

## Summer oasis gets makeover

Written by  
| By Mark Hansel

YMCA Camp Ernst has been a summertime oasis for area children since 1928.

Fronted by a scenic lake, the campus in Burlington provides a variety of activities, including horseback riding, a 100-foot waterslide, banana boat rides, swimming, hiking, archery, biking and campfires.

"It's very rewarding to see the growth of all the kids who come here and find their voice," said Elizabeth Cochran, executive director of Camp Ernst YMCA. "I love the connection with the young people over the course of the summer."

The camp, which hosts 3,000 children and teens each year, is currently in the midst of its first major renovation project since the 1970s.

The "For the Love of Camp Ernst Campaign" is three-quarters of the way to its goal of \$4 million in donations needed to complete the upgrades. The facility will conduct an open house on Sunday to help kick off the public portion of its donation drive.

Sandy Berlin Walker, president and CEO, YMCA of Greater Cincinnati, attributes the success of the fundraising effort to widespread support from throughout the

Greater Cincinnati area.

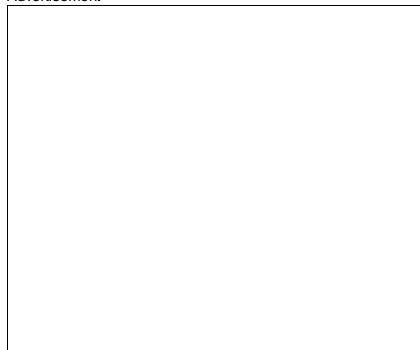
"It has taken the collective effort of our volunteers, alumni, parents and board members to raise the first \$3 million toward our \$4 million goal," Berlin Walker said. "This broad base of support has demonstrated just how important Camp Ernst is to this community and how much everyone is committed to seeing it continue for generations to come."

Major donors include the Robert and Adele Schiff Foundation, which contributed \$1 million, the Jacob G. Schmidlapp Trust and Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile/US Bank Foundation.

Jeff Long of West Chester first attended Camp Ernst in the 1940s and his family made a donation through the Oren and Jane Long Trust, which is named for his parents.

"I was a camper for three or four years and I was a worker there and now I've got grandkids that go every summer and are

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part of the crew as well," Long, 69, said. "We believe in exactly what they are teaching the young people and we strongly support these renovations."

The Long family has had a reunion at Camp Ernst for 55 years and relatives come from as far away as San Francisco to attend.

Cochran said one of the great things about the fundraising drive is all of the families that have reconnected with Camp Ernst, and each other, as a result.

Cochran, originally from Mount Washington, also went to Camp Ernst in her youth and met her husband, Cameron, there. The couple now lives on the grounds of Camp Ernst with their two sons and a daughter.

"This is a wonderful place to raise a family," Cochran, 35, said. "I've got the greatest back yard in the world."

In addition to the children who pay to attend, Camp Ernst also provides 300 scholarships to underprivileged kids through donations each year.

"That's really a great thing because Willard Wade founded Camp Ernst so inner-city kids could come and enjoy the outdoors," Cochran said. "I think he would be very happy that we are still doing that today."

The renovation project includes a new Welcome and Health Center, funded with the Schiff Foundation donation and currently under construction.

Other elements of the upgrade include two bathhouses, dining hall and kitchen upgrades, a new Valley swimming pool, an E-Team longhouse for teens, a camper cabin, a horse barn, and an arts center that will feature an art studio, dance room and performance area.

Follow Mark Hansel at [www.twitter.com/hanselmark](http://www.twitter.com/hanselmark)

#### If you go

YMCA Camp Ernst is at 7615 Camp Ernst Rd. Burlington, KY 41005.

The open house takes place Sunday, May 20, from 1 to 4 p.m.

For more information go to [www.mycamp.org](http://www.mycamp.org)

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