



Gwynn Valley

Millwheel News

November 2019



There's a New Director in Town...

Many of our Gwynn Valley families know Grant and Anne, our current directors. They bought camp from Howie and Betty Boyd in 1998 and have been directing and running camp for over 20 years. After some serious thought and strategic planning, Grant has decided to refocus his role at Gwynn Valley. After working



for over 40 years in the camp industry, he's ready to transition into different responsibilities. Going forward, Grant will be serving as an owner / advisor to Gwynn Valley and continue to teach and enhance our program. *We are very excited to announce that Maggie Howe, former Associate Director, is stepping up to take the role of co-director alongside Anne!*

Thoughts from Maggie

By Maggie Howe

The long and winding journey to Camp Director starts with a single step. My first step was in the summer of 1995. The family legend, according to my Dad, is that when he dropped me off at Cabin Playhouse I gave him a big hug, told him I loved him, and then walked away and never looked back. My love for Gwynn Valley was strong from the start and it grew with each summer I spent here. Six summers as a camper led me to discover a love for outdoor adventure, to make great friends, and to delight in all the simple joys of childhood.

Thoughts from Maggie - continued on page 2

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Gwynn Valley turns 85 - and you're invited!!!

85th Reunion: August 14-16, 2020

It's hard to believe that we are approaching Gwynn Valley's 85th Reunion! We are so excited to see who will be able to come back to celebrate this special occasion, and we hope many of our alums will be able to join us.

To register for the reunion go to:

<https://gwynnvalley.myevent.com/>

Also, if you haven't done so lately, please visit the "alumni" page on our website to update your contact information: <https://gwynnvalley.com/alumni/>

If you have any questions, please contact our office. We hope to see you in August! ☞



Thoughts from Maggie - continued from page 1

I later returned to spend 5 summers as a seasonal staff member moving from SIT to cabin counselor to head counselor. I worked overtime during my school years at Georgetown to fit in academic and professional experiences that would ensure I was on track for my career choice of environmental policy and that would still allow me to have summers free to return to Gwynn Valley. As a staff member, I formed treasured, life-long friendships, grew tremendously as a leader, and discovered new hobbies including mountain biking, which had terrified me as a child. As a camper the farm had been a favorite activity area, and as an adult this grew into an interest in cooking, food justice, and sustainable food systems. After graduation while working as a government contractor for the EPA, I chose to spend half of my two annual weeks of vacation volunteering at the Gwynn Valley Farm. Even as a young adult, my love for this place remained very strong.

With the opportunity to step into a year round position at Gwynn Valley in January 2013, I knew that I had to say yes. I said goodbye to all my coworkers and friends in DC, told them how much I appreciated them, and never looked back. Although I had also been working towards other goals and career opportunities, I could see that my experiences at Gwynn Valley and elsewhere had also been building towards this. From my own years as camper and staff, I understood quite intimately how powerful and important the camp experience is for helping young people develop independence, confidence, and the ability to adapt and create a community for themselves when they land in new environments. Gwynn Valley's core values had been integrated into my own personal values, although truthfully I can still be quite competitive outside of camp. I felt I was well-suited to pay-it-forward and create similar but updated experiences for the next generation of leaders.

As I moved into my seventh summer in 2019 on the director team and my 18th summer overall, I was honored to begin transitioning into the role of Co-Director alongside Anne Bullard. We are glad that Grant is close by as his 40+ years of experience in the camp community continues to be an invaluable resource. In many ways, I think of the role of Director as a guardianship. I'm here to serve current Gwynn Valley families and alumni, and to ensure that this place remains a healthy organization so that we can continue creating fun and transformative summer experiences for another 85 summers. 🌿



Glimpses of GV History

In honor of 85 years, we have created a brief timeline of some of the important dates from Gwynn Valley's history:

- 🌿 **1935** – Mary Gwynn's Camp is founded
- 🌿 **1942** – Mary Gwynn purchases the current camp property
- 🌿 **1949** – The camp name changes to Gay Valley
- 🌿 **1967** – Howie and Betty Boyd take over as the Camp's directors and owners
- 🌿 **1972** – The name of camp changed from Gay Valley to Gwynn Valley

From a letter sent April, 1972: "Note for campers: one other new thing you may have noticed is that Gay Valley is changing its name to "Gwynn Valley" in memory of Miss Mary Gwynn, the founder of Gay Valley. The change will be gradual but we wanted you to be the first to know. Soon, we will be seeing you coming "through the hemlocks" and we can hardly wait. Love, Betty and Howie"

- 🌿 **1982** – The farm program is added
- 🌿 **1985** – August 23-25: 50th reunion
- 🌿 **1995** – A Conservation Easement is created with the Pacolet Land Trust
- 🌿 **1995** – Sept. 1-4: 60th Reunion
- 🌿 **1997** – The Gwynn Valley Campership Foundation is created
- 🌿 **1998** – Anne and Grant Bullard take over as directors and owners
- 🌿 **2001** – The Riverside Program is reopened
- 🌿 **2010** – 75th Reunion
- 🌿 **2016** – The Young Leaders Program is started
- 🌿 **2017** – A new dining hall is built
- 🌿 **2020** – August 14-16: 85th Reunion 🌿



What's New at Camp?

