

# Suwannee Ripples

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## The True Beauty of Camp Suwannee

Most have heard of the impact Hurricane Idalia had on Dowling Park, including Camp Suwannee. Most of the facilities have roof damage and we have lost many of the old oak trees that contributed to the natural beauty of this special place.

Enter the grounds today and you may want to cry. There are blue tarped roofs and stumps everywhere and much more sunlight streams in. It looks completely different than just a few short weeks ago.

Reflecting on the aesthetics of the camp, yes, Camp Suwannee has been impacted greatly and it will not look the same for many, many years. I am reminded however that the camp's real beauty does not come from its setting; it comes from the beautiful ministry that occurs in this special place.

Its beauty comes from the lives that are changed, the lasting relationships that are developed with like-minded believers and it comes from commitments that are made to follow Jesus or to enter full time Christian service.

The things that really make camp special remain. Bowl services will continue, the facilities still function and worship services will be held—ministry will carry on.

Beginning in October, the camp reopened and the first groups returned. Yes, it looked different, but ministry happened, and that is why camp is camp.

We thank God for those who came and helped to remove debris and get the camp opened so quickly. Over the coming weeks and months, we will work to repair the facilities and restore the natural beauty of this place. In the meantime,

Camp will continue to change lives as people are reached for Christ...and that is a beautiful thing.

If you would like to help the camp recover from Hurricane Idalia, you can send your gift to Camp Suwannee and earmark it for hurricane relief. We are grateful for your support.

Craig Carter, ACV President & CEO



Top: Looking from Suwannee Loop toward the Bowl.

Left: Log furniture? No, just a branch Idalia put through the roof.

Right: Damage to the Camp Suwannee Bell.



# Director's Notes



By Doug Mabey

Wow, what a busy summer that was! This was my 19th summer as Camp Director and this was the first summer that every week was booked. Hallelujah!

We had four first-time groups: First Baptist Church of Brevard County, DSL Deaf Family, First Assembly of God of Live Oak, and First Baptist Church of Dowling Park. The great thing is that they all want to come back, some in a larger capacity. We are waiting for confirmation from another group that inquired about the one vacant week in June.

The Florida Conference of AC church camps went well and numbers were healthy.

Sr. Camp – 80 campers (27 first timers)

Jr. Camp – 59 campers (28 first timers)

We tried out an online registration process that worked pretty well. We hope to use that for the Youth Retreat in January, which will make it so much easy to register in the future.

On August 30, Dowling Park had a direct

hit from Hurricane Idalia. The damage at camp was devastating. With many trees down, the landscape has changed significantly. Every building had some level of damage to it. Oak 2 and Pine 4 both had a limb come through the roof into the cabin. Praise God no one was hurt! The damage could have been much worse.

The cafeteria was spared from penetration, which is a blessing because the ceiling and lighting were replaced just the day before, thanks to a generous donation.

A huge thank you to longtime Camp Suwannee friends, Tres Dias, for donating their time clearing trees and doing repairs! All the buildings are currently tarped, awaiting new roofs, but it will take some time.

However, we are back up and running.

We are so thankful to all of you who pray for this ministry and support us financially; we couldn't do it without you.

## Junior Camp Report

by Meagan Portervint, Junior Camp Director

God placed 62 campers into our care as we encouraged them to “Level Up” their faith, based on Luke 17:5 Our speakers were Doug Mabey to the 7-10 year olds and Stone Robinson to ages 11-12. At Junior Camp:

- Two campers were saved.
- Two campers rededicated their lives.
- Two campers were called into ministry.
- 32 campers came forward at an altar call by Stone Robinson. These campers prayed to receive an increase in faith and “level up” their walk with God.
- One camper overcame her fear of public speaking at the Bowl.
- One camper received counsel that she can be forgiven when she makes mistakes.
- At least 24 campers received prayer and counseling for issues including grief, familial fighting, friendship issues, and discerning God's voice.



- One counselor received answers to two separate prayers.

- Two counselors began taking steps toward reconciliation with someone they were previously estranged from.

We were blessed to have Jeannie & Jason Thomas with us for a couple of days before Jeannie's procedure in Jacksonville. The counselors and staff laid hands on Jeannie in prayer before she left, as the campers looked on. Many campers and staff chose to wear a colon cancer awareness blue ribbon, in support of Jeannie on the day of her procedure.

Mrs. Barbara Phipps returned to present a missions class on Tanzania and the Hadzabe tribe (which corresponds nicely to this year's Penny Crusade focus).

Kent and Chrystal Staples returned this year to encourage us with both silly and serious songs. Kent also led a worship class on Monday-Wednesday, (Continued on P.3)



# Senior Camp Report

by Shane Mumford and Liz Vann,  
Sr. Camp Directors

Our theme for Senior Camp this year was **Endeavor: Doing Hard Things**. Throughout the week, we encouraged campers, counselors, and staff to dig deep in their relationship with God. Pastor Bob Copeland challenged everyone to move from partial obedience to full obedience.



