

Echoes from Camp

THE GLISSON NEWSLETTER

FALL 2009

QUICK FACTS:

- Next year we will celebrate Glisson's 85th anniversary! 1925-2010
- We just completed our 2nd consecutive summer with over 2,500 campers.
- Sparrowwood Lodge turns 25 this year.
- Next year we also celebrate sixty years of the Glisson Chapel 1950-2010.

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Forty Years of Sparrowwood 1969 - 2009

Sparrowwood began as a ministry to children with developmental disabilities in the Athens-Elberton district in 1969. This year we celebrate 40 years of a special ministry to some very special people.

The first summer program was held at the Hartwell Youth Camp. Alice Bagwell, one of the program's pioneers, recalls, "We did many of the traditional camp activities that first year, such as fishing in the pond from the dock and also in flat-bottom boats. We also had horseback riding, dances, talent shows, and all the campers had cabin duties too."

Alice also remembers that Bea Detrick was the motivator behind getting the program started in

1969. "Bea worked closely with Don West on this. I was working with Bea in the Conference office at



Sparrowwood campers receive a special brand of love and care from their counselors

the time, which is how I got involved."

The name "Sparrowwood" was selected by campers and counselors in 1979 from a long list of

suggested names, based on Matthew 10:31. The program eventually outgrew the Hartwell Youth Camp and was formally moved to Glisson in 1982. "Bob Lanford was very enthusiastic about bringing Sparrowwood to Glisson", Alice recalls. "He wanted to be sure we could pay the counselors and secure funding for the program long-term."

A major turning point for the Sparrowwood program occurred when Sparrowwood Lodge opened in 1984. After 14 years of temporary locations, Sparrowwood finally had a home of its own.

Alice remembers how proud the Sparrowwood leaders were when the Lodge was being built.

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Forsyth UMC Loves Glisson

In 2003, a total of five families made the 125-mile trip from Forsyth, Georgia to Dahlonega for mini camp at Glisson. Six years later, Forsyth UMC sent 48 campers to Glisson for summer camp 2009.

What started as five families traveling in their own cars now requires at least two trips with

the church bus.

Four of those five original mini campers are still attending Glisson each summer. They are now senior high campers who are excited about the prospect of becoming Leaders-in-Training (LIT's), CREW and Counselors over the next few years.

"Our kids talk about Glisson all year

long", says Cathy Stevick, Director of Children's Ministries. "On the way home from camp on Friday nights, they are already talking about next summer!"

Many of the Forsyth youth participate in the church's Glory Ridge mission trip. Many of those who have also been Glisson campers indicate that their

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Village campers work the “Flying V” on our Low Elements course, with helping hands in support

“I saw a spiritual re-awakening in my son after Glisson this year. He really connected with his Outpost counselor.”

— Cathy Dunn,
Forsyth, GA



Campers kayaking on Lake Hale

On a Personal Note

It’s truly a blessing to be on the year-round staff at Glisson. What I love the most is being able to share stories of the transformational experiences so many of our summer campers recount each year.

The impact God has on Glisson campers literally came home for me this year. Each of my three children returned from his or her Glisson week with stories of much more than just fun at camp.

My oldest daughter Megan, in her fourth Glisson summer, came home wearing a promise bracelet and showed us her favorite Bible verses from the week. Psalm 34:5 was her top favorite.

My 11-year-old middle-high camper Amelia, told me she was moved to tears in chapel when a Sparrowwood camper translated the lyrics of “You Raise Me Up” with sign language.

And my youngest, 8-year-old

Jimmy, after his first time as a full-week camper, told me that he had gone up to the altar during chapel and prayed several times during the week. This is the first time he has ever done that on his own.

For years, I have been sharing my Glisson memories from the 1970’s with anyone who would listen. I remember being a preacher’s kid who was sometimes treated differently from other kids back home because my Dad was the preacher. However, when I came to Glisson each summer, it was fun to be just one-of-the-kids at camp. We PK’s weren’t treated differently at camp just because of who our parents were. Uncle Bob Lanford made sure of that.

