

The gift of empowerment

Dear Ewalu Family,

Our 66th summer at Ewalu has reminded us of the refuge that camp can be—a place where faith is formed, leadership is forged, and lifelong memories are made. This summer is our first with a seventh vision value adopted by our Board of Directors:

Empowerment. We define our commitment to empowerment this way: ***“Ewalu cultivates courage to tackle challenges and the resilience to bounce back, anchored in the promise that Christ is our strength.”***

At Ewalu, empowerment is more than self-reliance; it is about **anchoring our identity in something much bigger than ourselves**. When campers step outside their comfort zones—whether scaling the climbing tower, facing homesickness, or sleeping under the stars for the first time—they are practicing courage. In a world that so often wants to make things easier, we don't shy away from things that are hard! **When campers face adversity, they discover that failure is not the end, but a place where grace meets growth.**

This summer, I saw this happen on the Turkey River with a group of Confirmation campers. It was hot—it was sunny—there were bugs when we stopped on the shore—



but these campers met the challenges by singing. Camp songs! All the way down the river—one after another. They just kept singing. Best of all, it wasn't their counselors or adult leaders who suggested it. We just paddled and listened! They did it all themselves—facing some of the mild discomfort of being outdoors in God's creation with a joyful spirit that made the trip fun and meaningful. By the end of the 6-mile paddle, they were a little disappointed to get off the water.

This is what Ewalu means for kids who crave a deeper, more meaningful life than what social media sells them. **We offer a training ground for a better life.** Campers come to us in one place and leave these sacred spaces standing a little taller and ready for whatever comes next, **filled with the unshakeable confidence that they are capable, they are loved, and they are never alone.**

Please consider partnering with us to empower the next generation of Ewalu campers! **Your gift ensures that every child who comes to Ewalu has the chance to build resilience, anchored deeply in faith.** Thank you for your prayers, your support, and your commitment to the mission of Camp Ewalu!

In Christ,
Frank Johnson, Executive Director

To give to the General Fund, please use the enclosed card.



UPCOMING EVENTS

AUG 28-30 **65TH ANNIVERSARY* & CEDAR LODGE DEDICATION**
OUTDOOR CONCERT FRIDAY NIGHT

SEPT 19 **QUILT AUCTION: LIVE EVENT**
GROUNDS OPEN AT 9 AM, AUCTION AT 1 PM

OCT 3 **WILD DRIFTLESS RACE***
5-HOUR & 9-HOUR RACES IN ELKADER

OCT 14-16 **AUTUMN ODYSSEY* (AGE 55+)**
SENIOR RETREAT AT STONE CENTER

OCT 16-18 **DIRTY FEET RETREAT***
JUNIOR HIGH RETREAT AT CAMP

OCT 17 **VOLUNTEER WORK DAY**
HELP CAMP GET READY FOR WINTER



*EVENTS THAT REQUIRE REGISTRATION



DETAILS FOR ALL EVENTS:
WWW.EWALU.ORG



When camp **REALLY** feels like family

The 3 Meehan sisters, all serving on summer staff, have a special bond with Ewalu as a foundation

Camp Ewalu has often seen family members serving together on summer staff, and this summer brings together three sisters who have long hoped to have the opportunity to work together on staff.

Rachel Meehan, the oldest at age 23, graduated from Luther College in 2025 and now works as a high school choir teacher during the school year. She is the program assistant this summer at camp. Ruth Meehan, age 22, is a 2026 Luther College graduate and is serving as Ewalu's health officer. Rounding out the trio is Clara Meehan, age 18, who will be a first-year student at Luther this fall and is a counselor this summer.

The Meehan family's roots at Ewalu started a generation earlier. "Our mother (Sarah) was a camper in the '70s and '80s at Ewalu," said Rachel. "I remember spending a day each winter hiking around camp in the snow with our family, exploring all of the trails and structures around camp." The family's home church, Zion Lutheran in Iowa City, was strongly connected to camp and hosted Ewalu staff for its day camps in summer. "As a kid I remember being involved with camp in that way and absolutely loved it," said Rachel.

For middle sister Ruth, it was not love at first sight with Ewalu. "When I first went to Mini Camp, I hated it. I told my parents I never wanted to go back. My parents encouraged me to try again, but I was having none of it," she said. "My parents have said that they were unsure if making me go back was the right decision, but ultimately I am so glad they did. I hated my week of Explorers up until Thursday night. Then something switched and I decided that I loved camp, and I have been back every summer since."

For Clara, who also started coming as a Mini Camper, there was just something special about being at Ewalu. "Camp was always a safe and fun space that I looked forward to all year,"



Clara (top), Rachel (bottom left) and Ruth Meehan are all on summer staff this year.

she said. "I always felt like the church taught me the stories of the Bible, but Ewalu taught me my faith."

The high school Leadership Training (LT) program was especially formative for Rachel, the oldest. "I've met some of my best friends as an LT, and found it so much fun to finally have some more responsibility around camp and get to interact more with the staff members, people I desperately looked up to," she said. One night during campfire as an LT, she decided to one day become the LT coordinator herself, a dream that came true in 2024, with sister Clara being among the LTs that year. "I found so much joy in watching them grow in their leadership, make meaningful connections with campers, and just shine in their own beautiful ways," she said. "I am now honored to be on staff with eight of them! They continue to inspire and impress me every day."

The transition from camper to counselor keeps inspiring Ruth. As an LT in 2020, she got to co-counsel with a group of Explorers. "It was a crazy experience going from a camper and looking up to all the staff, to becoming a 'counselor' and having campers look up to me," she said. "Some of

MEEHAN SISTERS: *Continued on next page*

Spotlight: Vehicles needed at Ewalu

Camp has a big need for vehicles in good used condition! We squeeze as much life as possible out of our camp vans and trucks, and we are at a point of needing to replace some of them.

