

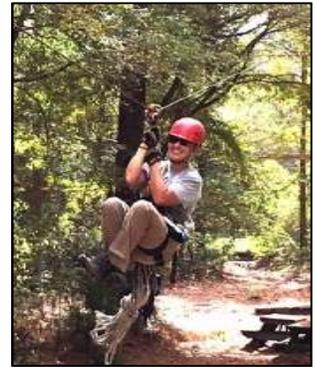


A Natural Setting Where People Experience God's Love

Evolution is a key component for survival in Nature and in today's fast paced and ever-changing world. Those that don't evolve with change don't survive; however, peace of mind comes in knowing God's Grace and Love never change. At Briarwood, this year has been a time of evolution. We completed the addition of our Zipline/Climbing Wall for the start of the Summer Camp 2017 season. This proved to be a fun and exciting addition for campers and for groups throughout the year. We officially dedicated the climbing wall on September 23, 2017, and in doing so remembered Mamma Jean Oswald and Pastor Eric Schulze. Though missed, the legacy of Mamma Jean and Pastor Eric will live on through this new addition to camp.



Funds given to memorialize these two patron saints of Briarwood, along with gifts from individual donors and congregations, were used to build a 30 foot climbing tower which also included a 450 foot zip-line. The climbing tower and zip-line provide an exciting challenge for campers to develop skills, gain confidence, and have fun at Briarwood. The added element will also serve as a wonderful attraction to our ministry as we reach out with new programming to the community that surrounds Briarwood.



Evolution has also taken place with the staff of Briarwood. Our increased Hosted Ministry and larger Summer Camp ministry necessitated an additional staff member in the kitchen, increasing our total kitchen staff to 3 members. This additional staff is

focused on reducing burn out with our ever growing ministries. We welcomed Ivanna Santiago to the kitchen in January.

Change of the Programming staff at Briarwood has also occurred with the departure of Aaron Colwick. We have taken the opportunity to bring Courtney Sullivan aboard as Interim Program Director. Courtney is a member at Faith Lutheran Church in Flower Mound. She has been a part of the summer staff for the past four years in various capacities and will be going to Medical School in August of this year. The intention is for Courtney to be a bridge in this time of transition as we conduct a nationwide search for a new Program Director. During this time, we are also evaluating how the Program at Briarwood, which is a critical component to directly strengthening Briarwood's relationships with NT-NL congregations and the larger community, can be improved to maximize the ministry's impact. Suggestions and input as to how Briarwood's Program can improve your own ministries are welcome and encouraged.

Perhaps the biggest evolution at Briarwood this year has been Pastor Phil's realization that leadership dynamics are not just changing at the congregational level, but also within the camping world. Briarwood's management team is very active in Lutheran Outdoor Ministry (LOM), which is a network of camp professionals. Looking at the operational models of other LOM camps, Pastor Phil came to the realization that Briarwood was stuck in the past as far as the Management structure of Briarwood stood. The truly successful camps/retreat centers (of comparable size to Briarwood) are moving toward having one operationally- and donor-focused Executive Director over having both an Operations Director and an Executive Director. Phil realized that my expertise as the Operations Director, acquired over the last 10 years, along with support from the NT-NL synod office, would better fit into the model of what it takes to survive and thrive as a Camp/Retreat Center in this day and age.

PROGRAM MINISTRY



Overnight Camp – Under the leadership of a dedicated group of counselors, children and youth again experienced the joy of an amazing summer camp in 2017. Last summer over 300 on-site campers and 396 offsite day campers participated in our outdoor ministry at Briarwood. To serve those campers, Briarwood employed 25 young adults, most of whom came from NT-NL Synod congregations. We have been blessed in 2018 with a grant from MEF to help give the overnight camp experience to those who otherwise couldn't afford to experience God's Love in the natural setting at Briarwood.

BASE Camp – New in 2017 at Briarwood was a day camp experience called BASE Camp – Briarwood's **Awesome Summer Experience!** BASE Camp is specifically designed to serve the communities that surround Briarwood. We are currently reaching out to the community with an invitation to have a unique summer camp experience at Briarwood and still be home for dinner. With BASE Camp, the activities change each week to keep it fresh for returning campers, as well as our staff.



A scheduling evolution is also occurring this summer. We typically have weeks that are more popular than others. To maximize staffing variety, and for increased financial stewardship, this year we are offering 4 weeks of overnight camp based on the past peak summer weeks (BASE camp continues to operate all summer long). The theme for 2018 "This Changes Everything," and we will be exploring how God's gift of grace has changed EVERYTHING for us—our hearts, our perspectives, and our world! The apostle Paul summed it up best in Ephesians 2:8 (our theme verse of the summer,) when he stated, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." More information about Overnight Camp and BASE Camp, along with 2018 on-line camper registration, can be found on our web site – www.briarwoodretreat.org.

