

# County Life

RELIGION

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## Selah a less well-kept secret

BY ROLAND STOY  
STAFF WRITER

**READING** — In 1948, Harry Truman defeated Tom Dewey for the presidency, Joe Louis retired and Babe Ruth died.

On a much quieter note that year, a number of local churches and individuals who felt their community needed a Christian camp for boys and girls purchased 250 feet of lake frontage near Reading, and founded Camp Selah.

The Rev. Phil Charles, camp director, told a recent meeting of the Coldwater Area Ministerial Association (CAMA) that Camp Selah has been a "well-kept secret" over the years, including during the over 20 years he pastored at Snow Prairie Bible Church near Bronson, and the congregation there supported it and sent youth to summer camp.

Charles retired from the ministry at Snow Prairie and assumed the directorship at Selah in January of 2006.

The secret is getting out.

Four hundred young people attended camp there last year, with 40 percent of them doing so for the first time, Charles said, as he shared about his efforts to promote the camp this winter by visiting area churches.

The numbers last summer included 23 youth from a church in Illinois, and overall, he said they have added an extra week in their summer schedule to accommodate the increasing attendance.

He expects most of the first-timers to return this summer.

He is also making it known that the camp is available as a retreat when it is not hosting young summer campers.

"We have a swell camp," Charles told the CAMA members. "It's a little rustic, but we have good facilities. . . It's a good experience. God is working there."

The camp is on 23 acres with a creek running through a natural wooded area and the waterfront.



Charles is at front, with summer staff from a previous season.

Buildings include a chapel which seats 150, two dorm buildings with bathrooms, showers, and private accommodations for guest group speakers or leaders, and a lower level which includes the kitchen, dining room, and game room with fireplace.

Recreational facilities include a covered pavilion for picnics or rainy day games, a softball field, a sand volleyball court, a regular volleyball court, a four way volleyball court, basketball court, and two big game fields. The waterfront includes paddle boats, kayaks, canoes, a large swimming area with a diving and sunning raft.

The days of campers are filled with activities and games, as well as attention to spiritual matters.

In 1950, the first building was erected and the first summer camp was held, and until 1982, Camp Selah was without any year round staff, leaving the maintenance and operation of the ministry to the volunteer board, which Charles chaired before accepting the directorship.

Wife Carolyn serves as financial secretary.

Charles expressed gratitude for "the great foundation" laid by his predecessors, Duane Cross and Jeff Knoll, and said he prays he can continue to build on that.

He said the decision to retire from Snow Prairie and take on the directorship came only after much consideration and most importantly, prayer.

"I believe this is what the Lord led me to do," said Charles, 60, who is assisted by program director Mark Emmons, last week on the road promoting and seeking summer workers for the camp. "I've been stretched physically and spiritually. . . I believe the Lord will continue to use me here."

Needed are four male counselors, five female counselors, a head lifeguard, kitchen staff (paid and volunteer) and six youth servant leaders (counselors), three male and three female.

As it is explained to potential workers, "We demonstrate that being a Christian



Youth experience a variety of activities in their stay at Selah.

can be fun. In every thing we do we want to demonstrate to the campers that God loves them and that this love can make a difference in their lives. In the cabins, on the ball field, and in the chapel services our love for Christ and His love for the campers must be evident. Because of this it is necessary that camp staff share a deep love for the Lord and for others," said Charles.

Camp Selah, licensed and inspected by the State of Michigan Department of Consumer & Industry

Services and a member of The Christian Camp and Conference Association, is at 3600 Long Lake Rd, Reading

Selah is at (800) 943-2527, and has an extensive Web site at [campselah@yahoo.com](http://campselah@yahoo.com).

Charles said "God's love, through us, to others," (1 John 3:16) is their slogan.

"Selah's effectiveness depends upon a growing partnership with other believers," said Charles, emphasizing the need for prayer, work and financial partnerships.

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