By Katie Bullard

Keeping our core values constant is essential to Gwynn Valley's success, but change and innovation are also very important. As Howie Boyd once said to Anne, without change camp will die. Many things have been changed in recent years at camp, and we hope you will be able to join us for the 85th reunion to experience some of these improvements first hand.

New buildings

Sometimes it takes time to re-adjust our feelings as we move from the old to the new. Change is not taken lightly at camp; we always consider camp's best interest with an eye towards improvement. One of the largest changes in recent years is our new dining hall, kitchen, and pavillion, finished in May 2017. Our old dining hall had been the center of camp since Mary Gwynn moved to the present site in the early 40's. Though we were sad to see the old building come down in 2016, with all of the memories that took place inside it, we are so happy with our new dining hall and kitchen. The dining hall now has high ceilings, better airflow, and more space between the tables—all changes that help with heat and functionality in the summer. Another gift of our new dining hall is that our growing community now has a place to come together as one. All programs—including Day Camp and Riverside—now eat together when they are on property. Just like in the old building, our new dining hall is filled with laughter, conversations,

and camp's traditions during meal times. As a tribute to the old building, we have incorporated old boards into the new design. This circle ensures that we remember the old while celebrating the new.

A growing camp population also means building new cabins for campers and staff to sleep in! You may remember voting on new cabin names prior to the 2018 summer. The winners were Fern Hill over on Brookside and Firefly Cove on Hillside.

New staff

With 400 acres, 73 buildings, and a large working farm, it takes a lot of work to keep Gwynn Valley's facilities looking great and functioning smoothly all year long. To help with that work, this past January we hired Chris Webb to join our year-round maintenance team. Chris received his undergraduate degree in Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education at Brevard College, and he's passionate about land conservation, environmental sustainability, and outdoor education. Chris started working at Gwynn Valley in 2011, and in 2015 moved to Colorado. There, he taught at a Waldorf preschool and worked on a production farm for three years. In 2018 Chris and his wife Camille moved back to western North Carolina, and shortly thereafter Chris joined the Gwynn Valley year-round team. He's excited to share his interest and knowledge about agriculture and the outdoors with today's youth. During the summer, Chris not only works with Team Maintenance, but he also assists in

several different program areas including the farm, kayaking, and camping and nature skills.

New programs

Over the years, camp has grown to accommodate more families, campers, and staff. In order to make room for the campers who want to come back, we have expanded our Older Programs by adding Young Leaders for our 9th and 10th graders. An intimate program of 12 campers, Young

What's New at Camp? - cont. on page 5



A camper shaping red-hot metal at the anvil

GV's Scholarship Fund

By Robin Rose

Beginning with Miss Mary Gwynn's vision in 1935, one of the core values of Gwynn Valley Camp has been to bring together children and staff from all backgrounds and experiences. This included children from families who did not have the financial resources to afford a Gwynn Valley experience. Howie and Betty Boyd took that vision to a new level when they established the Gwynn Valley Campership Foundation in 1997.

The Foundation includes a fund that grows as a result of generous gifts from alumni, parents and friends. The fund is invested and the interest it generates is used to enable families with restricted resources to send their children to camp.

Last year, using \$37,000 worth of interest from the endowment, The Board of Trustees for the Foundation was able to award full scholarships to 16 children. In addition to this, the Camp provided \$95,000 in full and partial scholarships to 70 campers.

This year, as we celebrate our 85th anniversary, we hope to grow the endowment. We want to make camp a reality for more children and we invite you to be part of that effort.

As we approach our reunion, we hope that you will consider making a tax deductible donation to the Gwynn Valley Camper-ship Foundation. Please note on your check if you are donating to a named scholarship or to the Campership Fund in general. Checks should be made out to the Gwynn Valley Campership Foundation and mailed to the camp address or you can make a donation online at [https://gwynnvalley.com/who-we-are/foun- dation/](https://gwynnvalley.com/who-we-are/foundation/) and click on the orange "Donate now" button.

You have experienced the joy and love of Gwynn Valley-please share it with others! Many thanks,

The Gwynn Valley Camperhip Foundation Board - *Ginger Boyd Van Valkenburgh, Robin Rose, Bob Persky, Jann Graham, and Margaret Taylor* 🌿



Let Kindness Direct our Lives

By Grant Bullard

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

- Fred Rogers

As families gather all over our land for Thanksgiving, we must remember those who don't have the comforts and freedoms that many of us are provided in this country. Thanksgiving is that time that brings most if not all of our country together in the spirit of welcoming one another home and rekindling the family ties and love that binds us. Most importantly is breaking bread together and giving thanks for the many blessings we have. One of camp's values is simplicity, and that first Thanksgiving started out as a simple welcoming gesture extended to the Pilgrims by Samoset, a chief of the Eastern Abenaki tribe. That welcome came from a group who had every reason to be fearful.

