



Another Place God Is

**UPCOMING  
EVENTS:**

- **Coffee and Comedy**  
December 12
- **2009 Summer Staff Reunion**– December 19
- **Jr. High Retreat**  
January 15-17
- **OMCA Annual Business Meeting**– January 25
- **Mother/Daughter Retreat**  
January 29-30
- **Sweethearts' Banquet**  
February 13

**WISH LIST:**

(contact office for details)

- Ventrac attachments
- Log Splitter
- Software upgrades for the camp's computers.
- Telescoping Pressure Washer Wand
- Electric Piano/Keyboard

There are several "Skilled Labor" projects on our work list. If you consider yourself a handyperson and are willing to help us out please call the camp office.

Camp Luz  
152 Kidron Rd.  
Orrville, Oh 44667  
(330) 683-1246  
www.campluz.com

# Luz Link

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2009

## Jean's Story: Responding to God's Call

*This is the story of a woman who saw a need and felt God's call to act. The following is taken from a written interview. We are sorry for the long length, but some things just can't be shortened.*

**1. Please share any personal information you want to relinquish.**

Jean Hershberger, wife of Maynard, mother to Brian, Nathan, and Jonathan (Jon). Member of First Mennonite Church in Canton, OH.

Maynard went to Camp Luz as a child and all three of our sons went. Jon figures that between being a camper and a counselor, he went for 11 summers! Both our oldest son, Brian, and youngest son, Jon, were campers and counselors. All three boys accepted Christ at Camp Luz.

I have been a teacher in the Canton City School District for 26 years, all at the elementary level. I've been at Madge Youtz Elementary for my entire career, teaching 3rd, 4th and 5th grade. I am currently beginning my 16th year teaching 3rd grade.

Youtz has grades Pre-K – 6th and is on the northeast side of Canton. Over 85% of our student population lives below the poverty level and we have over 45% minorities – primarily mixed race and African-American.

**2. What was your vision for sending students to Luz and what gave you the idea?**



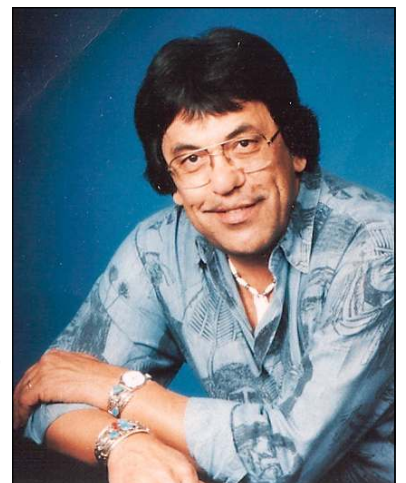
Jean with her son Jon and the 10 kids she helped bring to camp

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## Internationally Recognized Speaker at Luz

We are proud to announce that we will once again be having internationally known speaker, Don Bartlette, sharing at our Jr. High Retreat January 15-17, 2010.

Don has a tremendous story of over-coming huge obstacles in his life. At past retreats Don has challenged us to love others as God has loved us. This is truly an event that you don't want your Jr. High youth (6-8th grade) to miss! Brochures and registrations are available at [www.campluz.com](http://www.campluz.com) or by calling the camp office at (330) 683-1246.



# Youth Retreat Review

On November 13-15, about 60 youth and 15 sponsors gathered at Camp Luz for our annual Youth Retreat. This retreat is an opportunity for youth to gather in a larger group setting for worship, recreation, and fellowship. Eight churches brought some or all of their youth groups. We also had a number of individual registrations from youth who didn't have a group to come with.

Highlights from the weekend included the square dance Friday night (complete with dresses and straw hats), Son-of-Fresher, "Persecution"-(a night game used to get youth thinking about what it might be like to be persecuted for what you believe), and wonderful worship times.

Rudi Kauffman, assistant professor of restorative justice from Bluffton University, challenged youth to explore God's call in their lives. Following every session youth groups were given time to discuss and process what they heard, and how they saw God moving in their lives.



Youth square dancing Friday night at the youth retreat



"I wanted these kids to be introduced to God's love."



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God planted the idea of sending my 'kids' to Camp after sitting with Jon one Saturday afternoon watching a Camp Luz DVD that he put together earlier this summer. As I was watching I started picturing my students doing the things I saw in the DVD; actually SAW their faces: playing games, running, laughing, bonding with counselors, singing and receiving the Word in chapel...and thought "Why not sponsor a couple of my kids?"...after all, I wasn't paying for my own sons to go anymore.