Now that my own kids’ lives are being impacted by God here at Glisson, I am more gratified than ever that this experience is here for the children and youth of North Georgia.

In the midst of creek hikes, singing on the porch, rappelling gear, swimming in the new pool, kayaks, zip lines, climbing towers and campfires, Glisson summer campers return home talking about sensing God’s presence with them in the Chapel, at Mountain Top, during a devotional with their Living Group or in the quiet of a cabin just before “lights out”.

Campers experience God’s love for them in the example set by a devoted and committed group of counselors who model Jesus’ example of servant leadership.

God is changing my own children’s lives right before my eyes through the ministry of Glisson. I have never been more proud of **my** camp!

Phil Dodson
Director of Development

oops!

In the Spring edition of Echoes from Camp, we included a “Thank You” to all the generous donors who made gifts during 2008. We need to correct two errors from that list:

- ◆ Gary and Janet Willis were inadvertently omitted from the list.
- ◆ Jeromie Wilson was incorrectly listed as Jeromie Willis.

Please let us know anytime you see an error in our newsletter.

Family Camp

Family Camp is set for the Saturday & Sunday of Labor Day weekend. We have opened-up the program to include both Glisson Alumni and the families of summer campers.

You have two ways to participate. You can spend the night in a cabin for the complete experience, or you can attend just for the day on Saturday.

Information on schedule and costs is available on the Glisson website.

Creek hikes, swimming in the new pool, singing on the porch, climbing tower, zip lines, s’mores by the campfire - Family Camp will have it all.

Come to Glisson and build family memories through worship and play!

Make your reservation today!

Sparrowwood

(Continued from page 1)

"I remember reviewing the plans for the building with Bea Detrick and Ray Warner. We even picked out the furniture together", Alice recalls.

Sparrowwood has always offered both a traditional summer camp experience for those with developmental disabilities, but also respite for parents and caregivers. The program originally served campers between the ages of 10 and 21, although there had always been a plan to add adults at some point.

Today, Sparrowwood offers full-week summer camp opportunities to two age groups - youth between the ages of 10 and 19, and adults 20+ years old. There is no maximum age for Sparrowwood campers. As stated by Laura Wilcox, Sparrowwood Director for 2009, "You never out-grow Sparrowwood!"

When asked what makes Sparrowwood so special, Laura continues, "Sparrowwood campers love you unconditionally. It's the perfect example of Christ's love for us."



Sparrowwood campers during one of our two horseback riding programs offered each summer

by the longevity. "From the beginning, we knew it would be permanent. We never had any doubts. I am proud of the whole Sparrowwood program and how it has remained true to our original mission. I am also proud of the North Georgia Conference for its commitment to the program. Sparrowwood has contributed more to the lives of those with developmental disabilities than any other program we have today."



As she reflects on the fact that Sparrowwood is celebrating 40 years of ministry, Alice Bagwell is not at all surprised

Why the Glisson Annual Fund is important

The Glisson Annual Fund was introduced in 2007. As we were completing the funding for the swimming pool, knowing that the next significant need (the Dining Hall) was a couple of years away, we found ourselves "in between" capital projects for the first time in more than a decade.

We decided it was the right time to introduce the Annual Fund - a way for friends to support all aspects of

Glisson ministries with unrestricted gifts.

Because they are unrestricted, Annual Fund gifts can be utilized in a variety of ways based on the needs present at any given time.

While gifts toward a particular brick-and-mortar project will help see that specific project to completion, gifts to the Annual Fund can support camper-ships, operations, facilities, program

expansion and emerging ministries, just to name a few examples.

While we work toward completion of the Glisson master plan and strategic decisions on the upcoming Dining Hall project, please consider a gift to the Annual Fund - a way for you to join us in creating transformative experiences for the children, youth and adults whose lives are changed at Glisson.

