



# PASSING IT ON



## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PILGRIM LODGE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

# WE ♥ PILGRIM LODGE

## KAREN CHOATE

If you've been to PL anytime since the 1970s, there's a high probability you've run into a Choate. This long line of PL started when Karen attended PL as a 3rd grade camper in 1970 and continues to this day with Karen and her kids. After spending six years as a camper, Karen went on to work on the permanent staff from 1981-1983 doing a mishmash of tasks - running the store, sending and delivering mail, and working in the kitchen. The permanent staff of these days was full of names we still see involved in PL to this day. Besides Karen, Allie Rimkunas, Rocky Ackroyd, and Leslie Swanson were a part of the team.



Karen and her niece Kiah Baxter at Community of Caring

In the summer of 1984, in addition to counseling for two weeks, she was tapped to dean Senior High camp with fellow staffer Julia Peterson (more commonly known to campers of the day as *Squid*). Karen and Squid's Senior High camp was the first camp to have a slideshow at the end of the week, and it was an actual **slide** show. (Ask your parents about slides if this all sounds prehistoric to you.) Squid spent hours and hours working on it and played music to accompany the carousel of slides, and a new PL tradition was born.

During Labor Day Weekend 1985, Karen got engaged to Andy at Pilgrim Lodge! Karen continued to counsel or dean every summer until her first daughter Beka was born in 1989, and just a few short years later, she was back at PL bringing Beka to camp for her first year in 1998. The addition of Ruth and Tom to the Choate family didn't stop Karen from counseling and then deaning, because Karen hasn't missed a summer *continued on pg 2*

## MESSAGE FROM THE CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIR

Cleaning up the CDs in my car the other day, I came across the Pilgrim Lodge CD made several years ago. Well, I popped it in the player and skipped to my favorite track - "All God's Critters Got A Place in the Choir" and sang along. Hum a few lines of that and you can picture EVERYONE at PL. There is a better place for them on the new boardwalk, an easier walk to the Labyrinth and coming this fall, a new and improved Dining Hall!

Our campaign has been going well, and we continue to receive generous support. Looking forward, we need to raise \$100,000 for the next five months to reach our financial and timing support. Our team is working hard and will be talking to more people each day. We will also be reaching out to our churches for their support. Look forward to our Mission Moment somewhere near to you soon.

We are getting close and count on all of you for support.

Pam Gormley, Co-Chair  
Capital Campaign Committee, [pgormley@msln.net](mailto:pgormley@msln.net)

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[www.pilgrimlodge.org/passiton](http://www.pilgrimlodge.org/passiton)

## KAREN CHOATE *CONTINUED*

since 1999. After her first year at PL, Beka continued to return as a camper on both the land and the island and as a staff member from 2008 through 2011. Both Ruth and Tom were campers from the minute they could be, and Ruth started on staff in 2011 and plans on being back this summer -- "God willing and the creek don't rise!" Karen is glad that her kids have found PL to be a place they enjoy going. "I think I would have been very sad if they had said they weren't happy going to PL."

Karen has made a one-time gift of \$1,500 to the PL Capital Campaign and expects to add to it in fits and starts. As she says, "The family bank account is paying for college, so I'm giving from my bank account where birthday money and money from odd jobs accumulates." More often than not, Karen also donates her time. "It is such a fabric of my life that it would seem odd not to be involved." As a teacher, she has the flexibility in the summer to drop what she's doing to head to PL to help cover a gap or fill a space.



The whole Choate family—Andy, Ruth, Beka, Tom & Karen  
Family Camp 2009

When asked why she decided to give, Karen replied that PL is "a little spot of magic" and that her gift was to help keep the magic going. "You never know what little kid is going to get that extra spark that turns a bad beginning into a great ending...that takes them from point A to point Z because they were present in this place. You never know where you're going to find those heaven lines and where they'll take you."

### ***WE WANT TO PASS IT ON CAMPAIGN PASSES \$1.4M!***

*Lift up the campaign in your prayers*

Pam Gormley and Herb Oliver, co-chairs of the Pilgrim Lodge Capital Campaign, announced on Monday, February 3, that the campaign has now reached \$1,410,000 toward the \$2,000,000 goal. "Exciting news," Pam Gormley commented, "but we have some work still to go!" As the campaign passes its mid-point, pledges, gifts and grants have been received from 17 churches, 104 individuals, and two foundations in addition to the original commitment of \$750,000 from the Maine Conference.

Over the next three months, every church in the Maine Conference will receive a packet of materials publicizing the *We Want To Pass It On* campaign. Each packet will contain posters, brochures, worship materials and pledge cards. A three minute video recalling the history of Pilgrim Lodge in pictures and song will also be available. Churches that have already pledged may wish to use the material to help their congregations appreciate the commitment the church has already made to the campaign. Churches that haven't reached a decision yet can use the packets to promote the campaign.

