



Circle Pines Center  
8650 Mullen Road  
Delton, MI 49046

For More Information

Email: [info@circlepinescenter.org](mailto:info@circlepinescenter.org)

Visit: [circlepinescenter.org](http://circlepinescenter.org)

Call: 269-623-5555



Feb 11-13	Cabin Fever Weekend
March 11-13	Maple Syrup Weekend
April 8-10	Workbee
April 15-17	Round Bread & Bagel Weekend with Noah Silver Mathews
April 22-24	Workbee
May 13-15	Spring Mushroom Camp (aka Morel Camp)
May 20-22	Spring Spanish Immersion
May 27-30	Membership Weekend (and membership meeting online)
June 10-12	Workbee
June 17-19	Buttermilk Jamboree Festival of Music and Arts
July - August	Summer Camp
August 12-14	Homecoming: A CPC Reunion for ALL
Aug 26-28	Rock and Fossil Camp
Sept 23-25	Mushroom Camp
Oct 14-16	Apple Cider Weekend (and membership meeting online)

Consider Circle Pines Center for your wedding, reunion, or retreat.



# Pine Needles

Winter 2021 Volume 83, Number 1

## Love and TM1470

GMAC

I fell in love with the John Deere tractor at the Circle Pines Center many years ago. A great friend of the Circle Pines donated the tractor at a cost of about \$10,400. Tom Van Hammen asked if I could drive a tractor. I said ‘yes,” and soon discovered that I could in fact drive a tractor! A lot of old timers lay pronouns on things. This green machine is not a she, a he, a they or a them. To me this green machine is a “beast” in the old Greek meaning, a creature that moves about with its own locomotion but which lacks intellect and reason. This green beast has a bucket in front and a “three-point hitch” and PTO (“power take off”) in back. It has a slim build, but an amazing body filled with gears, hydraulics, and lubricants. A three-speed transmission, complemented by a three-speed differential means nine forward gears and three reverse! Two-wheel drive, and four! The PTO drive shaft is inside the transmission drive shaft! Clever. The clutch is actually two clutches, one for the transmission and one for the PTO. And we had a welder construct an extra tool bolted to the bucket to rip autumn olive out at the root. It moves about, it eats, and it bleats like a goat when mistreated. I love it.

So much for infatuation. True intimacy came when the beast failed. While pulling a large black locust from the woods, the clutch ceased to work; the beast stammered and then stood unmoving. Stationary? Really? What now? For \$70.00 I purchased the Bible of The Beast, a John Deere technical manual with the alluring title “TM1470” and we began to disassemble the green machine. The transmission, the quill plate assembly, the drive shaft, the PTO drive shaft all came out. The new clutch went in, properly adjusted of course, but then I broke the quill plate. Three months to get a new quill plate! Damn! Then on reassembly three or four old bolts broke off and had to be drilled out and extracted. That alone required special drill bits and extractors, and more than twelve hours bent over the beast with a drill. (We purchased a number of new bolts, throwing away the old, to prevent further

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Love and TM1470	1
Director’s Report	2
Circle of Life	3
Winter Camp 60’s Style	4
CPC Steps Up for Camp	5
Upcoming Events	8

problems). Almost done! No, not quite. Hydraulic fluid was leaking from the PTO cover, so we spent another \$30 on a can of extruded gasket material. Now done! We might be married. In its 1,300-plus pages, TM1470 tells me again and again and again



The Beast at work

# Director’s Report

*Sasha Ospina—Center Director*

## Ramblings of a Center Director



Well, it has been a year for the history books. Where do I even start?

2021 at Circle Pines.

We performed a feat of strength and cooperation – we ran summer camp. We hit the sweet spot in July, an all time low in Covid19 cases. The stars aligned, we had camp, zero covid. As a nonprofit, summer camp 2021 was one of the most important things we have ever done. It is also the most exhausting thing I have ever done. Worth it though!!!

I’ll never forget the year we ran summer camp during a global pandemic. The amount of extra cooperation it took was incredible. 2021 also saw an incredible shift in the labor market. I think that the pandemic showed us that the United Statesian way of working is unsustainable. Workers have higher standards. Low wage exploitative jobs are having a

hard time finding workers. ... and we had a hard time finding workers. We found just enough people who were dedicated enough to Circle Pines to create this life changing experience for kids.

