

Machia Wilderness Camp

Annual Report 2021

The Annual meeting of the Machia Wilderness Camp was held January 9, 2021 at Faith United Methodist Church in South Burlington, VT from 10:00 am – 11:40 am. Present were: Denis O'Brien, Margaret Wilbur, Dennis Briggs, Tim Kane, Garth Peterson, Paul Conover, and Bonnie Machia. Our slate of officers remained the same with Denis O'Brien, President; Margaret Wilbur, V. President; Bonnie Machia, Exec. Dir. and Secretary, not a board member. Dennis Briggs agreed to be Treasurer while we look for a more permanent one. Bonnie met Dennis B. at the Credit Union on Jan. 14 to get him officially listed as Treasurer and able to sign checks.

We ended 2020 with about \$110,000.00 in the Capital Campaign. Since Paula Blanchett had left in October, we did not have an official Treasurer's Report but Bonnie was able to report that the actual money we had in the two accounts was \$115,482.55. The People's United Bank Account has been closed and the Operating Budget Account has been moved to One Credit Union so all our money is in one location but still in two separate accounts.

Thank you letters were sent to our eighty-one 2020 donors early in January. In February and March, we received small grants from the Milton ice fishing Derby, and General Dynamics. Alan Luzzato, a friend of Bonnie and Garth, has offered to sell items for us on Ebay. At this time, we have not been able to start that as there is a glitch between Ebay and PayPal. As soon as that is cleared up, Alan will sell items that we give him for sale, at no charge to us.

It was decided in April, considering the state COVID mandates, that we would hold camp but with just 20 campers and at a cost of \$125.00. We recognized this would be at a loss but felt uncomfortable asking more this year as last year was \$100.00. Campers who left their money in last year, when we were unable to hold camp, were invited to attend this year at no extra cost. Most of those campers came.

Reasons for limiting to 20: to meet the COVID requirements for space inside the classroom; we had readjusting to do since we would be on our own land; and there was a lot of land and building preparation.

Dennis Briggs presented a punch list of things that had to be done to the building and property before we would be able to have campers enter for the program. To help with clearing the portion of the land we would need to use this summer and help build the 10 picnic style tables needed for classroom work, Dennis organized several work parties. These were very successful and we are deeply grateful to those who came to one or more of the days to help. In just one day we clocked 75-man hours of constructive clearing. Apprentices helped with clearing as well as constructing the tables and building the wall to separate the classroom from Rand Larson's items.

There is no kitchen for preparing meals yet. We are very grateful to: Margaret and Colby Wilbur for the donation of their Out Front Food Truck for the week; Diane Chamberlain for volunteering to make Gwen's macaroni and cheese ahead of time so Margaret just needed to warm it; and Out Front Food for their famous pulled pork.

The down payment for the land was made at the end of June, transferring title to us. We had a ribbon cutting ceremony the last day of camp, July 17, to physically show the passing of the land from Juli and Rand Larson to the Machia Wilderness Camp.

Early in July we put finishing touches on the land: Some of the changes we made:

Created paths around the building so campers could easily get to our entrance; made sure the water was potable, though there was sand in it so did not use it for drinking or cooking, did use it for hand washing; Flattened area for food truck; Mowed path to fishing area, hired a bus to get campers there on fishing day; cleared around trees for tree stand area, as well as field exercise, land navigation, bow and shooting areas. Berm put in place for live fire.

Milton required forms be filled out, though we were not making any type of zoning changes to the land, we treated it as an introduction to who we are and what we are doing.

All food was donated this year: We are grateful for donations from Hannaford on Dorset St., Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shop on Church St., Shaw's Supermarket, Costco, Price Chopper on Hinesburg Rd., City Market, Trader Joes, Re*Marc*Able Bakery, Out Front Foods, Bonnie Machia, and Jim Messier. The total donation was over \$800.00, plus the use of the Out Front Food Truck.

Camper, apprentice and parent surveys showed that this year's camp was a wonderful experience for all. Several parents indicated that they felt all should have the experience these kids had! Instructors and Board members felt this had been an excellent camp, and that it felt very different from the camps held at the Ethan Allen Firing Range – we were in our own space!

We are considering a 2nd week of camp to also be run as a day camp. We will need a camp director for that. The program will have some of the hunter education programs, but will have a different focus – possibly more focus on forest development and sports type activities (fishing, hiking, etc.). This is part of an ongoing conversation so stay tuned!

In September it was decided to have a fundraiser focusing on money to pay a Design Engineer. Dennis Briggs thought \$10,000.00 would cover at least the first stage of the process of deciding best locations for our buildings on the 16 acres, as well as the infrastructure that must be laid out before we do any building. E-blasts went out in October and we successfully raised a little over the \$10,000.00. For Giving Tuesday it was decided to focus on growing our sustaining donors and carry that through the rest of the year and into 2022. The first 100 sustaining donors making a commitment for at least a year will have their names on our Founding Donors Plaque that will be placed in the Lodge.

Machia Wilderness Camp is very grateful for the many hours of work Dennis Briggs has put into the property in Milton. Without his great effort and contacts camp would not have happened in 2021. We are also grateful to Denis O'Brien for his work on our acquiring the land.

Future: We continue to look for suitable Board members. Currently we have just 5 and have come to the realization that we need several more to spread the work out, offer new ideas as to how to raise money, construction, instruction, etc. We also need an Accountant/Treasurer and an Attorney.

While we do not have an official sign on the land, it is made. We need town approval and we need to decide where to put it.

There will be a Calcutta in 2022 held at the Eagle's Club in Milton September 17, 2022.

The search for a development/fundraiser person continues. We changed the name to "Director of Development" hoping it will narrow the type of person who applies. We are considering hiring people for specific things such as "event coordinator".

We have discussed the possibility of creating an Advisory Board, but have not formalized that yet.

Additional fundraising activities being considered for 2022:

On line Auction

Advertising on Vermont Public Radio

Board Members:

President: Denis O'Brien

Vice President: Margaret Wilbur

Treasurer: Dennis Briggs, Lead Instructor

Directors: Garth Peterson

Paul Conover

Secretary: Bonnie Machia, Executive Director