Teams of volunteers will be contacting churches after Easter in April and May in a final push toward the campaign goal. The teams will be offering Pilgrim Lodge Mission moments for worship, a table of materials for coffee hours, or a full service featuring a Pilgrim Lodge speaker. It is hoped that both churches and individual members may consider a pledge to the *We Want To Pass It On* campaign.

Anyone wishing to know more about the campaign, to view past campaign newsletters, or to preview the video is invited to go to the campaign web page at [www.pilgrimlodge.org/passiton](http://www.pilgrimlodge.org/passiton). At the top of the campaign page, you will find tabs directing you to campaign information to an electronic pledge card.

Pledges of all sizes are gratefully received. If you have any questions about how you can be involved in the *We Want To Pass It On* campaign, please contact our campaign consultant, **Peter Heinrichs**, at [peheinrichs@gmail.com](mailto:peheinrichs@gmail.com) or 207-615-2212.

Don't forget the Giving Circles!

- \$500 -- BURPS Circle
- \$1000 -- Boardwalk Circle
- \$2500 -- Labyrinth Circle
- \$10,000 -- Lodge Circle
- \$25,000 -- Cobbosseecontee Circle

## Jena's Story: A Burnham Tale

Six years ago, Pam Burnham asked me if I wanted to be a Pilgrim Lodge camp counselor. I laughed. Intensely introverted, the idea of being "on" 24 hours a day for a week was, well, laughable. A few days later, I said, in passing, to my then boyfriend Ross, "I wonder if I could do it." He told his mother we would both do it. Now she was counting on me, and as my future mother-in-law, I didn't think it wise to back out on her. "You know I don't do the God thing, right?"

"Don't call it 'the God thing' and you'll be fine."

It was terrifying. It was physically and emotionally exhausting. And before the end of Senior High week, I had a list of items I planned to bring the next year. This year will be my sixth as a Senior High counselor. I look forward the entire year to my week at PL. It's a safe and soothing place. People let their guards down, are more fully themselves, and thus create deep and true connections. These bonds are vital for the campers. They are similarly vital for the lucky adults who are let in. My Senior High week restores my faith in humanity. The teenagers I see at PL are the future, and they make it brighter.

I started off at PL not 'doing the God thing.' Each year opened my heart more. My third summer, Dean AbbyLynn Haskell told a story about a wooden people called the Wemmicks (*You Are Special* by Max Lucado).

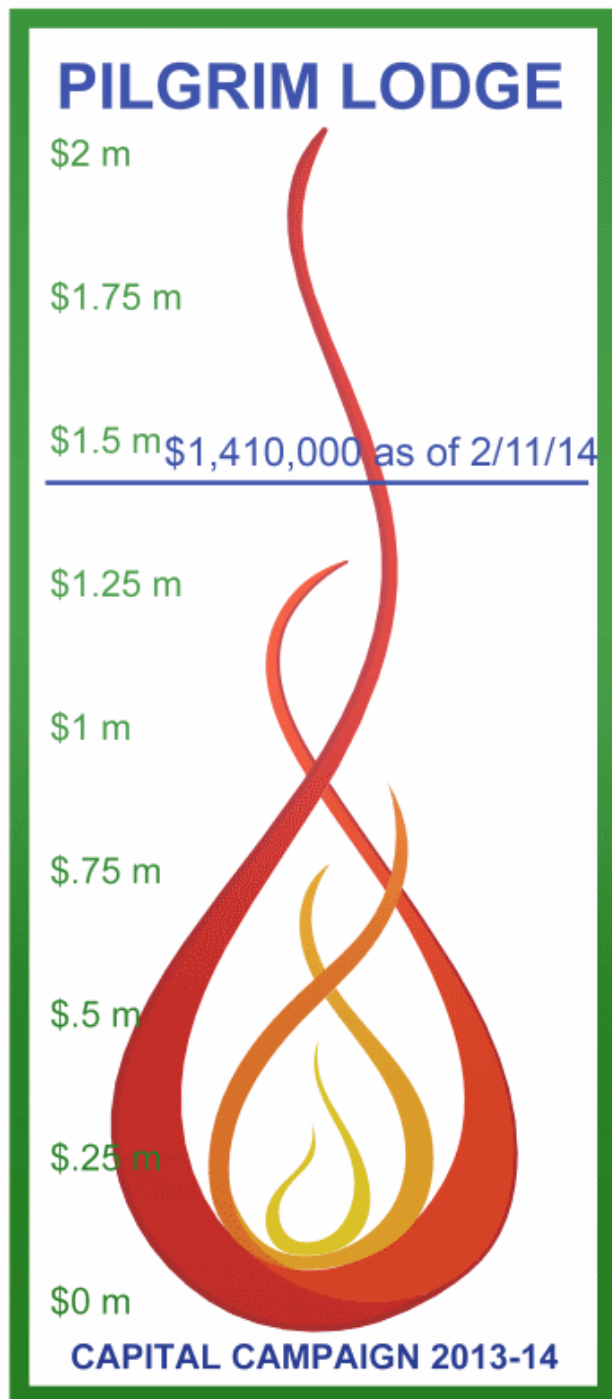


It broke through a barricade built of hurts and fears, and for the first time in my life, I **heard** God. More than just a brush of the Spirit, it felt like a direct message to me, telling me it's okay to flounder in faith; it's okay to make mistakes, and to have questions. And I had so many questions. Dean AbbyLynn was both patient and enthusiastic in answering. My fourth summer, I shared my wish with my Family Faith Group, and during our group's vespers service, I was baptized. The Blue FFG lined up the steps, and through them, more than a hundred campers, counselors, deans, and staff prayerfully supported me by the laying on of hands during my baptism. I cry tears of joy every time I think back on it.