I know I talk about this a lot, but summer camp wages are extremely low. This is true across the industry – except in California where they have minimum wage laws. Minimum wage laws do not apply to summer camp. If they did, our campers would have to pay at least double the current costs. It is an impossible situation. From a labor rights standpoint, summer camp is not a great example. We teach kids about labor organizing though! How do we live in this tension – how do we advocate for labor rights while everyone is living in a situation where the labor conditions are not great? We talk about it, and we need to keep talking about it. It is OK to say that we don’t have the answers. It is OK to say that we know it isn’t great, and we don’t know how to fix it right now. It is OK to make gradual continual improvements. We make it work, and we can keep talking about it, and keep fundraising. Ugh, capitalism.

Summer camp was incredible though. Our staff was excellent – on mission, teaching campers, creating a life changing experience. Our campers were also amazing, so eager to hang out with other kids. We had two camp nurses, and we needed them! I just can’t describe how different everyone’s needs were this year. I went from isolation, to minimal social interaction, to EVERYTHING ALL THE TIME. It was the experience of a lifetime.

I’m looking forward to summer camp next year. I’m looking forward to figuring out how to pay more reasonable wages. I’m looking forward to 200 summer campers. I’m looking forward to campers staging protests, campers crafting experiences for other campers, hunting rocks and mushrooms, and swimming. I love lifeguarding. Someone come be my assistant during summer camp so I can just lifeguard the whole time.

OK – enough about summer camp.

Before summer camp we hosted a few retreats, and we hosted lots of members and friends and their families on solo retreats. We built a lot of stuff! We did a lot of physical labor, planting, pruning, and preparing. We did sawmilling, firewood production, and much more. We also had two epic mushroom camps and hosted the Great Lakes Permaculture Convergence. We were very busy in 2021!

Finances... we made out OK for 2021. We got a lot of government covid relief money in 2020 and 2021. I am worried about



Suzy Guttman and Sasha Ospina tie dye with Josh Behr after camp.

**Ramblings Continue Page 7**

## Ramblings continued from page 2

our finances in 2022 because that support is gone now. It is hard to charge enough money to cover our expenses. Capitalism strikes again!!! We’re set to have a break even budget if everything goes according to plan. That means no emergencies, nothing breaks, and all of our events are successful and nothing gets cancelled.

Check out the event schedule on the back cover! A new thing this year is Rocks and Fossils Camp... like mushroom camp but with fossils instead! Like hunting mushrooms? Try hunting fossils! We have an excellent lineup of fossil experts. We have a surprising amount of cool rocks on site also. I was inspired by the gravel hill on the way down to Old Youthies. Hopefully it can be financially successful and educational like mushroom camp is. I’m excited for the community building aspect of it too. Mushroom camp works well because the people who like to come are outdoorsy and aren’t expecting us to be a fancy resort. It is the right cultural fit for us. Hopefully Rocks and Fossils camp is too! 2022 event signups will start on January 6, 2022.

## In Other News

We have not hired a year round staff person since myself, 3.5 years ago. It is now probably time to hire another as Mike Evans is leaving the organization. We are sad about it, but we’re happy for him and his new endeavors! He is still putting together this Pine Needles for us though, thanks Mike! He’ll continue to do a little remote work. He was involved at CPC for decades and worked here for half a decade. He is one of my favorite co-workers of all time. Goodbye Mike!



Photo: Mike Evans

## Big Questions

We still have the big Circle Pines questions. What are we doing, where are we going, and how are we getting there? What are our overarching goals? How do we enact our mission? How do we teach cooperation as a way of life? How do we support ourselves financially? How do we be better than we are now? How do we govern ourselves? How do we talk about these big questions in productive ways? Make sure to come to our spring membership meeting to talk about these questions and more! And... have you ever considered running for the board at Circle Pines? Now is a good time to think about it!



Mike (Right) with camp counselor, Erica Lee, .

## Set, in Motion

*Mike Evans—Development Director*

Former director, Joe Likover, was here recently. Before he left he looked at me and told me, "Thanks for keeping this place going." For me, the best ones offer deep gratitude to the people working here. They know the emotional and physical energy it takes. How simultaneously chaotic and organized cooperation can be. What it's like to rely on the generosity of donors in order to educate and recreate recruits on the fringe of the capitalist system. They know that it is a law that an object at rest, remains at rest, until someone sets it in motion. So, for you who remain, and to you still to come, from my heart of hearts, thank you.



Love Continued from Page 3

Canadian mining companies, clever engineers and the petroleum lobby. More energy went into building this tractor than it will consume in its lifetime of use. It was delivered to America on a huge ship, burning the dirtiest of all possible fuels to cross the ocean.

