

Camp Wyman

Kiwanis and Kiwanis Camp Wyman

St. Louis area Kiwanians speak fondly of their experiences at Camp Wyman, located at 600 Kiwanis Drive near Eureka, MO.

Founded as the **Children's Industrial Farm** in 1898, the original concept was to be an **orphanage** for children in St. Louis aged 4 to 12. "Industrial Farm" refers to the Boy's Town style institution where children learn agricultural skills and raise some of their own food. Incorporated as The Children's Industrial Farm Benevolent Association of St Louis, the enterprise was modeled on the "Fresh Air" movements in New York, Michigan, New Jersey, and other states.

The farm was funded by subscriptions from 500 St. Louis families. The advisory board included well-known names such as Adolphus Busch, William J. Lemp, and R.M. Scruggs. As was typical of the fresh air movement, many early benefactors were leaders in the region's wholesale food and beverage industry. Albert Russell Verdier was the man behind the idea and a committee was formed to find a location for the farm.

Frank Wyman served as president of the Children's Industrial Farm from 1899 until his death on April 24, 1924. He and his wife are buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis. Known for his fund-raising, Wyman was a prominent businessman who was appointed Postmaster of the St. Louis Post Office from 1903 to 1909 during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt.

Camp Wyman was first located near Sullivan, MO, but in 1900 moved to a rented farm near Eureka (the farm was later purchased by the organization in 1910). Early on the organization transitioned from a 'farm' focus to providing summer "outings" for children. For 10 weeks each summer, groups of 100 children were brought to the camp for two-week visits. Included were boys and girls from ages 6 through 12 from low-income areas, sent on referral by churches and social welfare organizations. The "farm" raised most of its vegetables and milk cows were rented from local farmers.

Lodging for children and staff was in canvas tents until 1910 when sixteen cabins were built with scrap lumber from the 1904 World's Fair (thanks to Frank Wyman's connections). These lasted until the late 1920's when they were replaced by larger, better ventilated dorms. Built of pine clapboard and painted white, they stood all in a row on the camp's north hill.

The organization's name has evolved over time. It became The Frank Wyman Outing Farm for Children in 1921, Camp Wyman in 1938, and Kiwanis Camp Wyman in 1979. The final name change was to Wyman Center in 1999 and coincided with the expansion of the organization's mission to include both the camp and community programming. Concurrently, a board resolution was approved to honor the

historic relationship with Kiwanis, naming the campsite near Eureka as Kiwanis Camp Wyman until 2003.

It is not clear how original subscription funding worked, but by 1922, Frank Wyman's Outing Farm was one of the charities funded by the St. Louis Community Fund. The funding organization later became the St. Louis War Chest Fund, the Community Chest, then the United Fund, and now, the United Way of Greater St. Louis.

A fire destroyed four buildings at the camp in 1939. The loss was estimated at \$20,000.

In 1947, George W. Kirk of Sikeston Kiwanis was Governor. That year, Marq Braun, Chairman of the National Vinegar Co. and a member of the Southside Kiwanis Club, along with Harold Duffy, Executive Vice President to the S.G. Adams Printing and Stationary Co., and member of the Downtown Kiwanis Club (also chair of the local Kiwanis Interclub Relations Council), led the effort to enroll the Kiwanis Clubs of the St. Louis Region as sponsors of Camp Wyman. Some 1,200 Kiwanians agreed to pay \$1/yr to the camp association. The MO-ARK History indicated that between 30 and 40 clubs in Greater St Louis (Divisions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) sponsored Kiwanis Camp Wyman.

Many recall workdays to maintain cabins used by the children. Each cabin sported the name of a Kiwanis club that agreed to sponsor and maintain it. Dave Hilliard recalls that clubs from Arnold, Brentwood, Chesterfield, Clayton, Collinsville, IL, Creve Coeur, Crestwood Sunset Hills, Ferguson, Festus-Crystal City, Flo-Valley, Glen Carbon, IL, Harvester, Jennings, Maryland Heights, Normandy, Northwest, Ritenour, St Peters, South County, Southside, Tower Grove, Troy, West End, and West St Charles County had cabins or sponsored camperships.

When Adj and Eddie Dillon were executive directors (1942 to 1975), it was not rare to see 300-400 Kiwanians and their families spread across the camp, paint brushes in hand on work day. As club members aged, participation diminished to a few dozen members who still faithfully come out each year. Annual workdays were and remain a ritual.

