

Camp Fowler 2009 Report

Dedication of Fleming Pool and Gambet Center

For those of us who have been involved in developing Camp Fowler, June 17, 2009 was a memorable day. After several days of cloudy skies, the sun greeted a crowd of several hundred people who came to help us dedicate the new Fleming Pool at Camp Fowler. As the speeches were made, dozens of youth in bathing suits waited for the pool to open. Finally the talking ended and the signal was given; swimmers were finally able to splash happily in the water.



With the completion of the new, handicapped accessible pool five years of work to make our vision for Camp Fowler a reality had come to fruition. All the elements of a wonderful community resource were now in place. The Fleming Pool was named in honor of the leader of our capital campaign, Dick Fleming, and his family. Dick was a very generous benefactor of the capital campaign, and his leadership of the capital campaign team was largely responsible for the success of the campaign. On June 17 we also dedicated the Fr. Daniel Gambet Center at Camp Fowler to recognize the extraordinary contribution that Fr. Gambet has made to Valley Youth House.

The completion of the pool was the last of the major capital projects planned for the camp. Since acquiring the camp in 2004 we have spent approximately \$3.5 million in upgrading the facility. In addition to the new bath house, opened in 2008, cabins have been re-roofed, new paving installed, adventure elements constructed, bridges built, and trails enhanced. Camp Fowler is now a remarkable resource for youth served by Valley Youth as well as for other community groups.

Helping Youth Over the Wall

Camp Fowler is more than simply a tremendous physical facility; the camp is a powerful therapeutic tool. At the camp abused and neglected kids have an opportunity to heal, to learn, and to grow. We are pleased to report that the value of the camp to our counselors and therapists has exceeded



expectations. As the construction of the physical plant has progressed so has our counselors' knowledge of ways to use the camp to help our kids.



A corps of 32 certified adventure specialists provides assistance in the design and delivery of activities to meet the individual needs of each program or camp user. Valley YouthHouse counselors report that kids are making significant therapeutic breakthroughs that would not have been possible in conventional settings.

Ultimately the success of our work is measured one child at a time. But we do find it useful to measure the number of youth who use the camp each year. When we were planning the camp, we projected that about 1,000 individual youth would use the camp each year. We can

report that in 2009 more than 3,000 young people used the camp, well above what our planners had imagined. Over the course of the summer an average of more than 100 swimmers used the pool each day, a total of more than 9,000 "swimmer days" for the season.

A Camp Serving Youth Organizations



Because we realized that the community has made a significant investment in the camp and because we want to assure the community a good return on that investment we have made a conscious decision to make the camp available to other community groups that serve youth. The Lehigh Carbon Intermediate Unit has held camps for developmentally challenged youth for the last four years and those programs continue to expand. The State Police Camp Cadet, the Boy Scouts, and the Hispanic American League of Artists are among the agencies that hold annual events at Camp Fowler. In 2009 the American Lung Association of

Pennsylvania held a camp for asthmatic youth, and The Autism Research Community Hub made good use of our pool for their programs. Both are planning to return this year.

The Year Ahead

In 2010 we will continue to upgrade and maintain our physical plant. Additional adventure elements will be added, and we plan to build a new gazebo. Ball fields will also be upgraded.

During 2010 we plan to expand our aquatic programming. Much of 2009 was devoted to learning to manage the pool and hire staff. Now that we have learned to walk we will run. Swimming lessons will



be offered as part of our programming, and pool-based programs will be greatly expanded.

Other program initiatives for 2010 include a community youth softball teams at our fields, and a bereavement camp conducted by Diakon Lutheran Ministries.

The wide range of groups with whom we have formed partnerships demonstrates that Camp Fowler is a tremendous resource for many segments of our community, including those with special needs. The camp is also an ideal spot for outings by church, civic, or corporate groups, or for private parties. We hope to make the camp available to an even larger variety of community groups this season as scheduling permits.

A Success For The Lehigh Valley



The development of Camp Fowler has been a major undertaking, and would have been impossible without the support of virtually all parts of our community. Because the support was so broad based, we have a long list of supporters to whom we are indebted. The generosity, vision and leadership of Linny and Beall Fowler launched this enterprise, and the Valley Youth House Board, Staff, and capital campaign leadership team were instrumental to pulling it all together.

But the success of the Camp Fowler project ultimately rests with the long list of individuals, corporations, foundations, federal, state, and county governments, and church and civic groups who provided generous financial support. Our thanks also goes to the many volunteer groups and individuals who donated their time and sweat and blisters to work on projects at the camp. To all of you, the Board, staff, and kids at Valley Youth House extend our most sincere thanks.



If you have not taken the time to visit the camp recently, please do so after the snow melts. When you see the magnificent facility, and have a first hand look at our kids benefiting from the camp, we think you will be as proud of the investment that you have made. We would love to give you a tour, so give us a call.



***“Camp Fowler, a place to
heal, learn and grow”***