Love it? No, I hate it! Our green beast is one small piece of a very, very large monster that is eating our planet. We fill our little piece of this monster with diesel fuel so we can remove trees and brush and autumn olive, justifying this extravagance by “restoring” a tiny piece of Circle Pines’ land to the Oak-Hickory Savanna that prevailed before Europeans arrived. But we use it for a whole number of other things as well - mowing, hauling, digging post holes. We “need” this machine!

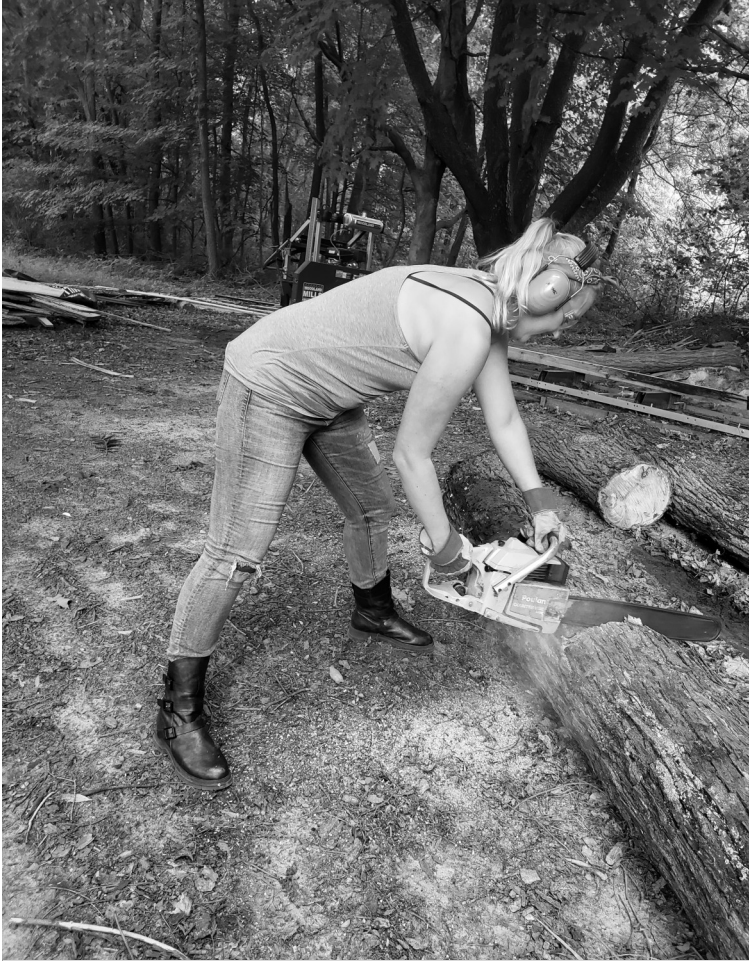
The last thing we want to happen is that we purchase another one. No, that would be a sin. Not a sin like a new love and a bad marriage in the Catholic Church or Hillbilly Bob videos. It would be a carbon sin to replace our green machine. Because more energy goes into the manufacture than it will ever consume, our obligation is to assure that no additional machines are manufactured than is absolutely necessary.

In Cuba they drive 1957 Buicks because the monster said “f&^k you, we aren’t selling you new cars or new car parts because you won’t play by our rules. Damned Commies.” Forsaken by the monster, Cubans rebuild their equipment, fashion new parts from scrap, and carefully restore and repaint their darlings. It was decided for Cuba that they’d do better maintaining and coddling their machines than feeding the monster, and for over sixty years they’ve adapted admirably! Where does this take us? First, we want to treat our tractor with great care with the intent that it will last forever. But the implications are broader than this. Does Circle Pines want to buy a new chainsaw? Well, yes, we do. A handy little machine that starts every time, that has a functioning chain-brake, and sharp cutting edges would be fabulous!. We could put our best looking work volunteer out in the pine stand with this new machine, gleaming and shiny, and do a really nice photo shoot!

But, no, buying a new chainsaw would feed the monster. Instead we have a source for used and refurbished chainsaws. We have a Poulan, for example, that was built in the era before chain-oil pumps were standard equipment. It was free to Circle Pines. But, you have to pump the little lever to be sure the chain is adequately oiled! Positively barbaric! But, it cost CPC nothing - not a penny. We do buy oil and gas and will need to replace the chain at some point, but these are just crumbs for the monster when compared to a new chainsaw. This Poulan was probably going to the scrap heap if a friend of Circle Pines had not rescued it, and a friend of that friend-of-CPC rebuilt it. We treat it kindly and it runs like a champ (most of the time!). This little beast cut down 70% of the trees we have removed for the prairie restoration project. Every time I start it up I think “I am not feeding the monster today! I’ve got better things to do!”