In this era, Kiwanis clubs participated in numerous fundraisers for Camp Wyman. In 1959, a swimming pool was built with \$35,000 from Downtown Kiwanis earned by selling fruitcakes. There was always a swimming pool. The first, made of tin caulked with tar was kept filled by a spring running in and out of it. This was replaced in the late 30's, by a concrete pool that also straddled a creek. Neither early pool had chlorination or filter systems; they were man-made swimming holes. Emerging public health requirements necessitated the "modern" pool that opened in 1959 with the assistance of the Downtown Kiwanis.

Over the period from 1972 to 2000 all the old cabins were torn down and replaced with modern facilities designed for year-round use. Many of these were also funded by Kiwanis Clubs.

A lake was built in the 1980's with funds raised by Bridgeton Kiwanis during the heady days of bingo fundraisers. In 1986, the Inter-Club Council donated \$30,000 for septic improvements at Camp Wyman. By 1990, Kiwanis Camp Wyman was completing a \$5MM capital campaign and operated with a budget of about \$1.5MM per year. In 1990, West St. Louis County Kiwanis donated \$25,000 to Camp Wyman. Between 2011-2020, Chesterfield Kiwanis donated \$55,000. The list of club donations is long–

1. Bridgeton: Shop, Lake, Small Dining Room, Health Lodge, Education Room, swingsets and multiple, passenger vans
2. Hampton/Midtown/Tower Grove: Council Ring, Main Dining Hall and Great Hall
3. Kirkwood: Chapel
4. West County and founding Kiwanian of same, Joe Linneman and his wife Georgana: four North Ridge Cabins
5. Spanish Lake: Laundry
6. O'Fallon and Kiwanian Frank Forst: Staff Apartments
7. Southside: Cabin and Recreation Hall
8. Gravois: Lower Pavilion and Library, later converted to Accessible Dorm
9. University City/Clayton: Cabin and Nature Lodge, later converted to Accessible Dorm 2
10. Downtown: Pool
11. Maplewood: Health Lodge
12. St Charles: Director's Lodge
13. St Clair, Union, Washington: Morning Star Village (primitive adventure campsite)
14. Midtown: High Adventure Course
15. Ray and Ginny Scholin (Hampton Club): Aquatic Study Pond and Entry Monument
16. Frank Bick (Southside): Purchase of adjacent land, Office
17. Bill & Debbi Voss (Chesterfield): Headquarters Building
18. Isaac and Marilyn Young (Maplewood): Nature Lodge, purchase of adjacent land and vegetable gardens

Wyman held outdoor education camps beginning in 1948 for public schools from St. Louis and Webster Groves as well as Lutheran parochial schools. 2023 marks 75 consecutive years the Webster Groves district will have been served at Camp Wyman.

In 1953, Ed Kurmann of South (St. Louis) County Kiwanis went to camp for a week during Spring of the school year at Camp Wyman with his sixth-grade class at Mallinckrodt School in St. Louis.

Judy Burnette also of the South County club worked at Camp Wyman as a counselor. In 1958 and 59, she

volunteered while a student at Harris Teacher College and later worked summers at Camp Wyman until 1973. During girls camp, she observed Sinawiks (Kiwaniis spelled backwards), the Kiwanis Women's Auxiliary, visiting the camp. An end-of-the-season barbecue given by Kiwanis Club members was a tradition. It was a festive occasion enjoyed by all.

By the late 1980's, Wyman's data made it clear that a deeper engagement with young people was required to create true and lasting changes in their lives. Concurrently, local data showed that teenagers were most at risk and underserved. National research also reinforced Wyman's belief that longer term engagement was needed to realize sustained improvement in the lives of young people.

Dave Hilliard, who began working with Wyman Center as a camp counselor in 1965 and became president and CEO in 1975, began the process of pivoting the organization to focus only on serving teens. Wyman designed a multi-year, year-round program (now known as Wyman Leaders) that integrated camp and community-based elements to cultivate leadership, service, positive peer relationships and civic engagement while fostering educational success and positive youth development.

When Dave Hilliard retired in 2016, Claire Wyneken took the helm of the organization. Claire began working at Wyman in 1987 and was an instrumental leader in many aspects of Wyman's evolution - including recognizing the importance of and securing the Teen Outreach Program. She retired in 2023 after nearly 37 years of service to Wyman and the young people it serves and current President and CEO, Allison Williams, took over leadership of the organization. Allison first joined Wyman in 1993 and since then has served in many roles in Wyman - including leading efforts to develop and replicate the Teen Connection Project.