**"As always, our son is more confident because of his time at Sparrowwood."
- Sparrowwood parent**

"There are many organizations my husband and I support, and Glisson is just one of them. The difference is that when we give to Glisson, it doesn't feel like an obligation. We honestly give joyfully because we see first-hand the difference it makes in so many kids' lives."

Anne Vaughan
Cartersville, Georgia

My gift to Glisson

Give online using **Donate Now** at www.campglisson.org or return this with your check to
690 Camp Glisson Road, Dahlonega, GA 30533

Apply my gift to:

- Annual Fund
- Camperships
- other: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Phone: (____) _____





A Village camper taking a "Leap of Faith" on the high elements course

"Outpost definitely showed me that I want to be a Glisson counselor one day."
- Senior high camper



An Outpost camper on a climbing trip with staff on belay

Director's Corner

Hard to believe, but the 2009 summer camp season is over. Buildings are dark and quiet, being cleaned for the retreat season. Campsites are empty, allowing nature to recover from nine weeks of use. Program areas lay silent awaiting swimmers, climbers, creek hikers, potters, singers, zip liners, kayakers and archers. The Glisson staff has already begun preparing for next summer, eager to see what God will do in and through this place in our 86th season...

Every Friday evening at our closing celebration in June & July, I reminded camper parents that the Glisson ministry is a partnership. We partner with the families whose campers we serve all summer. We partner with the churches that send campers each summer confident that we will provide them transformative experiences of Christian community and of God's creation. We partner with staff and camper alumni, with donors, and with volunteers, all of whom work to ensure that Glisson's impact

grows broader and stronger with each passing year.

This past year saw fruit of our partnership. For only the second time in Glisson's history (2008 was the first), we served over 2,500 summer campers. Our zip line and climbing tower opened in time for summer, being cleaned for the retreat season. The "infant" day camp program grew to three sites as we partnered with new churches this year. Our Adventure Outpost program fully embraced a decentralized camping model with the addition of camper living group-driven activity planning and the development of outdoor living skills through our weekly "Home-in-the-Woods" program.

The coming year is full of new possibilities from our ongoing partnerships. A task force will meet in early fall to consider the Sparrowwood program's next 40 years as we look at changes in the special needs populations we serve and developments in program with folks with special needs. Your



staff will launch a newly renovated website this fall to better serve our partners. We'll celebrate Glisson's 85th Anniversary with Glisson Day on April 17th. The Camp Glisson Board will enter into a master plan update process in the coming year during which feedback from all our partners will be solicited and appreciated. And the Annual Conference will be exploring, through the work of a task force appointed by Bishop Watson, the needs, possibilities and vision for the camping and retreat ministries of our Conference.

So the summer may be over, but life at Glisson is full! The Glisson staff and Board of Directors look forward to partnering with you in ministry in the coming year...

Russell

Important Dates

September 5-6, 2009
Family Camp

September 7, 2009
Board and
Cabin Owners' Picnic

September 19, 2009
Board of Directors Meeting

October 23-25, 2009
Outpost Fall Retreat &
Sparrowwood Fall Retreat

November 7, 2009
Board of Directors Meeting

November 21-22, 2009
Glisson Leadership Program
Interview Retreat

December 1, 2009
Summer Camp
Registration Begins
(for United Methodists)

January 1, 2010
Summer Camp
Open Registration

February 6, 2010
Board of Directors Meeting

April 16-18
Pre-camp Training for
Summer Staff

April 17, 2010
Glisson Day

May 1, 2010
Board of Directors Meeting

May 8, 2010
Glisson Open House for
Prospective camper families

May 30, 2010
Summer Camp Begins!

Forsyth UMC

(Continued from page 1)

Glisson experiences have encouraged them to reach out to others through missions.

"They tell me Glisson has taught them they can experience God absolutely anywhere - not just in church", Cathy continues. "It can be in a kayak, around a campfire, or on the roof of a house you are repairing for someone. 'He is everywhere and I'm experiencing it myself first-hand. I'm putting it into action!' is what they tell me."