Acceptance is another value we treasure here at Gwynn Valley and that is exercised here at camp by bringing diversity to our camper and staff ranks. As we make our way through our polarized culture, we all must strive to understand one another and seek out the peace that our country and world so desperately need. Through the ages, our country has been a beacon and refuge for those wanting a better life where fear is not lurking over your shoulder. Let us keep our thoughts and prayers focused on those who don't have a home to go to or a safe country to live in. Let us listen and be thoughtful before we act and speak. Let kindness and a grace filled spirit direct our lives.

While uncertainty surrounds us sometimes, we must remember what Fred Rogers' mother told him, "Look for the helpers". We must look for and be the helpers in a servant leadership role that we all have within us. We are thankful for your children who attend Gwynn Valley. We are grateful for our own families here at work and we wish you all the best this Thanksgiving holiday. May "simple joys" surround you and yours in the days ahead! 🌿



Not Retiring – Just Refocusing

By Grant Bullard

Retirement is the action of leaving one's job and ceasing to work. That friends, is not in the cards at this time. Why would I leave and cease to work in such a wonderful environment? I can't think of any good reasons except maybe traveling and camping with my bride. Even though I haven't had a summer vacation in 42 years, what would I do with myself...ride my bike more, take up more woodworking, more gardening, or more time at our church and community involvement?

I think what I'm doing is "refocusing" my energy. Last fall, winter and early spring I didn't keep the same work day schedule that I've kept for many years. I'm learning that I can come in a little later and go home earlier than in the past. I've also focused my attention on our site. It was a good year to do that because of the amount of rain and harsh weather we had after the summer of 2018. Heavy snows, erosion, and high winds wreaked havoc on our trail system here at camp and maintenance of our trails took a good portion of my time. What time I did spend in the office last winter was spent on thoughts of long range planning, reading more journals and articles on outdoor education, camping and our changing culture. I told our staff the other day that my goals for the time ahead are to keep things fresh and innovative at Gwynn Valley.

Our staff is incredibly talented, so some of my previous tasks have been taken over by those who are more capable than I. Many of camp's operations have been run by Anne, and she will continue in that role. Maggie, with her many years of experience at Gwynn Valley, has a brilliant mind and a great feel for hiring and managing staff. Newest to camp, Kevin continues to design and create in his role as Program Director. Shelley, Barbara, and Katie keep our office running smoothly. We're excited to have Zeke assisting with staff hiring, and Dale, Jeff, Chris, and Ashton make our site shine year in and year out.

This past summer I was able to get home at a reasonable hour each night. Usually between 9 and 9:30 was good for winding down from the day. I was at camp early before breakfast each day and love that time in the morning with everyone. I managed to go on more trips and actually taught more this summer. I continued my daily rounds of camp with cameras in hand and helped out with some service projects this summer. I'm excited to have Maggie stepping into the role of Camp Director along with Anne and am happy to announce that I'm not retiring, just refocusing.

Looking forward to seeing you all for the summer of 2020—our 85th year! 🌿

What's New at Camp? - *continued from page 3*

Leaders are able to develop their leadership skills, add on to their abilities to work as a team, participate in fun off camp programs, and take on more responsibilities while at camp. Not only has the program provided a smoother transition between camper and staff, it has increased the number of Older Campers we can keep at Gwynn Valley each summer. Older Programs has also grown by increasing the size of our Mountainside program to hold 10 extra campers each session. This addition has allowed us to have more of our campers move through the programs at camp, and experience the outdoors, in addition to building and strengthening skills they started working on in the Main Camp program.

New and improved activities

While it may seem as though many of our changes have been in the building realm or an increase in camper numbers, we have also grown the number and quality of activities we offer. We still have our staples like arts and crafts, pottery, sports, the farm, mill, horseback riding, and our adventure activities, but we now have Earth Skills and Blacksmithing. Both of these activities allow campers to practice skills where they can either take home a project, like a wall hook in blacksmithing, or a skill, creating fire by friction, and show it off to their family and friends.

One of our growing and popular activities at camp is mountain biking, enjoyed by both Main camp and Mountainside. We are excited to be in the process of constructing a new building in front of the pool to enhance our biking and swimming program areas. It's a large building with two bathrooms, storage space, an inside room for bike maintenance and teaching, and a large wrap-around porch for program use.

We anticipate that the 2020 summer will be a 10-week celebration honoring 85 years of educational, fun, and innovative program at Gwynn Valley! We can hardly wait to share all of this with our current camper families and alumni. 🌿

