

# ConText



## The River is My Home

By Sophia Warner, Eugene, First time con attendee

Once many flower blooms ago, Mother Earth carved a large crater. She spit into the crater and made it the home of a special type of fish called the Cispus. The Cispus had such a great spirit as a community that Mother Earth decided to speak to the fish. Her warm kind voice vibrated through the pool. "If you can change this pool to a river that flows through the fourth mountain range, I will proffer a special gift for all of your kind."

The Cispus knew they were stronger as a community, so all the fish came together as one and started chipping off bits of the lake. The work was slow, but piece-by-piece the Cispus molded the lake into a river. The task took many seasons to complete. Once the fish made it past the last mountain

range, they waited and waited, wondering what it was they had worked to achieve.

The sun started to fall. The moment it left the sky, Mother Earth's voice rumbled as if from the peaks of the surrounding mountains. She said, "I will now give you your great gift. I will make you humans, but before you evolve I will name this river after your kind. In this way you will always know where you are from and may return when you wish."

Now, an innumerable number of blooms later, the children of the Cispus return to the river once a year under a new name, the Unitarian Universalist youth. When they come together they become just as close as their long gone ancestors. Secretly, somewhere deep inside, they all know this river is their home and that they will always come back



TOUCH GROUP LOVE



GROUNDS AT CAMP CISPUS



SPONSOR LAP TAG!

# I Love CACs, Part I and II

*Part I: Erin Zysett, Sponsor, Salem (& Adult Advisor)*

A common refrain from youth leaders, sponsors and advisors to any youth attending a CON is “Don’t get CAC’ed!” Meaning: don’t break the rules. Don’t break community. Be present. Be healthy. Be connected. I agree with the spirit of this message. Ideally, we don’t want a broken community. We want healthy behavior from everyone, but I am realistic enough to know you must always meet people where they are, and people don’t always come to us from a healthy place. It is our job, it is our calling, and it is our purpose to bring people along the path to our healthy, embracing, unbroken place of love. We can’t expect that everyone will start here.

It is common knowledge by now that we had a CAC at this past CON. I want to go on the record now saying I am thrilled. I was one member of the CAC team, and what I saw was the most beautiful example of ministry I have ever witnessed. CACs are not about punishment; they are about holding people accountable and getting them the support they need. Because, make no mistake, if a person lands in a CAC, there is a call for help buried somewhere nearby.

This past CON was all about passing the torch, embracing our roots, learning from our history and owning our future. Having our first CAC since Fall 2009 was a fantastic way to live up to our theme. It was a reaffirmation of the incredible ministry we do with CONs. To me, all the fun: lap tag, hair dying, capture the flag, dancing and singing workshops, the silliness and the No Talent Shows...these are just the shared experiences used to lay the trust-lines needed to draw people back in when they go astray. The fun leads to the deeper ministry done in touch groups, workshops and especially CACs.

CACs are a sign that our community is healthy and operating the way it should. It means someone in the community has gone astray, and someone else has cared enough for them and for our group to bring them back in line. We cannot be naive enough to think that no one breaks the rules, but we must recognize that when they do, someone has failed them along the way. Perhaps the person wasn’t ready for the responsibility of a CON, and we failed by turning them loose in one too soon. Perhaps they haven’t connected enough at their home congregation and are hiding their pain. That is a failure of honesty on their part and observance on ours. CONs are intense emotional experiences that can create huge break-throughs for many people; some people are ready for those break-throughs. Some people are not. Those who aren’t will often revert to old modes of coping and disconnecting. They will run from comfort and emotional health. CACs are a time to not only hold them accountable, but ourselves as well. They are a time to examine the path we are all on, take stock of our surroundings and pull out the moral compass. We must prop up the offender, hold their hand, and find our way back to a place of love before we pass any form of judgment or accountability. In order to do what is fair and

see “Zysett”, next column

*Part II: Devon Buckles, Spirit Corps Captain, Corvallis*

At my first con there was a CAC. I didn’t know then what that meant: no one seemed to be saying anything except that it was a BAD thing. I remember Tandi stepping up in front of the con and telling us that she loved CAC’s, and thinking she was crazy.

I now know what a CAC, or Conference Affairs Committee, does/is, and I agree with her. The CAC process is not one of horrible happenings, but rather of healing. Having now sat on a CAC as the youth YES team representative, I now understand the function of, and the reason we have, CAC’s.

The CAC is not designed to be a judicial system, but rather an extension of our CON Community. It is because we have the CAC system set up that we can have the amazing cons that we have. During the CAC itself the statement was made ‘this is the true CON Community, all the outside stuff is setup for this’.

