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Letter from the Conference Council of the Illinois South Conference

Much has happened in the last few months. In March, we said goodbye to Noah McCarn, our most recent Executive Director, and we continued to search for the right leadership fit for DuBois Center for the interim period. As we shared in a Conference-wide letter in February, we contracted Kaleidoscope Inc., a team of professional consultants and planners who know and are passionate about camps, retreat centers, and outdoor centers, to staff our search process to find the right transitional leadership for DuBois Center.

On our behalf, Kaleidoscope networked and screened candidates based on the materials we provided. After posting the position nationwide, they received resumes of applicants. They spoke to candidates on the telephone, conducted interviews, and checked references.

The Executive Committee of the Conference, entrusted with final interviewing, met with Kaleidoscope several times to review the applicants' materials and their notes and recommendations based on their experience of the changing landscape of the camping world. After doing their due diligence based on the candidates they identified as final candidates, and after much prayer, conversation, and discernment, the Executive Committee presented their surprising final recommendation to the Conference Council, which was unanimously affirmed.

We say surprising because where we ended up was different from where we had expected to go. However, we believe this is true discernment. Discernment is not going into a process with the answer already in mind but being open to how the Spirit might be at work. After a nationwide search, the Spirit-led process brought us back home and led us not to one, but two qualified candidates who could serve as Co-Interim Executive Directors.

A new model necessitated new thinking regarding staffing structure and compensation. If we took the compensation package for the Interim Executive Director and programming staff and combined the executive and programming responsibilities and what we had identified as essential interim tasks, we could create two full-time positions within the 2024 proposed budget. Yet more importantly, we could extend a two-year contract to two persons who deeply love and are committed to the mission and ministry of DuBois Center.

Therefore, we are excited to announce that we have hired Jason and Leah Petry as Co-Interim Executive Directors of DuBois Center. As former staff members who served in various capacities, including counselors, barn coordinators, lifeguards, programming staff, and assistant directors, it has been their dream to return to DuBois Center in executive leadership positions. As you have the opportunity to interact with them in the coming months, we are confident that you will see the potential we saw and how their leadership could greatly benefit DuBois Center.

Jason will start his ministry as Co-Interim Executive Director with us on May 10 to ensure a smooth and successful summer season. On August 5, when our current program director, Sarah Harding, starts a full-time graduate program, Leah will begin her ministry with us as the other part of the “co” leadership.

Together, they will seek to build up the current programs of DuBois Center and identify the staffing, partnerships, and financial opportunities that could help DuBois Center thrive as a ministry of the Illinois South Conference. While it will not be an easy task, they are up to the challenge and hope to be considered as settled executive leaders, a possibility built into the position and contract at the beginning of our search.

We covet your prayers and support for them and our beloved DuBois Center.

With love and hope,

The Conference Council (Rev. Christy Smith, Moderator; Rev. Lori Schafer, Vice Moderator; Darryl Collins, Treasurer; Rev. Steve Boorsma, Secretary; Rev. Shana Johnson, ex-officio member and ISC Conference Minister; Mark Beckmeyer, Diane Degener, Rev. Dr. Mary Beth Hartenstein, Chilang Lawless, and Rev. Patrick Poole)

Below is a picture and message Leah and Jason have provided for you to get to know a little about them:



DuBois Center is near and dear to our hearts. It inspired Leah to minor in Recreation, Park, and Tourism Administration while in college and provided a supportive community on her journey into yoga teacher certifications. It also provided Jason with opportunities to expand and share his love for and knowledge of the outdoors and exposed him to a varied skill set he never imagined thriving with.

Between the two of us, we have logged countless hours volunteering and as staff. During our previous tenure at DuBois Center - including our time working together as Outdoor Ministry Interns - we gained and developed skills and experience in hospitality and guest relations, event planning, program implementation, equestrian program management, problem-solving, facility management, and maintenance, supervision, and administration.

In recent years, Leah became a small business owner while also working in the insurance industry and Jason has gained experience in industrial maintenance. These various opportunities provided us with time and experience to refine the skills we initially formed at DuBois Center.

We felt a calling to return to DuBois Center and are excited to give back to a place that has given us so much.

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