Wyman Today

Today, Wyman partners with young people by providing experiences, opportunities, and resources to support and challenge them as they grow and learn. Through Wyman's three proven programs, they are part of the lives of more than 3,000 St. Louis area youth and nearly 30,000 nationally every year.

Wyman Leaders supports young people in St. Louis to develop life and leadership skills, enter and complete college and career education programs, and create strong community connections. Youth participate in immersive camp experiences, enrichment activities, postsecondary education tours, and individualized coaching. Teens enter Wyman Leaders the summer before ninth grade, at a pivotal time in their education and lives. They finish the program as adults, four years after high school graduation. Wyman's trained youth leadership professionals support more than 400 students each year through this recognized, nine-year program.

The Teen Outreach Program® (TOP®) is a nationally recognized program empowering teens with the tools and opportunities to develop social-emotional skills, build community connections, strengthen relationships, avoid risky behaviors, and build a powerful vision for their future. The 9-month program

serves young people from 6th-12th grade, and TOP youth are prepared to navigate challenges during their teenage years – when decisions matter. Every year, Wyman directly serves more than 650 teens in the St. Louis area and TOP is part of the lives of nearly 30,000 teens nationwide.

The Teen Connection Project® (TCP®) is a highly engaging, evidence-based social-emotional learning program for high school students focused on social-emotional skills, peer connections, and building healthy relationships. Through this 12-14 week program, teens participate in group lessons on topics that include communication, trust, and recognizing strengths. They learn to interact, share, and improve connections with others. Annually, more than 500 young people in the St. Louis area and across the country participate in TCP.

Wyman has been accredited by the Council on Accreditation since 2011; is a Better Business Bureau accredited charity and a partner of the United Way of Greater St. Louis; and was recognized as a 2022 Top Workplaces Honoree by the St. Louis Post Dispatch. Additionally, Wyman's TOP and TCP are included on several national, evidence-based and best practice listings.

Kiwanis and Wyman's Partnership Today

Kiwanis clubs in the area continue to support Camp Wyman through financial support and by volunteering at the camp.



Kiwanis Work Day at Camp Wyman: Twice a year local Kiwanis Clubs come to visit Wyman for volunteer workdays that have been ongoing since the late 1940s. In our most recent Wyman workday, we wrote 340 positive messages on snacks that will be given out to Teen Outreach Program (TOP) and Teen Connection Project (TCP) students! We also helped maintain camp by mulching and taking down old structures that are no longer used.

Kiwanians often request donations to Camp Wyman in their obituaries and Wyman's endowed funds include several estate gifts from Kiwanians and their families.

Local clubs that have established memorial funds for members include:

- Creve Coeur Kiwanis
- Chesterfield Kiwanis
- Crestwood-Sunset Hills Kiwanis
- Kirkwood Kiwanis
- Maryland Heights Kiwanis
- South Side Kiwanis

- Webster Groves Kiwanis

Named memorial funds include:

- Martin Bailey – Midtown, Hampton/Midtown
- Al Bryant – South Side
- W. Donald Dubail – West End/Clayton/University City
- Larry Embrey – Creve Coeur
- Elmer and Beulah Kolkmeier – St. Charles
- L.W. Matheny – Hampton
- Red Reininga – South Side
- Erv Roesel – South Side
- Bob Springmeier – Florissant Valley
- John Warren – St. Charles
- Charlie Zeigler – South Side

General or Special Endowments:

- James Scholin (Ray and Ginny Scholin)
- Julie Ramsey (Jim Ramsey)
- Paul and Vicki Jungerman
- Jack and Pat Wichmann

Sources and Notes:

Information here comes from Wyman staff and archives, interviews of Kiwanis members, and newspaper files available online. The latter includes the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis County Library) and the Pacific (MO) Transcript (State Historical Society in Columbia, MO).

Camp Wyman Website (WymanCenter.org) and staff, Ancestry.com, Findagrave.

Interviews and email exchanges with: Dave Hilliard; Elmer Austermann, St.

Charles Kiwanis; Judy Burnette, South County Kiwanis; Jeff Johnson, Maplewood Kiwanis; Ed Kurmann, South County Kiwanis; and Barb Thompson, Florissant Valley Kiwanis.

Post-Dispatch articles

June 27, 1899

August 3, 1902, p 19B

August 15, 1918

July 1

August 9, 1942, p 17c

St. Louis Star Times Articles
July 3, 1939, p 1

Pacific Transcript articles
June 10, 1921