Then I got a **really strong feeling** that 'a couple of kids' wasn't enough...God was telling me to ask for help, to say something during our "God at Work" time on Sunday in church. I went to bed totally pumped, but by the morning, I had talked myself out of saying anything. My church family already does a lot to support my school 'family' and in these economic times, I hated to ask for more. I also had doubts (would my kids 'fit' at camp?) and fears (what if they had a bad experience?). Plus, it was summer break – my selfish self didn't want to think about the work involved getting something organized!

As the microphone made its way through the church, I made up my mind not to say anything...then the microphone was in my hand and I blurted it all out!! I shared the vision God gave me and asked people to prayerfully consider sponsoring kids for camp. That day, I had sponsors for two more children in addition to the two Maynard and I were planning to send,

and by the end of the week, there were pledges for five more children – nine in all! Since I wanted the kids to get to come with a 'cabin partner', a friend, I decided that I would go on faith that the tenth camper would be provided for, and he was. Someone came and shared they couldn't afford a complete campership, and gave me \$60, then (not 10 minutes later!) another person came and gave me \$100 – and that took care of the last child's funding!

*My vision, my hope, was very simple...I wanted these kids to be introduced to God's love.* I envisioned them in a place of beauty at camp: away from the city, away from the chaos their lives can sometimes be, away from the noise and concrete, their TV's and video games...I just wanted them to be able to be kids – having fun in the fresh air! I also knew that seeds would be planted in their hearts about our Father God loving them just the way they are and always being there, no matter what! I was excited about them being able to spend time with Jon and all the terrific counselors at Luz – to have positive role models (especially male!)

They all come from poverty. One lives in a homeless shelter, two in the projects, five in Section-8 housing. The two families that own their own homes are just a step away from losing those homes if anything would happen to their jobs. These 10 beautiful children also all experienced some kind of trauma in their lives this past year, things that no child should have to deal with (domestic violence, sexual abuse,

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home robberies (tied to drugs), arrest and incarceration of a parent, and traumatic deaths in their families).

If I had any doubt that I was supposed to do this, that God planned this, those doubts disappeared when I called T's mom. T's mom was the first I called after pledges came in for 6 more kids. As soon as I mentioned the words "would you consider letting T go to a Christian camp..." she burst into tears. Just the day before I called, T witnessed his father beating his mother for the fifth time (he had just been released from prison in April for domestic violence) – the police were called and T watched his father arrested and taken away. Mom shared that she had gone to 4H camp as a child and always wanted to give her children the opportunity to go to camp, but because of her "poor life choices", had never been able to...she was amazed by the timing of my call and the gift being given to her son.

D's Mom jumped up and down and hollered "Halleluiah!" and gave me a huge hug when I stopped by their apartment in the projects to ask her about camp. She, like T's Mom, had always wanted to send her kids to camp, but didn't have the means.

TL's Mom shared that she had just discovered her daughter had been molested by a family friend. In tears, she told me that her daughter's counselor felt she needed to get away for a little bit and have some fun...then I called! Mom couldn't believe the timing of my call – said she knew it must be a "God thing"...

### **3. What was your process for contacting families, finding donors, etc.**

After asking my church and securing pledges for each child's camp tuition, I prayed and asked God to lead me to the children he wanted at camp. I had 28 students last year, and didn't know who I should pick!

I called the mothers of the first two girls God put on my heart. Both mothers were thrilled! Then I had those girls choose a person from our class they would want to be in a cabin with and called those parents. God put more names on my heart and I called them, and repeated the process until I had my 10 campers. I thought my parents would be wary, suspicious of intentions, worried about distance, etc., but they were ALL excited and thankful for the opportunity.

Thinking it would be cool for the kids each to get a camp Memory Pack (picture, DVD, t-shirt, and pen), I

emailed my colleagues at Youtz School and received memory pack money donated by teachers and support staff! Then the idea of a new Bible for each child popped into my head...Malone University had donated Bibles, but I was afraid the difficulty level would turn my kids off instead of getting them excited about the Word. I happened to go to my dentist that week and she asked what I was up to, so I told her all about camp and how all I had left to do was get them Bibles...as I was leaving, she put a check for \$50 in my hands and said, "You mentioned Books and God and Kids...I can't turn away from THAT!" Other money came from family members and friends. I ended up having exactly what was needed plus a little left over that I was able to share for gas money with people who helped with transportation!