I found God and faith at Pilgrim Lodge. I was married there. I was baptized there. Sacred work is done within us while there. PL has been an absolute blessing in our lives, and my husband and I are so pleased to be able to participate and pass it on.

*By Jena Burnham*

*Jena and Ross have made a \$1,000 pledge to the PL Capital Campaign.*



# WHISPERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

*Rev. Bryan S. Breault, Director of Outdoor Ministries*

It started with postcards. EBay was new. I was new. My wife Deb was away most of the week at her interim in Bar Harbor. I typed in "Lake Cobbosseecontee" and to my delight three or four old postcards popped up. I bid, and won some. Years later I've amassed a prodigious collection of postcards, brochures, advertisements, objects, and ephemera that tell the history around the lake from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. With that came pieces from Pilgrim Lodge, its predecessor Balbrook Lodge, and even a few things from the 1930's when we rented the YMCA camp up the lake.

One thing leads to another and I started to solicit material from people involved in the program. I always offer to scan the material for the electronic archives and return it. Occasionally, people will suggest I keep their old brochure, photos, or album. Sometimes, on the death of a loved one who attended the very early sessions, a relative will offer me items, thrilled to have them enthusiastically cared for. I've sat down some of the key players in PL's history and videotaped them in interviews. At various times, between meetings, or when I just needed a break, I'd venture deep into the basement of the former Pennell Center and there would rescue all sorts of treasures. And then there was the mother lode; upon cleaning out the farmhouse I came upon two file boxes filled with Pilgrim Lodge history. The kernel of the archives was there all along.

And so, before I knew it, I was engaged in a hobby. And as with many hobbies, I find I have very little time to dedicate to it. While every donation is carefully labeled, there is not any particular rhyme or reason to the collection. Year after year, I imagine myself immersed in what has become the Farmhouse Archive Room carefully cataloging, scanning, and taking notes, working towards writing a definitive history of Outdoor Ministries of the Maine Conference. There always seems to be something demanding my attention in the management of camp that keeps me from diving in. And yet, hope remains.

What draws me is learning about the passion of people who have given so much of themselves in making the ministry of Pilgrim Lodge possible, and reading about their struggles and victories. The most obvious are those in the twenties working hard to start the program, and of course the fifties and the monumental task of purchasing and repairing the property. But throughout the ninety years this program has evolved, that passion has always been present. It's easy to look back on an endeavor like PL as though it has always been there and always will: to take it, as the expression goes, for granted.

But the archives tell a very different story. The people represented in the archives deserve our gratitude. Those of us who have benefited from their hard work include: those who have had a powerful experience of the divine at PL; or whose child found faith, or acceptance, or simply friendship; those who have felt the excitement of church renewal through the communities involvement, or a church retreat; counselors who have had a moment of peace being sung to sleep by loons; staff members who discovered a skill or a gift and went on to develop it into a career; church members whose pastor heard the call somewhere between the joy of community and the peace of being quiet in the natural world.

Sitting in the Archive Room, surrounded by images, and documents of thousands of people from the past whose efforts live on today, I sometimes wonder what our legacy will be. Will we be the generation that renewed and reinvigorated Outdoor Ministries for our children, and theirs? Will some future PL historian be able read of the current capital campaign's title "We Want To Pass It On," look around at a strong, vital, ministry and whisper quietly, "yes, they did indeed"? That is my hope and my prayer.

## **They May Be Small, But...**

*By Anne Roundy*

It's a small church to begin with. And it's federated, which means two denominations, United Church of Christ and Methodist. On the UCC side, there are eighteen member. That's right, only eighteen. By any standard, that's small. Small does not mean ineffective, however. In September, three of the 18 members accompanied their pastor, Rev. Anne Roundy, to the Blessing Event for the PL Capital Campaign. They were impressed with what they saw.

Fast forward to their annual meeting in January - that's the meeting of the Congregational Society of the United Church of Monmouth. The moderator looked at Anne and said, "Tell us about Pilgrim Lodge." And she did. The result was that the church has made a \$1,000.00 pledge to Pass It On! \$200.00 a year for five years. Again, small. But, significant because these good people, though few, are contributing to the important ministry that is Pilgrim Lodge.

All gifts, large or small, are what will get us to our goal. We Want to Pass It On! Do you?



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