Circle Pines also has a Dodge truck that somebody donated. It looks like hell. The rear bumper has rusted off along with the license tag, the back window is broken, the body is literally disintegrating and the mirrors are gone! (I broke one of the mirrors. Twice. Sasha is savvy and won’t pay for another). The drive-train mounts will require some work, soon. We don’t take it off campus. This truck is an embarrassment! That is, it is an embarrassment until you learn to read the subtext so carefully etched into the rust: “F&^k the monster, I’m here forever! My death will be a carbon sin, and Circle Pines will not let that happen!”

So, next time you are at Circle Pines and you think “what a crappy little chainsaw” or “man we need a new truck” remember our motto for the 21st Century: “Recycle, Reuse, Retaliate - F&#k the Monster. (And join us for Summer Camp).”



The Poulan at work.

Circle of Life

Jude Mathews: May 12, 1952—March 16, 2021

Jude Mathews, 72, died in her home on March 16, 2021 from complications related to ALS. She was born and raised in Chicago, but her love of community and connection grew up at Circle Pines. Her parents, Martin and Alma Mathews, began spending time at CPC in the 1940s (?). They were part of a community of Hyde Park residents who loved the values and friendships they found at CPC. Jude, and her late brother James, both attended Circle Pines summer camp as kids. Jude remained involved throughout her life. She attended Adult Camp, year-round events, served on the board, and helped plan multiple anniversary celebrations, themed weekends, and other festivities.

Jude loved building community at Circle Pines. She made and maintained lifelong friendships and was a warm, welcoming presence to newbies as well. Jude is, at least in part, responsible for reviving Thanksgiving at Circle Pines – and helping to bring it from a dozen or so folks to more than 70 attendees over the years. She also helped bring back the Chicago-area CPC Holiday party after many years without the festivity. She organized Chamber Music Weekends, Women’s Weekends, and was deeply involved in planning the 50<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations among others.

In addition, the great Circle Pines tradition of folk dancing was deeply important to her. She taught folk dance at many Circle Pines events, revived dances long forgotten, and brought new ones to share whenever she could.

She filled the buildings and the grounds of Circle Pines with love, laughter, creativity, music, and family. She is survived by: her husband, Shel Silver; her children, Ben Goldberger, Anna Goldberger, and Noah Silver-Mathews; her son-in-law Chris Gillett; and her granddaughter, Dina Gillett, all avid Circle Piners.

Jude Mathews’ imprint on all of us in the Circle Pines community is indelible. She will always be a part of us, dancing along in the madness.



Love Continued from Page 1

“inspect and repair [this hugely complicated sub-component]”. In my sleep I hear “inspect and repair....” Like “don’t forget the groceries” this simple instruction is pregnant with responsibility, there is nothing more specific like “fresh salmon, please,” and any not-quite-perfect-performance might end in catastrophic failure. (I hope it’s not an infidelity to fill in details with Hillbilly Bob tractor-repair videos on YouTube).

We spent about \$1,000 for parts, special tools and materials, but The Beast is back! We saved at minimum \$2,400 not having our local John Deere dealer do this work, probably a good deal more given all the other small things we’ve “inspected and repaired” along the way. (Parts to make the Front Wheel Drive work again cost \$14.00; we’ll install them soon!) But now questions abound. Why are some of the nuts and bolts metric, some English? Odd. Why does the serial number plate on the engine not match that on the body? We have discovered that this creature is a John Deere 970 Compact Utility Tractor, serial number M0Q9702103900, built by Yanmar Equipment Company. The tractor I love is a Yanmar! It was built in Japan and painted John-Deere-Green rather than Yanmar orange so silly Americans would identify with it!

Snap to, Gary, this is just a machine - steel, oil, pinions and gears! It is the product of big finance, wage slavery, giant



# Winter Camp 1960s Style

*Meryl Greer Domina*

Winter Camp was so important! It was a time to come together after the long fall. It was a relief to be together with other Circle Piners again. My first memory of Winter Camp was that we arrived in the evening; most of us were driven up from the Chicago area. When I stepped out of the car, I saw the sky was filled with many more stars than we could see in Chicago and there was clean snow all around. I noticed a group of footprints going past Kings and Queens; and was told that the boys were staying in the Mansion. The girls stayed in the second-story loft of Swallows. The second Winter Camp I attended there were enough of us so we chartered a bus from Chicago. The ride went smoothly; however, when we came to the intersection of Lockshore and the driver stopped the bus and stood up. He said he didn't know if he was supposed to turn left or right; did any of us know? Nancy Rotecki stood up and went to the front of the bus, after looking out the window for a few seconds she told the driver which way to go.

