

Duncan's Woods YMCA Camp



Vision

Duncan Campbell, prominent Portland business leader and advocate for at-risk youth in our community had a vision. That vision was to serve the neediest and most fragile youth of our community in an overnight Christian resident camp setting away from the distractions and dangers of their local neighborhoods. To this end, Duncan purchased 160 acres of land near Trillium Lake in the Mt. Hood National Forest and for over two decades looked for the perfect partner to put his vision into action.

In the spring of 2016 the YMCA of Columbia-Willamette and Duncan Campbell joined forces, with a shared vision, to develop and create a new overnight camp on that 160 acres of land. Sold to the YMCA for well under market value it is a catalyst to continue to develop and grow the YMCA of Columbia-Willamette's camping services. With a vision to serve at least 50% of the camper population coming from at-risk or fragile backgrounds, our new operation will allow us to provide life impacting experiences and development of new skills in a safe space.

Traditional youth camp programs will be enhanced by the natural surroundings of Mt. Hood and Trillium Lake and could include activities such as: multi day backpack trips, mountain biking, a variety of water activities on Trillium Lake, eco studies, forestry, mountain climbing, wilderness survival, habitat restoration and more. The variety of activities will be endless and ever developing over time as program areas are developed.

With the addition of 200 year round beds, the site will be a perfect place to develop shoulder season programing around summer camp. Outdoor School, retreats and

conferences are perfect examples for use of the site from mid-April through the end of October while summer camp is not in session. As development continues through later phases the inclusion of winter programming including ski and snow board camps, snow mobile adventures, cross country and snow shoe trips will be an added draw.

The vision is the same, serving our youth through our Christian mission to make our world a better place for all.



The need

Kids from broken homes need the help and mentorship of caring adults. The high school graduation rate is below 65%, there is a loss of the family component with so many children in single parent families. There is a nature deficit disorder (lack of time outside the house in nature) and a loss of community neighborhoods. The lure of gangs in our community is taking over the family/community support that no longer exists within many homes. Peer pressure and social media are causing new ways to bully and pressure youth into making poor and/or dangerous decisions.

The solution

Most everyone knows that Camping is a very effective way to change the lives of youth especially when that experience is coupled with well trained, caring adults who minister the love of Christ to these young people. The American Camping Association offers the following:

The Case for Camp – why kids need it more now than ever

Change is a part of life. It is often directly related to survival and can enrich one's life in ways unexpected. Childhood is in essence a time of profound change and development. It is exciting and disquieting at the same time. When it comes to our children, we need to be sure that change is made for the better.

We've been so concentrated on the brain, we forget about the rest of our bodies. This change in focus has led to an obesity rate that is unacceptable. Our kids are not as healthy as the generation before.

Families used to live in a community. We've lost that, keeping kids inside and losing a sense of neighborhood.

Add to that the fact that our kids stand to inherit all the economic, social, and environmental challenges we've created, and the legacy we have left our children and youth begins to look bleak.

So, how do we prepare our children with the skills and more importantly, the competencies they will need to tackle changes in our world? We could start with a positive camp experience. A quality camp experience provides our children with the opportunity to learn powerful lessons in community, character-building, skill development, and healthy living — a meaningful, engaged, and participatory environment.

Camp promotes community. It creates this great space that shows kids how to live together and care for one another. There are norms and negotiation of boundaries; there are rules. Camp is a place where kids can "practice" growing up stretching their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive muscles outside the context of their immediate family. This is what childhood is supposed to provide.

Camp teaches critical thinking. We need to remember how important it is to be actively involved in the learning process, and camp affords that. We're going to need really strong problem solvers in the next century. We need the science, math, and biology, but without the ability to relate, connect, empathize, or inspire innovation, how will our kids be able to make a difference in the challenges now facing us?

The camp experience embraces the natural environment. While children have fewer and fewer opportunities to be outdoors, the camp experience advances the outdoor learning environment. As we become more concerned about saving the planet, we run out and make DVDs and videos about it. But the environment needs to be experienced to be appreciated. Kids need to catch tadpoles in the creek, wander among the trees, and feel the sun on their faces to understand the importance of those things. What happens to a generation that may grow up not seeing stars in the dark of the night?

Camp creates future leaders. The camp experience offers kids a close-up look at compassionate leadership through the camp director, counselors, resident nutritionist, and other camp personnel. And kids get loads of opportunities to practice being a leader themselves — song leader, lunch table leader, team captain, the list goes on and on.

Camp is an equal opportunity life changer. It addresses universal childhood needs not specific to a particular racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group. Nobody is left out. It's all about childhood development.

Camp has a lasting impact. One of the greatest gifts you can give a child is a sense of success and achievement. Camp teaches kids how to be active participants, ask questions, ask for help, and try new things. They leave understanding that it's okay to feel a little

uncomfortable sometimes, because that's generally what happens when you're getting ready to learn something. The camp experience translates back in real-world experience — in an "I can" attitude.

We need to advocate for our young people. We should promote opportunities for kids — give them camp experiences that serve as an antidote for the world's challenges. We need to recognize this is not a series of frivolous activities. We often think if it looks like fun it must be unimportant, but "fun" is a young person's "work" — to learn, to grow, to be productive, creative, and happy. If they don't do that work, they won't turn into healthy adults.



Phase 1

At present this property is not developed. There is no water, sewage or electricity on the property. The YMCA is working through the steps necessary to obtain a Conditional Use Permit. We estimate that it will cost about \$1.5 million dollars just to begin operating the camp, hopefully in the summer of 2018, but no later than the summer of 2019. That investment of \$1.5 million will get us started so that we can purchase all the program supplies needed, put in a well, septic system and fire suppression system, provide portable restrooms and seasonal yurts for youth and adults, and purchase the program equipment necessary to operate a camp. Phase one will also include moving lots of dirt and placing structures on site. It will also include the development of a Master Plan for the entire property.

Phase 2

This phase will include the building of the lodge, permanent cabins, the kitchen, restroom facilities, bunk houses, outpost areas and the development of program elements and equipping the camp so that winter programs can be offered. It will also include bringing electricity to the site. The rough estimate for this is phase is \$8 million dollars.