



Annual Report

The tests in the past year have been numerous to say the least, but I believe that we are a much stronger organization now than we were a year ago.

It was this time last year that the board of directors of Kaleo on the River, who is the body that has been charged with governing and managing the property we all know as Kamp Kaleo, took back control of the day-to-day operations of the Kamp. In doing so, the board re-formed and reactivated the Property Committee, who was tasked with creating a plan to deal with the many structural needs of the property and the board also created a fundraising committee, of which I was asked the chair. Both committees are made up of dedicated Kaleo community members who have devoted their time and talents to the needs of Kaleo in the last year.

While I firmly believe that the past should remain in the past, the reality of our situation is that the past continues to impact our present in many ways and we must confront those tests and learn from them so that we can continue to mature as an organization.

As the Board, the property committee, and the fundraising committee began to do their work, the reality of the situation we were in grew more and more challenging. The board was trying to get a handle on the finances, which included a few rather tricky situations with the IRS, some of which stemmed back a decade. The property committee began the work of evaluating the property and the facilities to put together a laundry list of items that needed to be addressed that included roofing needs, the deep cleaning of all the buildings, the removal of rubbish, trees, and other debris that seemed to be hiding everywhere, dire plumbing needs and so much more. The fundraising committee quickly realized that before we could start seeking donations, we needed to help with the damage control. We felt that it was necessary to create an air of transparency in order to earn back the trust of many within the Kaleo community. That's when we released, on behalf of the board, an outline of how we were going to set a new course for Kaleo on the River and for Kamp Kaleo. We have been dedicated to refreshing, rebuilding, renewing, and reinventing Kaleo for the future.

As such, with the help of Geoff Putney, we did a complete overhaul to refresh our digital footprint with a more user friendly website that remains relevant and up-to-date with all that is going on at Kamp. In addition, we use social media to remain connected with the Kaleo community in a way that reaches our Kaleo family across the world as we remain dedicated to telling our story and remaining transparent.

With the help of over 50 volunteers throughout the spring and summer, the rebuild phase of our plan began to take shape. Buildings were deep cleaned, floors were finished, screens and windows repaired, a new ramp built on the discovery center, a new roof on the discovery center, a number of in-operable toilets replaced, new water heaters installed throughout the camp, plumbing upgrades in bathhouses and so many other completed projects allowed us to launch the 2023 camping season by welcoming campers, counselors, directors, and nurses to a space that was clean, safe, and comfortable.

We still have much work to do including putting new roofs on the Staff Cabin, maintenance building, administrator's house, west bathhouse and Cabin 5. There are some projects that need to be completed on the administrator's house to make it more comfortable and safe for whomever is living there. There are some small projects in the welcome center that need to be completed from the water damage from a few years ago, many painting projects that are beginning to emerge among many other projects around camp. In addition, we continue to work on trimming trees and clearing out dead trees from our landscape. There is never a shortage of work to be done to maintain these hallowed grounds.

In March of this year, the Board voted to extend an offer to me to become the Transitional Administrator, which I gladly accepted and immediately began to focus on the 3rd pillar of our reset plan by building new and reestablishing old relationships with individuals, churches and businesses throughout the state, including forming many new and thriving relationships with many people in the town of Burwell. In essence, I invited the many lost sheep back into the fold and welcomed their time, their talents, their resources, and their witness to Kaleo while also stewarding their gifts in responsible and transparent ways, with the help of the board and both committees.

The 4th pillar that we have been dedicated to focus on was reinventing Kaleo for the future. As such, I have been working with a group of 8 dedicated individuals from many walks of life that bring many different experiences to begin to ask the questions of what is working and what needs to change. They are a think tank for me in my role and extra sets of eyes that see things that I or the board miss or overlook. This focus group meets monthly and at the end of their work, the plan is to submit a proposal to the board that will with recommendations that I believe will allow our story to continue for many generations.

Much of my time this past winter and spring was also spent on preparing for the site visit that we expected in the middle of June from the American Camp Association, the organization who accredits our camp. Our ACA safety policies and standards handbook had not been updated in more than 6 years, nearly all of which were out-of-date and needed to be re-written. In addition, since we failed to welcome the site visit in 2022, the visit this past June was all the more crucial. I am happy to say that after many hours of, sometimes, tedious, work and a very successful site visit, we fully expect to have our accreditation renewed by the ACA and will receive final confirmation later this fall.

Our issues with the IRS in 2023, many of which the board had been aware of for some time, also pulled some of the focus from me and the board. We remain committed to finally putting those past mistakes behind us and get into and stay in good standing with the IRS. As such, through the

hard work and dedication of so many, I made a payment to the IRS last month of over \$16,000 that will finally put to rest many of these issues and now we turn our focus to one final hurdle that I fully expect to be resolved by the end of the year. To ensure that we no longer make those same mistakes we have made in the past and to ensure that all forms and taxes are filed and paid on time, we have retained the services of long time Kaleo supporter, Jeff Moock, to assist us with this endeavor. In addition, we have implemented a series of checks and balances to ensure no one person is solely responsible for managing the finances of the organization. We have also committed to doing an official audit of the books every other year and an unofficial audit in the off years.

I should also point out that the board as formed a search committee that is meeting to develop a comprehensive and updated job description for the leadership role that I currently fill. After that is complete, a nation-wide search will begin to call a permanent person to the role. Many have asked if I intend to apply for the position, and I will say that I continue to be in a season of discernment as to what I feel God calling me to do. I am committed, at this time, to remaining in this role until a permanent person is hired.