Most needed at camp now are:

- **Passenger vans, minivans and pickup trucks**
- A **UTV (side-by-side)** that can seat 4 and has a small cargo bed in back, so our staff has a dedicated vehicle always ready to transport sick/injured campers

If you have a vehicle to donate, or would like more details, contact Paul Frantsen, property manager, at 563-933-4700 or Property@ewalu.org. Thank you for your generosity!



Here are some more ways to give to Ewalu:

- Purchase or donate items from Ewalu's "**Wish List**" at Ewalu.org/wish-list. Send us an email at office@ewalu.org if you donate via Amazon, as the receipt we receive doesn't name the donor!
- Do you have a **Thrivent** financial account? You can direct funds to Ewalu through Thrivent Action Team Grants or Thrivent Choice. See details at www.Ewalu.org/Thrivent.
- **Volunteers** are welcome anytime at camp! Come to our **Fall Volunteer Work Day on October 17**, or you can contact Paul Frantsen to set up a different time.

MEEHAN SISTERS: *Continued from previous page*

my Explorers from that week are still coming to camp and it has been so fun seeing them grow up over the years as well. I felt so reassured that being at camp was what I was being called to do."

The sisters' shared experiences at Ewalu have deepened their bond. "Ewalu has always served as a connector between me and my sisters," said Clara. "We loved performing camp songs and skits for our families and teaching the graces before dinners."

"It was always a fun week at camp when all three sisters were on site," recalled Ruth. "Rachel, Clara and I would always pray together at the Wednesday night campfire and I remember how impactful that was as a kid."

As the older two sisters enter their careers as educators, they are taking along lots of skills from their time on summer staff. "I am very grateful that my dream summer job was also the best training for my career," said Ruth, who will be student-teaching this fall.

As a new teacher, Rachel said camp has shaped her for success. "Camp taught me about the impact of servant leadership, showing up consistently every day, being adaptable, and the importance of creating an environment where everyone is encouraged to grow."

The chance to work together on summer staff is a time they will all treasure. "I love getting to be on staff with my sisters," said Ruth, in her fifth year on staff. "This is something that we had dreamed of doing but weren't sure if it would happen. I am very grateful that we were able to make it work this summer!"

Rachel is in her sixth year on summer staff and is soaking up every moment. "Being a part of the Ewalu camp community is such a unique experience, so having my sisters to walk alongside me is so special and something I will always remember."



Above: *The Meehan sisters at the Pioneers worship space in their camper days.*

Below: *Rachel, Clara and Ruth all share a passion for music, too!*



Cedar Lodge: Nearing the finish line!

The fundraising campaign for the Cedar Lodge renovation has crossed the \$3 million mark! That means just \$200,000 to go to avoid carrying construction debt forward.

To help us “cross the finish line,” Gloria Dei Lutheran in Cedar Rapids has issued a match challenge of up to \$50,000 for congregational gifts (see Pastor Trish Decker’s video from June on the Ewalu Facebook page). Encourage YOUR congregation to make a final gift to the Cedar project — ask your pastor or council about the letter each ELCA partner church received in June. **Every congregational gift will be DOUBLED!**

The construction on the main level is nearly done! The new kitchen and dining space were finished just in time for the start of summer camp.

The entryway addition with new bathrooms has recently been completed, and the renewed Cedar Lodge has just hosted its first wedding! Stay tuned for details about updated wedding options for Cedar Lodge and how you can help spread the word about our renewed space that can host



events of any kind year-round.

The lower level renovations are still in progress. Our summer staff have been using the Walnut Lodge lower level for their living space this summer, and we’re excited for the updates in Cedar Lodge that will soon be available: new showers, larger bathroom space, new HVAC and air conditioning, and a new staff lounge for rest and relaxation. The lower level lodging rooms will also be available for rental throughout the year for groups.

Check out Ewalu’s Facebook page for photos and video of the renovations!

All are invited to camp for a **Cedar Lodge dedication service** as part of the 65th Anniversary Weekend, August 28-30. The service will be 1 p.m. Saturday. Go to www.Ewalu.org/65th-Anniversary to see the schedule and to register for lodging and meals.



Campers dining in the renovated Cedar Lodge on a rainy day.

39th Annual Ewalu Quilt Auction

Online Auction:
Sept. 14-20

Live Auction:
Sept. 19

EWALU
Camp & Retreat Center

QUILT RAFFLE

Something NEW for the auction this year!

\$50 per ticket

Win a gorgeous king-size quilt pieced and quilted by Billijo Eckheart, with hand-binding by Jeanne Helgerson. The pattern is "Hocus Pocus" by Judy Niemeyer, a beautiful paper piecing technique with jewel tones, neutrals and white. The quilt measures 118 inches by 118 inches, so it will fit a king bed or a queen bed with a large drop. Buy more tickets to increase your chances of winning!
Value of quilt: \$5,000



Buy tickets
online NOW!



Proceeds support Camp Ewalu!

<https://Auctria.Events/EwaluQuiltAuction>

RAFFLE RULES: One winner will be chosen at random at the start of the Ewalu Live Auction, at 1 PM Saturday, September 19, 2026. Ticket sales will end at noon September 19, 2026. **To buy a raffle ticket with check or cash:** call the Ewalu office at 563-933-4700 or email office@ewalu.org. **Need not be present to win!** We will ship quilt free of charge to the raffle winner.

Our Mission:

Ewalu serves all people as a place to connect the Word of God with the world of God.

www.Ewalu.org | 563-933-4700