While this is a somewhat dull way to look at the community, it’s true. Our CAC process is the highest form of our community. Yes, it is how we deal with rule violations, but the process is that of holding our community accountable, of how our community deals with problems when they come up.

I may have thought she was crazy at the time, but now I definitely agree with Tandi. I love the CAC process too.

*Note of explanation...*

As Devon mentions, a “CAC” stands for “Conference Affairs Committee.” It is also a verb - a person would get “cac’ed” at Con if they break the rules. A CAC is not a punishment or consequence; a CAC is the process we go through when there has been an accusation of community-breaking behavior, where we take some time to find out what happened and what, if anything, will be done.

*Zysett, continued.*

right for all, we must start with an open, loving heart. That is sometimes hard to remember in the midst of what feels like betrayal, but is a necessity for healing and reconciliation. The CAC process allows us time and space to breathe, get back on track and reconcile our mutual pain.

Fall CON 2011 reminded me why I do the work I do. I will still begin every CON weekend with the mandate: Don’t get CAC’ed! But, I will now add: it is so much easier to trust and ask for help before we land in a CAC. I will say this with the knowledge that not everyone can ask for help. Not everyone knows they need help until they are in too deep. Just know that I and others will meet you where you are, take you by the hand, and lead you back into community. We love you. We may have to send you away from CON for awhile, to give you room to work on self-love. Yet, in the midst of exile, please believe we are holding this very special space open for you—a sort of spiritual Robby Rule—and we eagerly await your return.

# Love is the Answer

*Erich Brown, Sponsor, Olympia (Adult Advisor)*

I have been involved in planning two Cons. For this Con, I questioned myself every step of the way, (after I said I wanted to be more involved) if the amount of work, the sacrifice, the effort was worth it all the way up to the site. The inner voice that told me this was my last Con as a planner or staff stayed with me like a bad dream.

When I arrived at the site I sat with that uneasy feeling for a long time, staring blankly out the car window at the registration office. I was the first to arrive on site. I got the keys to the site, and went through the camp to open doors.

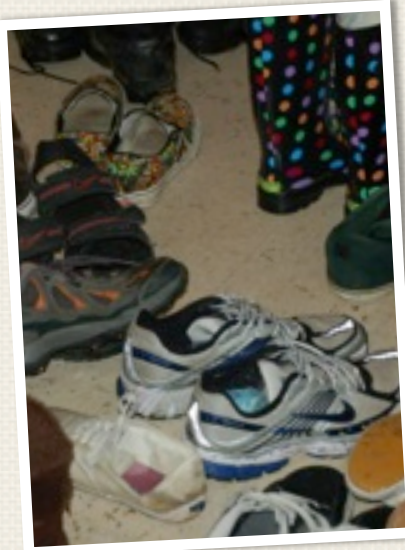
I was going through this mundane task of unlocking doors to the Blue Room when it occurred to me, very slowly, that I was being called to task. I was to open the doors to possibilities, possibilities that had no certain outcome, that were not predetermined. I was called onto make a difference, to stand up, to be counted on, to be part of a movement, to allow people in and out of their own space. I was facilitating their movement, creating spaces for people to have community.

I would be called, not by any one person, but by my commitment to something larger than myself. I would be called to many more mundane, yet entirely useful tasks like carrying cups for water, picking up trash, smiling when I did not feel it. I mattered in those moments, I belonged, I was community and I was beyond time. I had no past, present, or future.

In that moment I knew that all that the frustrations, the small injustices, the seemingly endless workload, the thankless tasks and the hundreds of complaints I had swirling in my head were useless to the powerful feeling I had that I was part of something larger than myself. I was part of something that would stand the test of time. I was part of love. I was the key holder and I was and will continue to open doors for everyone to come through. Look for me at the next Con: I will have a staff shirt and keys.

With love as the only answer,

Erich Brown



## SHOES

CISPUS TENDS TO BE WET IN OCTOBER, GROUNDS LITTERED WITH PINE NEEDLES, SO "SHOES OFF" IS THE RULE IN ANY BUILDING WITH CARPET. WHILE IT'S KIND OF A PAIN (AND MAYBE STINKY) SOMETIMES, THE VACUUMING TIME-SAVING ON SUNDAY MAKES IT WORTH IT.



## DIGGER & THE CON BUS

IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO LIVE IN OR NEAR OREGON, ODDS ARE YOU'VE COME TO CON ON THE CON BUS, DRIVEN BY THE AMAZING DIGGER.

