



Camp UniStar - a premier summer gathering place for Unitarian Universalists in the upper Midwest – is situated on Star Island in Cass Lake, northern Minnesota. The camp property was a gift to the Prairie Star District by the Andersons, a large Houston family who spent over 30 summers on the island from the 1920s through the 1950s. UniStar held its first camping season in 1961.

William Anderson, born in 1928, traveled to the camp in 1985 and told stories of his family summers on the island as a boy and young adult. He also shared the difficulty of letting it go. “We were all hesitant to let our prize go. This is a magic place for us,” he said, and he asked the camp Management Committee and staff to “continue making it magic for the campers.”

The magic continues in 2015, following a successful and eventful 2014 for Camp UniStar.

### **A Successful Camp Season**

By the numbers, 2014 was a very good year. Our attendance reached 802 campers, and both camper revenue and donations increased over the previous year (up 9% and 30% respectively). We were also able to boost our total scholarships awarded by 50% to provide camping opportunities to more youth and families. We ran a 13-week schedule in 2014, beginning on May 31<sup>st</sup> and ending on August 30<sup>th</sup>:

- **Work Week**: During the first week of the season 26 campers completed the new Prairie Star Workshop building and prepared the camp for summer.
- **Youth Weeks**: We offered two one-week programs that engaged 7th-12th graders as they explored individuality, community, and spirituality, and participated in service activities to support the camp. 115 youth and 25 adults participated.
- **Family Program Weeks**: Each week offered a specific program focus for the campers who attended one of the 10 family weeks (636 campers total). Topics included ecology, sailing, yoga, writing, dancing, knitting, photography, mapmaking, and Minnesota history. Other activities supported personal spiritual development and helped campers build a stronger connection to nature.

I want to thank our 2014 Co-Directors Ben Joselyn and Sylvana Tunesi who supervised the 12 staff and 44 volunteers during the summer. I also want to thank Steven Mosborg (Chair) and the rest of the marvelous camp Management Committee for their consistently excellent work in overseeing the operation of the camp: Sharyn Barney, Lynda Borjesson, Chris Bremer, Charles Callender, Glenn Corliss, Susan Elliott-Bryan, Omega Guzman, Bernadine Joselyn, Morgan L’Argent, Ann McCully, Rebecca McPeek, Mikki Morrisette, Trudy Ohnsorg, Abigail Olson, Randall Sanderson, Steve Schreurs, Marla Siegler, Joni Strozyk, and Kathy Wallace.

### **A Change in Ownership**

For the first time since 1961, Camp UniStar changed ownership this past year. The *Camp UniStar Foundation* (CUF) was formed in 2013 to own and operate Camp UniStar upon the dissolution of the

Prairie Star District (PSD). PSD remained in existence beyond the 2013 formation of MidAmerica because CUF did not have its 501c(3) status, and the property transfer would be a much simpler legal transaction if had its tax-exempt status.

Unfortunately, the CUF IRS application was delayed and it did not appear that we would receive it by June 2014, when PSD was required to dissolve. So, PSD and CUF sought and received approval from the State of Minnesota to move ahead, and on June 24, 2014 the property transfer was completed. Ironically, the IRS granted our tax exempt status very shortly after that, on July 7, 2014.

Post-transfer we are working to establish governance and processes, and the CUF Board and the CUF Management Committee are working out new roles and responsibilities. As a combined leadership team we have aligned on our vision for the camp, and started work on a strategic plan. We are collaborating to accelerate an existing capital improvement roadmap for the camp, with a focus on safety, health, and an improved camper experience. We are placing a greater emphasis on Development for our scholarship programs, capital plans, and endowment. Together we are moving a successful camp towards greater success in the future.

I want to acknowledge the great work of our CUF Board Members who served this past year: Kristin Boehm, Pat Diamond, Oliver Gross, Fred Hulting, Greg Schieber, Beth Toso, Grant Wacker, Linnea Asp, and Steven Mosborg.

### **CUF and MidAmerica**

The Camp UniStar Foundation is a Minnesota membership non-profit corporation with a single corporate Member: the MidAmerica Region. As the Member, the MidAmerica Region has some specific rights, but CUF is separate from – and operates independently of – the MidAmerica Region.

We believe that Camp UniStar is one of the real treasures of the MidAmerica region. In addition to offering a unique north-woods UU camp experience, CUF also wants to promote the mission of the MidAmerica Region and support other regional camps and conferences. As a first step in 2015, we are co-sponsoring a workshop at the Regional Assembly on “Summer Camps in MidAmerica.” I will represent Camp UniStar and will partner with Michelle Richards of ChaliceSparx and longtime UU camp director Mike Schwab. We aim to share the joy of UU camping with participants, and to inspire them to visit UniStar, ChaliceSparx or any other MidAmerica camp.

I encourage all delegates to attend our workshop or visit [www.campunistar.org](http://www.campunistar.org) and learn more about the camp and its programs. (By the way, there is still time to register for camp in the summer of 2015!). Then, please help build awareness within your congregation about UniStar and other summer UU experiences that can build new connections across our region.