

St. Columba Episcopal Camp and Retreat Center

2017 Report

St. Columba's mission is to offer a natural sanctuary and opportunities for growth through camps, retreats, conferences and events.

2017 was another banner year at St. Columba. We provided the ministry of camp and hospitality to 851 campers and teenage Counselors-In-Training as well as 208 group events. Of those events, over 83% of visitors came from non-Episcopal groups which gives a great understanding of St. Columba's value as an outreach program of the Episcopal Church in West Tennessee. Mud Camp continued in its rapid growth to serve more and more children and the center's kitchen staff planned and launched Camp Sweet Retreat, a day camp for children learning to bake wintertime goodies as a brilliant way of connecting with kids and utilizing some downtime at the center.

Episcopal groups included St. Clare Silent Women's Retreat, Bishop and Council, Happening, multiple parish vestries, Diocese of West Tennessee Clergy, and a variety of women's and youth retreats.

Non-Episcopal groups included area family reunions, nonprofit organizations, church retreats, and a growing number of area schools who are coming to St. Columba to experience adventure and teambuilding activities through the ASCEND Adventure Course.

Camp Able was held in June, 2017, and offered 25 children with special needs, or "diverse-abilities" as we prefer to call them, a wonderful day camp experience. Teenage and adult volunteers from our Diocese and beyond gathered to serve as camp counselors and St. Luke's, Holy Communion and St. Anne's Episcopal Churches brought in their parishioners to offer daily lunches to the camp community. Sponsored by FedEx and a number of individuals and parishes, Camp Able offers full and half-scholarships to anyone who asks and takes a lot of pride in never turning down a family due to a financial need.

Improvement projects around the St. Columba included the addition of the Loch Ness Monster waterslide, and new dining room chairs and new carpets at Scheibler Lodge. Continuous improvement is always planned, but sometimes unachievable due to funding, so the staff always takes a lot of effort to care for sacred and special spaces we are blessed to share with the community.

We received a generous grant from the National Episcopal Church to fund a Steward position in August, 2017. The position allowed St. Columba to grow the number of bee hives with all honey benefiting St. Columba's partner, Thistle & Bee. The honey sales benefit women who have survived a life of trafficking, prostitution and addiction. David Balling, the center's Steward, also took leadership over a handful of maintenance projects aimed at improving the center's environmental impact.

The Board of St. Columba continues to proceed on plans that will allow us to serve the nearly 30 groups we are unable to serve each year due to availability, provide accessible spaces to Camp Able so we can serve campers with physical disabilities, and become financial sustainable as a Diocesan ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Thompson

Executive Director, St. Columba