

Camp UniStar Foundation

2014 Report to the MidAmerica Region of the UUA

Fred Hulting, President, Camp UniStar Foundation

The *Camp UniStar Foundation* (CUF) was formed in 2013 to own and operate Camp UniStar upon the dissolution of the Prairie Star District, which previously owned the camp. Before I report on the activities of CUF, let me first tell you about the camp.

Camp UniStar

Camp UniStar is a premier summer gathering place for Unitarian Universalists in the upper Midwest. Reachable only by water, the camp is surrounded by the Chippewa National Forest on the roadless Star Island in Cass Lake, one of the largest lakes in northern Minnesota. Camp UniStar's unique location offers a remarkable environment for spiritual reflection, friendship, relaxation, and fun. Campers keep returning for the serenity and community of an island retreat to enjoy a week filled with new and old friends, thought-provoking programs, wonderful meals, and memorable experiences.

Volunteer-led for its 50-year history, Camp UniStar offers programming that is focused on the 13-week summer season: a work week for preparing the camp, two youth weeks for people entering 7th through 12th grades, and ten family weeks with various programs:

- Work Week, our first week of the season, focuses on readying the camp for a summer of use. Work Week is followed by...
- Youth Weeks, during which 7th-12th grade UUs explore individuality, community, and spirituality, and participate in service activities to support the camp. Then come our...
- Family Program Weeks, each with a specific focus. Programs include spiritual, academic, experiential, artistic, movement, and nature topics. Programming is grounded in UU values, and worship events are coordinated by campers to serve the needs of the attendees.

Beyond formal programming, the camp has much to offer. The camp's waterfront is perfect for a wide range of activities; the island's forest trails attract hikers; sunrises and sunsets encourage meditation. Campers are free to canoe, kayak, sail, swim, fish, hike, play volleyball or other games, read, reflect, and relax. Overall, the camp provides a unique spiritual environment; to quote one camper, "The religious experiences and community I found at Camp UniStar have been essential to my identity as a UU."

You can learn more about the camp and its programs at www.campunistar.org. There is still time to register for a trip to camp in the summer of 2014. To learn more, visit the website or contact the registrar at registrar@campunistar.org.

The Formation of the Camp UniStar Foundation

As part of planning for regionalization, the Prairie Star District Board created a task force to look into alternatives for camp ownership that would ensure its continued, long-term success. That task force recommended that the camp assets be transferred to a new non-profit – the Camp UniStar Foundation – that would own and operate the camp, with a mission to offer programs and camper experiences that:

- 1) Promote the values and ideals of Unitarian Universalism, and support the mission of the MidAmerica Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- 2) Enhance personal and spiritual growth through safe, healthy, and educational programs at a north woods island camp in Minnesota.
- 3) Are sustainable in the long-term - both financially and environmentally - driving positive changes for the camp, the island environment, and the surrounding community.
- 4) Foster a close-knit, caring, and accepting camper community, with an informal, intergenerational, and volunteer culture.

The Camp UniStar Foundation is a Minnesota membership non-profit corporation with a single corporate Member: the MidAmerica Region. This arrangement keeps the camp strongly connected to the heritage PSD congregations, and positions it as a resource for UU's throughout the region. As the Member, the MidAmerica Region has some specific rights, most notably appointing some CUF Board positions and approving any sale of the camp. Still, CUF is separate from – and operates independently of – the MidAmerica Region.

The current CUF Board is Fred Hulting (President), Greg Schieber, (VP), Beth Toso (Treasurer), Grant Wacker (Secretary), Linnea Asp, Pat Diamond, and Steven Mosborg (Management Committee Chair). To learn more, please visit www.campunistarfoundation.org.

The Camp UniStar Foundation in 2014

CUF is still in its “start-up” phase. It was incorporated in January 2013, adopted by-laws in February 2013, and applied for its 501c(3) status with the IRS in April 2013. Over the last 12 months CUF has been establishing its Board of Directors, planning the complex transfer of assets from PSD, and setting up our governance in collaboration with the existing camp Management Committee. We are planning on a May 2014 transfer of the camp property and its assets. At that time the Management Committee will become part of CUF and we expect a seamless transition as they continue their 50-year tradition of operating the camp. The remainder of 2014 will focus on delivering a successful summer season, and on strengthening the foundations of our new organization.

CUF is excited about owning a camp that has a proud history and tradition; is in sound financial condition with a strong Management Committee; and is making over its facilities and programs as it builds towards the future. We are looking forward to our collaboration with MidAmerica, and to offering all of you a unique summer UU experience in the north woods!