Winter Camp was held from December 26<sup>th</sup> through brunch on New Year's Day. It was only for campers ages 14 and up. We had two counselors. Ray Johnson was the Site Manager the three years I attended Winter Camp so he was around some of the time. He was in charge of maintenance, purchases, and maybe was the head cook. Bill Knox must have been around also. We helped cook and took care of the chores. We were expected to do work projects in the mornings (we were told what was needed to be done), we were able to make plans for our afternoons and nights. We also were expected to plan the topic for Youth Institute the following summer.

One of the three years I attended Ray told us he was going to grocery shop the next day and asked us if there were any special foods we wanted. Some of us decided to make a list of foods. We had fun thinking about food and decided we wanted lox and bagels for the New Year's Brunch. A few minutes later, someone remembered where we were and said that she didn't think Ray could buy bagels in Delton or Hastings.



2007 Winter Campers in a "Couch Pile" Photo: Brit Kusserow



Snow-face for Raven Alexander Davidson.  
Photo: Maggie Keenen-Bolger

We enjoyed going tobogganing down one of the hills. We took long walks and some of us even crossed the lake, which was frozen. We sang and folk danced in the Dining Room. We had meetings to make plans for our New Years' Eve Party and for the next summer's Youth Institute. One year we decided to put out a Winter Camp Magazine with everyone writing up a paragraph about themselves. Those who were interested could write more.

That might have been the year I brought up a friend from school who was new to Circle Pines. I was busy with either Meal Chores or the magazine when the Party Committee met. My friend had volunteered to be in charge of decorating the dining room for the party. I was surprised that she had taken on the role and I asked her about it. She told me that none of the other people on the committee seemed willing to be in charge and as she thought of herself as artistic she could see herself adding artistic touches to the dining room to make it fit for a party.

I think that is how a lot of leadership skills are developed at Circle Pines. Instead of staff making all the plans, they leave room for participants—children and adults—to make suggestions and see opportunities for action. If someone takes on a project but is not able to complete it; usually, someone offers a suggestion, asks the right question, or suggests a way to move on. Circle Piners are people who are willing to help; but are also willing to appreciate what was done even if it wasn't quite finished.

I am glad that Winter Camp is being revived!

# Circle Piners Step Up for Camp

*Caleb Carpenter—Summer Camp Director*

This summer we came together to create a safe, fun filled place for campers and staff alike to enjoy the magic of Circle Pines, despite the pandemic. For many of our campers, it was the first opportunity to spend extended time with peers after months with limited social interaction. Many thanks to the wonderful staff and volunteers who made camp possible. Their determination to put in the extra energy to run camp in as normal a way as possible, while maintaining Covid-19 safety was remarkable. The safety of our campers and staff was our first priority. With the use of PCR testing before camp, testing upon arrival, mask-use and social distance techniques during camp we did not have a single case of Covid-19. While it impacted the function of nearly all parts of camp, being able to hold summer camp in person made the extra effort well worth it.



Caleb (left) and Destiny, a YAL, co-direct for Capture the Flag night



Camp Counselor, AD, leads a demonstration

We faced some challenges along the way; we had a staff shortage, not unlike other camps in the nation. Thankfully we had lots of Circle Piners step up and volunteer, to work alongside our staff team. Counselors and staff put in a monumental amount of effort to provide the campers with an exciting, educational camp program that was as close to normal as possible. As our Covid-19 protocols changed to reflect shifting health and safety guidelines, the flexibility of our staff and campers to adjust to the changes was a testament to the power of cooperation.

On a lighter note, the spirit of activism that fuelled the creation of CPC eighty-four years ago is alive and well. Following a series of protests from the Junior's about the equity of resource distribution by unit, a favorable amendment to the snack schedule was secured. When Capture the Flag was in jeopardy of being cancelled, in less than a day, campers and counselors alike teamed up to clear nearly a quarter mile of cow fencing that was blocking the field of play. In addition, a series of seminar style discussions on topics such as capitalism, imperialism, and gender identity continued the tradition of education as an important part of our mission.

Looking forward to next year, we hope to continue some of the positive trends of this past summer. Because we had a small staff, giving counselors more autonomy to set their own schedules allowed us to significantly minimize burn out, without sacrificing coverage of the campers. This also allowed staff to have energy to start more passion projects with their campers, such as the renovation of the YAL bungalow, from cobweb storage into a funky fresh common area. With a record number of counselor applications coming in early this year, I'm looking forward to next summer, when we can again welcome old and new Circle Piners to a wonderful, memorable, meaningful time at summer camp.