Campers participated in our second annual Color Wars. Six teams were represented. This has become a fan favorite among the campers. Another favorite activity that campers enjoyed was our Campfire Cookout. Campers got to roast their own hot dogs and s'mores over the open fire.

We are excited to report that our numbers were higher than they have been in a long time. This is inspiring, as we have worked very hard to promote Camp Suwannee all year long. We topped out at 80 campers.

Reflecting on the week, these verses come to mind: The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps. (Proverbs 16:9) and, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13) We are so thankful for God's perfect timing in our week!

To God be the glory!

## Camper Testimonies

I love camp because of the Godly environment it is and learning more each year about God and making new friends.  
Paige Mercer, age 10

I love camp because it is so much fun. Everyone is so nice, it's like being with a giant family who loves Jesus.  
Grace Mercer, age 8

I love camp because we have a lot of fun and I meet lots of new friends. I can't wait to go back, I wish it was longer.  
Scarlett Mercer, age 7

I've had the best experience ever there. You learn a lot about Jesus, you go play at the pool, you will have fun activities and you can ask a Counselor or a Pastor to pray about anything. You can talk to a Pastor about accepting Jesus as your savior, like I did. You will have a great experience, like I did. Try it out next summer.  
Ethan Goblet, age 11

## My Experience

I want to share how I was impacted by camp this year. I grew up going to a youth camp with my family. My parents were on staff and it was something that I looked forward to every year! In 2021, the evangelist that ran the camp said it was time to be done, and that was going to be that last year of the camp. I love summer camp, and last year was going to be the first year that I was not going to get to go to summer camp.

Last May, a friend asked if I would help at [Camp Suwannee]. After talking with my parents, we decided to go! I really think it was the Lord that took us there, but it took me a whole year to appreciate Him doing it.

When I was at the Youth Retreat in January 2023, several people asked me if I would be back in the summer. I told them I did not know; I would see where God led. Well, God led me back to camp Suwannee, and I am so thankful He did!

I am saying all of these things because they show the work that God did in my life at camp. I am actually praying that God takes me back next year because I am looking forward to it so much! I loved camp so much this year and I was touched by the teaching, the music, the Bowl and everything else that I got to participate in.

One thing that really encouraged me was one camper's hunger for the Lord. I noticed her reading her Bible several times, and she asked me to explain some passages to her that she did not understand. This is just one thing out of the many that encouraged me and has made me want to go back to camp.

Jubilee Lee, Jr. Camp Counselor



**The apostles said  
to the Lord,  
INCREASE our faith!  
Luke 17:5**

# Junior Camp Report

Continued from Page 2

while Chrystal helped with art class. Jeff Pannone arrived at camp on Wednesday night to help with leadership.

While we had rain the first two days, we were blessed with fabulous weather for the rest of the week, allowing us to have a cookout at the pool, as well as spend time at the river, with tubing for the 11-12 year old campers.

We brought back a camp classic this year, modifying Shanghai to take place in two circles of campers facing each other (this allowed us to play indoors despite the rain). On movie night, we watched the Mario Brothers movie to tie in with our theme, "Level Up." Hawk Ward, our Camp News Network correspondent, brought us all the camp news for the week.

For skits this year, Tim Carver returned as our MC, and Curt Mathis returned as a guest judge, escorted into camp by Deputy Harmon. Cabins were judged according to a strength-based assessment, and each cabin received a superlative including "Most Improved," "Most Likely to Be Syndicated," and "Best Spiritual Message." The youngest girls' cabin, The Princess Warriors, received "Best All Around."

Please pray for these young campers as they "level up" their walk with Jesus.

## Most Wanted List

- Mattress Covers - \$250
- Refinish Pavilion Floor - \$2,500
- Replace Youth Lodge Rear Porch Overhang - \$2,500
- Golf Cart (Gas Operated/Used) - \$7,000
- Privacy Fencing - 12 sections, \$75 each
- Repairs to the Camp Suwannee Bell, \$500
- Help with cost of storm cleanup - All gifts welcome.

Thank you to those who support projects from the Most Wanted List! We appreciate your help with making Camp Suwannee the best it can be.



**Jan. 12-14 • Ages 12-18**

**Mark Your Calendar Now!**

## Upcoming Groups

Dates	Group Name
Nov. 23	DeVane Family
Jan. 12-14	FLCACC Youth Retreat
Feb. 23-25	Leadership Camp
Mar. 1-3	Dynamos #34

To schedule your group for a reunion, conference or retreat, call  
(386) 658-5100 or 1-800-371-8381.



## Where Christ is Exalted through Camping

Camp Suwannee

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