COST OF THE CON BUS: \$30.  
NOT HAVING TO DO THE DRIVING:  
PRICELESS



## SPONSOR LAP TAG

AT THIS CON, WE LEARNED THE MOUNTAIN-DESERT DISTRICT CALLS LAP TAG, "THE VIOLENT GAME". PNWD SPONSORS CALL IT "THE BEST GAME EVER." PNWD YOUTH AGREE. THE NURSE ... WELL, SHE'S OFF TO GET MORE ICE PACKS.

# Life as a Dean... from Beginning to End

## Elissa- Con planning:



Con planning is planning blindly. I mean, we didn't access the site until the Friday of Con and we don't have access to all of the youth and adults to try out workshops,

worships or touch groups, to do a run-through prior to con. There is a certain point in which everyone - even people as detailed oriented as Anne-Marie - have to have faith and "make shit up" (as Anne-Marie would say).

As a con planning team, we had forces working for and against us. All of us were on YES team, which means most of us had prior experience planning or in leadership in general. But we didn't have our first YES team meeting until mid August and that same meeting was also our first Con planning meeting, which in all honesty we didn't get a lot of planning done. That being said, through a ridiculous amount of emails, google docs and hours upon hours of skyping with Nick and Anne-Marie, we made it work.

I can't tell you how much the con community means to me, and that's why YES team decided to plan con and do this theme. That is why I was dean, because I wanted to make sure the youth are able to experience the experiences that I have had. We only had to hope that the things that we planned and did would create experiences and have an impact on the community.

## Nick- Friday:



Upon arriving at the camp early, I had a moment to myself to look across the camp and see where many memories had been made from the prior

years. I felt as though ghosts of people of con past were floating around as reality and my memory worked their hardest to blend together.

As set up and the crucial steps to get registration ready happened, I began to realize how much it really took to have all of the needed Friday night con necessities ready, something that was just that way when I arrived as a regular youth. Seeing the YES Team get their staff shirts on and their smiles grow really brought to heart and prepared me for what was coming. As youth began to flood in, familiar faces would appear and I'd be welcomed with huge hugs and screaming voices. At the same time, the new youth were all faces I had never seen and would be leading the whole weekend.

Come orientation, both Elissa and I had excitement running through our veins it seemed. Opening up yelling "Welcome to Fall Con 2011!" really set the tone for how we felt about being co-deans. We had all the enthusiasm in the world and it showed as we got through the usually most boring part of con with what seemed like enthusiasm and surprise at the end when we tried out something new, the con sorting hat. Logan did an awesome job with that and I couldn't have asked for a better group of leaders to get through main orientation.

## Elissa- Saturday:

We were now in fully into the weekend. After the main orientation, we crashed. We had been running around the site since 1 pm. I remember foggily rising out from my cocoon of warmth from my sleeping bag and heading in the rain to breakfast. The morning seemed to pass fairly quickly - touch groups, morning workshops, and then it was time for us to prep for main workshop.

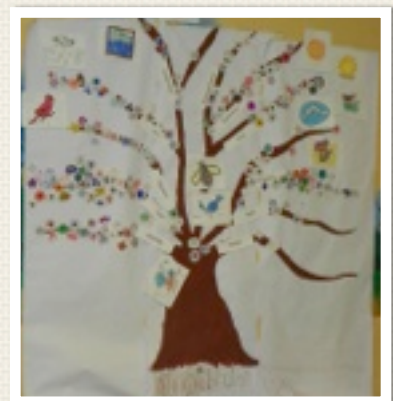
Before the main workshop, Nick and I (along with others) felt that our community was not fully understanding the con culture. The workshop and this con's goal was to learn our past (our roots), to grow and nurture our con tree, and empower the community. We have had a past of drugs, sex, and youth and churches getting hurt. We don't want to go back, we want to move forward.

Our branches of the tree are our con values. We are a loving, kind, radically

inclusive, empowered, open community. And when we are not, we apologise and forgive, because we know con is not perfect.

Con has changed and is always changing, hopefully for the better, just like our faith, as we are a living tradition. The community has the power. We might have youth and adult leaders, but really the ones who uphold the community is not one single person, but every single person.

We had speakers from all con generations speak about their experiences. The end result was our beautiful Con tree. From the 1900s, to now, to our future and beyond: spreading love and kindness everywhere, not just at con.



After the workshop, the air dramatically shifted. Our community got the culture. I have immense amount of faith in the future. Con isn't just about this one weekend, but about all the future weekends.