Young @ Heart ministries - One area of our ministry that we are becoming more excited about all the time is our Young @ Heart Ministry. This ministry is focused on serving the retired community around Briarwood and beyond. We are planning both overnight retreats and day events during the week. In February, we hosted a day event in which we viewed and discussed the Disney/Pixar movie "Coco." In the beginning of April, we hosted a 3-day overnight retreat filled with captivating bible studies, games, adventurous activities, and time for personal reflection in the natural setting of Briarwood.



Retreat Ministries – Briarwood continues to sponsor a variety of retreats and events throughout the year, and we are grateful for our partnerships with a variety of NT-NL ministries such as Leadership Convocation, Coaching, Via de Cristo, Peer Ministry, Lutheran Men in Mission, and look forward to strengthening these relationships to meet a variety of needs of the various ministries in the Synod. We continue to partner with NT-NL to bring more Leadership development events and new exciting learning opportunities to the greater community.

Hosted Ministries – "Location, location, location" is what it is all about for our Hosted retreats at Briarwood. We continue to operate a nearly half million dollar year-round retreat experience at Briarwood. In the past year, we have hosted weddings, company picnics, staff retreats, leadership formation events, rotary club events, Chamber of Commerce mixers, corporate retreats, **free personal sabbatical stays** for clergy, church picnics, and so on. All of this is possible given the remote feel of our peaceful natural setting within the hustle and bustle of the DFW Metroplex.

PART D

BRIARWOOD ANGELS

The ministry of Briarwood is deeply appreciative of our Angels who volunteer their time in support of our ministry. We now have over 65 people volunteering to provide immeasurable support for our ministry by helping with office tasks, fund raising, camp maintenance, building projects, and acting as camp grandparents during summer camp. I want to extend deep appreciation to all our Angels who give of their time and talent to faithfully serve and to extend an invitation to all to participate in this ministry of love and service.

FUND RAISING EVENTS

Donations to Briarwood from individuals, congregations, and organizations help make summer camp and retreats affordable for all people and help make certain that no child is ever turned away from camp because of financial limitations. Financial gifts from around the synod have never been more important and appreciated, and we thank you for your continued support.

Our next big fund raising event is our annual **"Fiesta" on Saturday, May 5, at the Texas Star Conference Centre, 1400 Texas Star Parkway, Euless.** Previously known as the Gala, this event continues to be a big support as we are in high gear planning for summer camp. This event supports our ministry and helps not only with the scholarships vital to turn no one camper away, but also helps us get items to restock the camp store and other pre-camp expenses. Last year, over \$50,000 was raised! Tickets for the event may be purchased at bidpal.net/briarwoodgala or by calling 940-241-2099.

The second major fund raising event is the **Briarwood Retreat Center Golf Tournament.** This year's tournament will be held on **Friday, October 19, at Bridlewood Golf Club in Flower Mound.** As in the past, we will play a 4-person scramble format with a shotgun start, and lunch will follow the event. We will continue with a friendly competition between congregations as teams vie for the coveted "Bishop's Challenge" plaque. Please join us for a fun event that raises money for our ministry at Briarwood!

The Fall Festival will be held with the Thrivent Financial Barbecue "Cooking for Christ" Cook-off. Cooking begins Friday night, October 6, and continues through the night with festivities and judging which take place on Saturday, October 7. Last year, everyone judged a dessert made completely over fire from each team with some unique offerings all around. Come out and enjoy a crisp, fall day away from it all at Briarwood (with smoked treats and fellowship)!

More information about all the 2018 events, retreats, and camps is available at www.briarwoodretreat.org.

THANKS

The entire staff at Briarwood want to extend a word of thanks to all of Briarwood's volunteers and supporters – you are God's blessing to Briarwood, and you bless others through our ministry, and for that, we are all extremely grateful! I want to express my deep appreciation for those who serve on the Ministry Team at Briarwood: Courtney Sullivan, Interim Program Director; Kyle Rydell, Hospitality Intern; Sharon Mersiovsky, Office Manager and Registrar; Christi Cook, Administrative Assistant; Paul Harrington, Facilities Manager; Carlos Carrasquillo, Executive Chef; Ivanna Santiago, Asst. Chef; Juan Carlo, Kitchen Helper; and Antoneta Barnea, Housekeeping. It is truly a joy to work side-by-side with these hard working individuals to make Briarwood a special place through which we are all blessed.

God continues to do amazing things at Briarwood. Thank you for partnering with us in this life changing ministry.

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