This past year we saw a tremendous amount of hope and new life breathed into the hallowed grounds of Kamp Kaleo. We formed a new and more equitable partnership with the Youth and Outdoor Ministries Committee and both of us remain committed to working together to support each other's endeavors and to host a radically hospitable and God-inspired summer camping season. We knew at the beginning of the year that we were essentially starting from scratch and we were focused on hosting each scheduled camp no matter how many young people registered for them. We felt that the camp needed some continuity and some normalcy in place of the uncertainty and discomfort that was experienced in recent years. We are excited that our numbers increased from 2022 and are more than confident that they will increase again next year. Holly Gage and I have worked to develop a fairly comprehensive marketing and recruitment plan and have the support of both the Kaleo Board and the Youth and Outdoor Ministry Committee to ensure that this happens. I am excited to say that camp dates will be announced on November 1st and registration for next summer will open on December 1st of this year. And I am even more excited to say that we have add a new camp for next summer!

Overall, this past summer we saw 72 campers and 50 counselors, companions, directors, and nurses on the grounds of Kaleo in the month of June. In addition, we welcomed 85 campers and counselors from Nebraska Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 50 campers and counselors from the 4-H camp, 25 youth and adults for the local 7th grade over-night retreat, and 11 quilters for quilt camp. And, we had a sold out weekend over Rodeo weekend with nearly 80 rodeo fans, 60 guests who attended the 1st annual luau and we had over 60 people here last night for a farm dinner to raise money for the local school, for a total of nearly 500 guests visiting Kaleo in the months of June, July, August, and September.

Speaking of the Luau, last month we took a chance by hosting an event like no other that has been done at Kaleo in the past with the 1st Annual Kaleo Luau and Rubber Ducky Regatta. It was a huge success in many ways, including the beginning of new traditions, the new people exposed to Kaleo, the money raised, and the support received from many throughout the state but most

importantly from the people living and doing business in Burwell. It is so important for the success of our organization that we develop and maintain a healthy relationship with the town of Burwell and make sure that they know that this space here at Kaleo is open for them as well and this event did that! In total, the luau and the rubber ducky regatta raised, \$14,135 for Kamp Kaleo. I want to personally thank the fundraising committee who worked tirelessly with me to make that event happen. And not just the luau, but also the other fundraising efforts that our committee has launched in the last year. If you add what we raised at the luau with the other donations that we have received to date, the donations from you...the Kaleo community have surpassed \$71,000 and that number continues to grow. That number includes not just the monetary donations, but also the donation of new toilets and water heaters, a brand new riding lawn mower, a new paddle boat, new gaga ball pit, new freezer, and many other items that were needed around camp.

The reality is that we cannot rely solely on the a 3-4 month camping season to cover our operating budget nor can we rely solely on the donations from individuals, churches and businesses either. But together, along with opening our space up to many other groups, churches, and people we can and will continue to cover our operating budget and begin to grow as an organization once again.

Our operating budget for 2023 was estimated at the beginning of this year to surpass \$190,000 with an estimated income of nearly \$110,000, which means we expected a deficit of almost \$82,000. These figures were, in many ways, a very educated guess. The reality that I found ourselves in at the beginning of this year was one that did not include a whole lot of historical information to create the budget and so with my understanding of the camp and my background with churches and in the business world, I made the best guess I could and the board agreed to take a chance on this year's budget by unanimously approving it.

The figures that I am about to share were presented at the last board meeting on September 14, 2023. So far, as of September 14th, we have accrued expenses in the amount of \$178,543.96 and have received in camp revenue, donations, and revenue from the rental of our farm ground a total of \$157,198.33. I will say that we have had a handful of donations that have come in since the 14th and some expenses as well. With 3 months to go in the year, we now expect any additional income to the camp to come in primarily three forms, the first is the other half of the farm rent (about \$11,000) and the second is through additional donations and fundraisers, with a small amount coming in from a few upcoming fall retreats and group rentals. We can also expect additional expenses estimated at \$45,000. This means that at this point, after you add in the farm rent, I am expecting a deficit at the end of the year of about \$55,000, which we hope to raise through donations and fundraisers over the next few months.

As we continue to look toward the future, we have a lot of hope for the possibilities that can become reality here at Kamp Kaleo. The absence of progress is complacency. For so long we have remained complacent to the point that we started to erode as an organization. With the new hope giving new life to this place we are starting to look towards progress once again. The board and I are starting to explore new ways in which we can generate revenue for Kamp Kaleo and new ways that we can attract people to this sacred space. We are currently exploring the possibility of a retreat center that would offer year-round housing and space to churches, groups,

families, and individuals. Additionally, we are exploring the possibility of constructing a full-service RV park to support the ever growing tourism industry in the area. A few other exciting and most likely more immediate projects that we are looking into is a full remodel of both bath houses as well as the commercial kitchen in the lodge.

The funding of these projects and others in the future is anticipated to come from grant funding as well as the donations from people like all of you.

As we continue to look to the future, we will soon be establishing a new task force that will be charged with helping to create a 5 and 10 year strategic plan that will be the North star for the board and for the Kamp. We have also recently established an environmental science committee made up in part of scientists throughout the state who will soon start meeting to explore the natural resources of the property in order to protect what we have and also to determine how we can use the natural resources in responsible ways, including opening up the space to campers, young and old, to study the grounds.

It has become quite clear that everyone has a different connection to the sacredness of Kamp Kaleo...a different story to tell of their relationship with this place we love so much. We must preserve that sacredness, but we must also open it up to the possibilities of what it could be to other people and how others might form new sacred connections with this place and tell new stories.