge.

"Spring Hill and WMFC don't want this to be a one-time deal," explained **Renee Young, WMFC Family Services Director**. "We are looking for those in the community who want to link arms with us in this endeavor and make the camp experience a reality for these kids. The hope is for the children to return year after year so that staff, through the camp experience, can grow relationships with these kids...relationships that have the potential to dramatically impact their lives."

WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER
P.O. Box 1985
Midland MI 48641-1985



"Pssst...Midland Lions Club enhances pretend play experiences...pass it on."

2018 Board of Directors

Officers:

Ben Dollard, President
Bill Bowen, Vice President
Brooke Alba, Treasurer
Rod Dishaw, Secretary

Directors:

Joy Buchanan
Dan Dub
Dave Parrillo
Tammy Screws
Carol Stone
Wendy Traschen
Joe Weiler

Honorary Board Members:

Bob Dostal
Tom Misner
Charles Norisez
Bill & Beth Schmidt

Advisors:

Greg Bergtold
Sally Bowen
Carl Coons
EJ Herst
Bo Miller
Dave Pellegrum
Larry Reeves
Ann Schmitz
Joe VanderKelen

Executive Director:

Greg Dorrien
dorrieng@wmfc.org

Family Focus Newsletter Publisher and Webmaster:

Renee Allen
allenr@wmfc.org

Brooke Alba Joins the WMFC Board of Directors

Brooke VanderKelen Alba was elected in January 2018 to the **West Midland Family Center (WMFC) Board of Directors** for 2018. She's also active on the Center's Investment and Accounting/Budget Committees.

Brooke is a lifelong **Midland** resident having attended **Cook, Jefferson, and Herbert H. Dow High School** before leaving Midland to attend **Michigan State University** where she majored



Brooke VanderKelen Alba

in Finance and Entrepreneurship. Brooke is married to **Dan Alba** who works at **Nexteer** as a mechanical engineer. You shouldn't be surprised if you see the Alba's skiing or at the dog park with their Golden Retriever, Koda.

When Brooke isn't volunteering at WMFC you can find her at **Snow Machines** pouring over spreadsheets to figure out her part on how they will land the snow gun contract for the next Winter Olympics!

Otto Family Involvement Spans Decades

...continued from page 3

camp but the fun of camp is still the same," commented Mr. Otto. "One of our favorite camp activities of sitting around the camp fire enjoying time as a family while singing silly songs, is still part of the Camp Neyati experience."

"The Otto Family shared how WMFC has always been there for them and was always willing to help when their kids were young. Mr. Otto shared with everyone how excited he is that his grandchildren are now attending the pre-school and summer programs," explained **Sheleigh Nicolai** of the **WMFC Family Services Department**.



Mr. and Mrs. Otto

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MIDLAND, MI
PERMIT NO. 153