

Ascension School Report 2007

We have so much to be thankful for, phenomenal staff and of course, a very special facility! For those of you have not heard yet; over the past 9 days, August 31, 2007 to September 9, 2007, Ascension School has been the "fire camp" for the Bridge Creek Fire on Mt. Fanny in the Wallowa Mountains. At the height of the "camp" there were 300 firefighters staying and being fed three meals a day (sack lunches). We had thought life was going to calm down after a pretty amazing summer camp season and was just getting into the groove of having rental groups on weekends and a few week day events. I have to say we are blessed by the staff we have at Ascension School, they have truly proved they are up to almost any task. I will forever be grateful for their Herculean efforts this summer, but particularly over the last week and a half.

Our summer camp season was quite successful with an increase of campers in all but 2 camps (adult education and intermediate). It was so wonderful to see the fathers that attended Discovery Camp with their children! I remain in awe of the number of people who are so willing to share their time as volunteer staff during summer camps. I can simply say a humble thank you. You have no idea the importance a week at camp can be for a youth, until you listen to their testimonies during the closing Eucharist of each camp. I just automatically get my Kleenex and get ready to cry. It was such a gift to have clergy from our diocese at each camp, you are awesome! We also had convocation in our diocese who shared a scholarship fund that brought kids to camp from as far away as Lakeview - fantastic!

Our challenge to you next year is to help us share the camp experience with as many youth as we can. One of the ways in which we hope to accomplish this is to challenge each congregation to sponsor at least 2 children of people incarcerated in the prison system in eastern Oregon. The prison ministries groups throughout the country are beginning to realize how important it is for children of inmates to have that experience to join in a week of a normal summer camp. The other challenge is to share your resources with other parishes that may not scholarship funds available. Let's get those kids to camp!!

We again our amazed at the breadth of the organizations with whom we have the pleasure of sharing this very special place. Repeatedly we have heard how wonderful this place is and it is nice to be reminded how gifted we are as a diocese. We only need to hear about another camp closing to know how special this place is!

The Ascension School Board has been involved in long range planning and a targeted fund raising campaign to start taking care of some of the more emergent needs and to take a serious look at our long term needs as far as structures are involved. Listen and look for further news! Exciting plans are being drawn and important maintenance needs are being addressed.

I am so pleased to announce the Right Reverend Bill Spofford and Polli in partnership with the Right Reverend Rustin Kimsey and Gretchen will be hosting our Christmas Retreat on December 28-30. The theme of the retreat is Remember, Refresh and Renew. Exciting!

All this excitement and work will be for nothing if you don't take the time to come for a visit or send a child to camp or attend a retreat. Ascension School is the camp and conference center owned and operated for the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon: that is YOU! I am still saving a seat for you to come enjoy the sunset with me!

Respectfully submitted
The Rev. Sherry Hartley, Deacon
Executive Director