The main workshop was just one of the many amazing things that happened, along with touch groups, worships, all of the workshops, spirit corps, etc. The no-talent show was great, as always.

That night's worship really touched me. Before I had been feeling a little disconnected from the community, and from the worship and beyond that feeling completely disappeared.

Later that night I was called into a CAC. All I have to say about it, is that I'm so proud of everyone involved and the discussion and work that was done. It was a good thing for our

see "Life as a Dean", next page

# Life as a Dean, con't.

community and also an extremely powerful experience. I didn't drop into bed until around 4:40... 3 hours later, I needed to rise and begin to close our weekend.

## Nick - Sunday:

When I opened my eyes Sunday, I felt like I had just closed them from the night before. After a long night staying up to watch the community while the CAC proceeded and getting the dance started the night before, I was exhausted. I wandered to breakfast, got something to eat, and then announced a CAC had happened with Elissa.

This moment was kind of bitter sweet. Having had an awesome con so far, the announcing of a CAC wasn't something the community wanted to hear, yet knowing it had happened proved that the new community was willing to

uphold and take responsibility for covenant, rules, and culture.

When that was all said and done, I finally went to a whole touch group meeting, which I had missed mainly for the purposes of getting a little rest. I enjoyed getting a little more one on one with some of the youth and was happy to see I was welcomed in despite my absences.

The day finished up with the car wash and wonderful worship that we had after. I got to see a mirror image of the final moments of one of the most important cons of my life, as youth hugged, wrote, screamed, cried a little, and enjoyed the presence of each other for one last little bit. I watched and waved as the cars went away, and I smiled as I saw the last youth leave, until I remembered I had to clean up the rest of their mess.

## Elissa - Closing Thoughts

Nick and I both want to extend our thanks to Anne-Marie, the rest of the amazing con planning team, the adults and youth who took on leadership throughout the con, to the sponsors for donating their weekend, and finally to our beloved community.

Remember to plant your own tree and let our faith, our love, our chalices shine, just like they do at con. We are the past, the present, and the future for our cons, our religion, for our world.

As Bill and Barrie said at the main workshop: "You're not back into the 'real world'. You never left it. Carry on what you have learned this weekend everywhere you go, and the two 'worlds' will not seem that different anymore".

## LIFE AT CONTINUUNITY



# Why I Keep Coming Back

Ward Ramsdell, Head Sponsor, Hillboro - 22 Cons as a Sponsor

When I left ContinUUity, I didn't go straight home. Washington Route 12, the road to Cispus, traverses an amazing part of the wilderness north of Mount Saint Helens, with beautiful views over Riffe Lake and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. It was at one of these vistas that I chose to pull over and collect my thoughts. I took off my staff shirt, read through my sheet from the closing car wash, and went for a short walk in the woods.

The fact of the matter is: I am an introvert. Although I enjoy social interaction, and my faith and values often compel me to work in close cooperation with many wonderful and talented people, being in constant contact with others for 40 hours



straight is ultimately exhausting. I needed the time alone not just to process my con experience or prepare for re-immersion in my daily life, but to find my own center and bearings once again.

Integral to that experience was the notion, which I

carried throughout the weekend, that the reason I stay active in the youth movement is because it was youth conferences that taught me ways in which to balance my introversion with my desire to effect change. It was cons that helped me find my voice, and it is now my calling to create environments that help others find theirs. Twice a year I am fortunate enough to participate in the process of creating a community in which all are welcome and received without judgment. It is an honor and an inspiration.

ContinUUity was an examination of the journey we've traveled together, and an invitation to discuss the future and what we want our conferences to be. It was timely; the conference covenant was formed three years ago, and the last of the youth present at its conception will be graduating in the spring. It's important that their work be continued, and that while we strive to keep conferences relevant to the new youth it's done with an understanding of the rich tradition that runs through their culture. It's my hope that the culture will continue to be communicated as it has been in the past, through our words and deeds, the work of the Spirit Corps in particular, and of everyone who cares about cons. I also hope that we will continue to provide these more structured opportunities to review and discuss the covenant that we share.

I look forward, as I always do, to the next conference; the next opportunity to come together and form a community that reflects our values and which strives to include and give a voice to all who come. That community, as with all con communities, will exist for too brief a period of time before it dissipates. But the message will remain with us: we have done this, we can do this, we WILL do this again. First in our own small way, then in the world at large, we will continue to live our values, share our stories, and lift up others.