### **4. What was your personal blessing?**

God filled my heart through this experience in a way he knew I needed. I get so tired of teaching sometimes, weighed down by the sad stories, seeing families trapped in poverty, their despair, pain, constant struggles... it just gets me down. I can get judgmental about my kids' parents, I lose patience with my kids' learning difficulties and behavior issues. I wonder why I am where I am and does any of it make any difference?!?!? Then

this happened – this nudge from

God taking on a life of its own, working itself out...and through it I am reminded that my kids' parents DO love their kids. They may not be able to show it in the ways my value system dictates – but they DO love their kids and want good things for them. I am reminded that these kids come with baggage, but are capable – they just need to feel safe and loved before they can turn their minds to their lessons. God reminded me that He put me at Youtz, and he will give me all the patience and love and wisdom I need to keep at it, as long as I remember to turn to him and ask.

Another cool "God-Thing" story – The parents who were going to help bring the kids home both backed out Thursday night. I didn't know what I was going to do – it was late – I hated asking people – the church van is scary to drive and only seats 10. Then I remembered meeting the babysitter of one of the kids earlier in the summer at a store near my home. She is a Christian lady and was very excited about the camp opportunity for the little girl she takes care of (started taking care of this girl when the girl's mom was a stripper and would be gone all night – now continues in relationship with the mom & kids helping and being a parent mentor). She gave me her number and told me that if I



Jean with two of "her girls"

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needed anything to just call. WELL, I called and before I could get the whole explanation out, she said “How many seats do you need? I can drive our van and my husband will drive our car!” She and her husband are already planning to pay for the little girl and a friend to return to Luz next summer!

When I got to camp to pick them up... I will never forget the looks on their faces as they broke from the final circle around the campfire and came running up the hill to hug me... talking all at once about everything they did... then watching them run off to say goodbye to new friends, see their counselors, play carpet pool... several of the girls wanted to give me a tour of “their camp” ... I had to keep pulling kids away from carpet pool! Eight of them wanted to stay! The other two wanted to go home “... just today then come back!”

The trip home was amazing! I held it together as the girls sang “Pharaoh, Pharaoh” and other songs over and over, recited “Herman the Worm,” and told me about the staff scavenger hunt. But, when A & M (who have been bullied mightily because of their weight, anger issues, and family situations) started talking about what the pastor told them in Chapel – well, I lost it... the floodgates opened! They told me that in no certain terms “God loves us just the way we are...” and “It’s OK to be different, that’s how he made us – unique...” and “God can hear us when we’re sad...” As they talked, the others were nodding, adding what they heard and breaking into song again – UNBELIEVABLY COOL !!!! *The seeds are planted!*

On the first day of school, I saw Camp Luz t-shirts... a first for Madge Youtz Elementary! All greeted me on the way to their new 4th grade – reminding me to get the camp song lyrics for

them, talking about the DVD, asking if they could go back next summer and giving me hugs to last the year. I am so blessed. I am so incredibly blessed.

5. Can you offer a challenge to others?

Send kids to Camp Luz! Not just “our” kids, from our families and our churches... but those who are ‘outside’ our ‘circles’.

Look around you, ask God to direct you to kids he wants at camp and don’t talk yourself out of it if he gives you a nudge!

- Check in with local agencies that advocate for children & families, such as the YMCA, and domestic violence shelters.
- Talk to teachers.
- Talk to guidance counselors.
- Touch base with inner-city churches. First Mennonite has programs for inner-city Canton neighborhood kids and would like to have Camp Luz sponsorship as an incentive for academic and behavior goals. I’m sure other places have programs, as well, and may have never considered camp for their kids.

Prepare to be amazed at the support you can get for kids... and be prepared for your hearts to be blessed beyond measure.

*We at Camp Luz would love to work with anyone interested in making the camp experience available to young people around you. Contact the camp office for more information. Thanks Jean!*

See the 2010 Summer Program Calendar online now!

[www.camppluz.com](http://www.camppluz.com)

## We Have a Van!

Thanks to a generous donation Camp Luz now owns a 15 passenger van! The van will be used with the Outpost program for our off-site biking/canoeing and climbing/rappelling trips. We also plan on adding a couple Adventure Trips to the program line-up by 2011. The van opens up several new options for our program. Thank you to our generous donor and Kidron Kars for finding this vehicle for us!



Several year-round staff in front of the camp’s new van.

Donate online at: [www.camppluz.com](http://www.camppluz.com)

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