The Forsyth UMC entourage on Friday, July 17th as they prepared to return home with their 30 campers who were here for week 7.

Youth fundraisers are held throughout the year to help reduce the cost for camper families. This includes yard sales, participation in the local Forsythia Festival and even a casserole sale with dishes cooked by the campers themselves. This year's events raised \$8,953, which covered almost half of the summer camp fees for their campers.

The church's support for Glisson doesn't end with 48 campers attending summer camp. They also embraced our Adopt-a-Counselor program this year by adopting eight counselors for their Vacation Bible School participants. These eight Glisson summer staff members received prayers, notes of support and care packages from the Forsyth VBS kids. By mid-summer, when

they found out that 21 of our counselors had not yet been adopted, they brought 21 additional care packages to make sure all the Glisson summer counselors felt the love and appreciation so many summer campers receive from them each summer. One of these care packages included a stuffed animal which was a quite poignant gift.

For several years, Forsyth UMC has partnered with the United Methodist Children's Home in Macon, including UMCH kids in their Vacation Bible School program. Although the church is in the North Georgia Conference and the Macon Children's Home is in the South Georgia Conference, the close proximity of the two makes this a natural partnership.

One of the Children's Home kids", Cathy recalls, "chose to put one of his favorite stuffed animals into a care package. He wanted a counselor to have it just in case a summer camper became homesick this summer. He didn't have much to give, and he offered one of his most prized possessions as his gift".

Glisson sees the Forsyth church bus at least twice each summer. Because of the bus's size, they get a special parking place alongside the Glisson ball field.

On Sundays, the Forsyth camper families worship together, have a quick lunch together at the church, and they are on the road by 1:00 pm to make the two-and-a-half hour trip to Dahlonega. They arrive back home on Friday nights around 11:00 pm. On the ride

north on Sunday, they are loud and excited, singing Glisson songs and chattering about last year. On the Friday ride home, they are hoarse, sweaty and just as excited as they had been on Sunday, talking about this year's counselors, the new friends they had made, and how much they are looking forward to next summer.

"Our tradition is to stop at Dairy Queen before we leave Dahlonega on Friday nights", according to Cathy. "This year, one of the Fridays was when Chick-fil-A was giving free food to people dressed as cows, so we went there instead with our cow costumes on. We linger in Dahlonega because our kids are never really ready to leave Glisson behind."

The church bus usually includes some "stow-aways" - kids who were campers earlier in the summer who just want to ride along to see Glisson again, hoping to see their counselors and re-live a little bit of the experience.

This summer the Glisson staff made some adjustments to the formats for our night chapel sessions. For example, Monday night became known as "Silent Chapel" with no singing, just worship in silence.

Forsyth UMC member Marcy Sanders' 7th-grade daughter Katie told her Mom, *"In silent chapel as I was praying I said, 'I love you, God.' And then I heard him say to me, 'I love you, Katie.'"*

That parking space by the ball field is ready and waiting for your church bus next summer.



Matthew English presents a check to Glisson Director Russell Davis representing funds raised for Glisson by Forsyth VBS participants.

Church Visits

We are rounding-out our fall schedule of visits now.

We would be honored to come to your church and bring the Glisson story to your:

- ◆ Sunday worship
- ◆ Youth group
- ◆ Family night supper
- ◆ Sunday School class
- ◆ Children's ministry
- ◆ Older adult group

To schedule a Glisson presentation in your church, please contact:

Pam Swafford,
Guest Relations
Coordinator

(706) 864-6181



Cathy Stevick with son William



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Visit the Glisson website and click the *View Our Newsletter* tab to enter your email address.

If you have not been receiving our monthly e-newsletter, *Electronic Echoes*, then we don't have your email address.

We want all Glisson friends and supporters to receive our e-newsletters which are distributed on a "sorta" monthly basis (9-10 times throughout the year).