## CONTINUITY, CON'T.



A RARE SIGHTING OF AN  
ERICHNID



DEVON AND EDDIE



FRIENDS KEEP YOU WARM



NUTELLA IS ONE OF THE 4  
MAJOR FOOD GROUPS

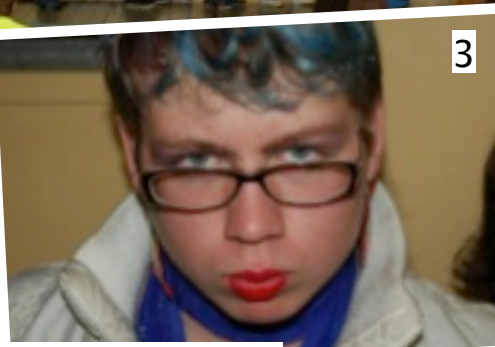
# NO-TALENT SHOW



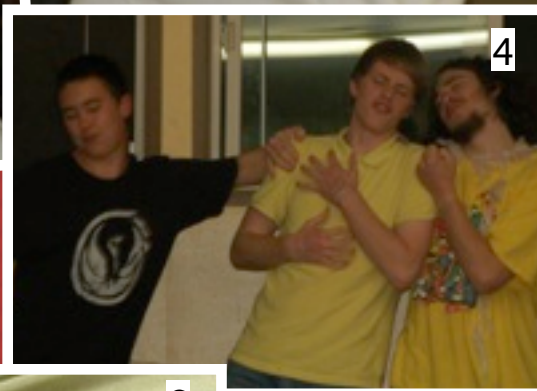
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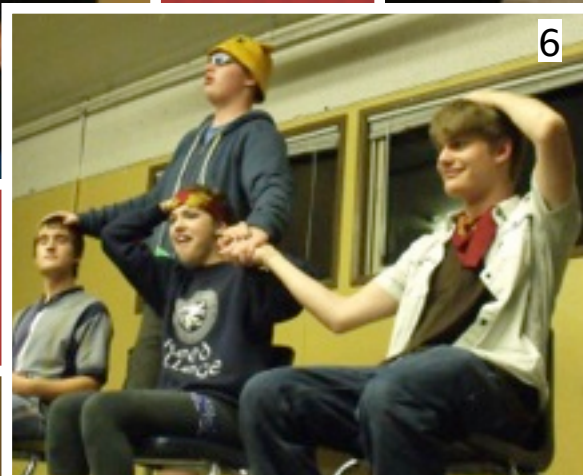
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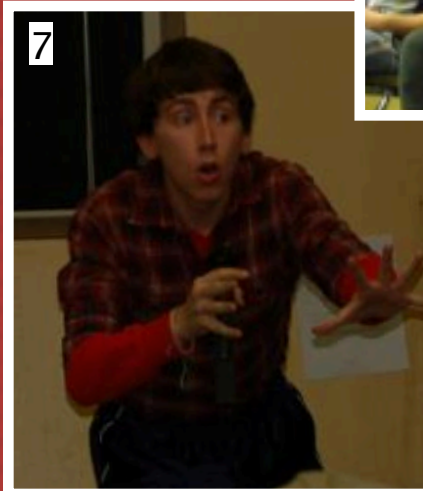
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5



6



7

(1) SERIAH'S DANCE TROUPE PERFORMS TO "MOVES LIKE JAGGER"; (2) ALAN DRINKS A GLASS OF WATER; (3) JULIAZ WILDE GETS FIERCE, (4) CAPPY,

BEN AND HAVEN SING THE POKEMON THEME SONG; (5) XANA AND HANA CLOSE OUT THE SHOW; (6) SKILLFUL SKILLS WITH QUINN; (7) LOGAN, OUR TALENTED SHOW HOST.

NEXT PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: THE LEVITATING DEAN (ELISSA LEAPS WHILE DANCING); KAYTE AND DEVA SING ZOMBIE; RYAN PROVES HE'S NOT LIKE OTHER GUYS.

## PHOTO CREDITS

ALL PHOTO CREDITS ERIK TROBERG, EXCEPT:

SPIRAL DANCE, PG. 1 AND TREE PG. 4 BY DONAL W

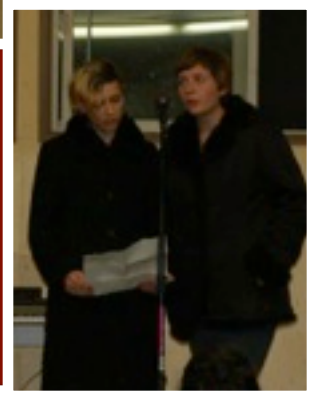
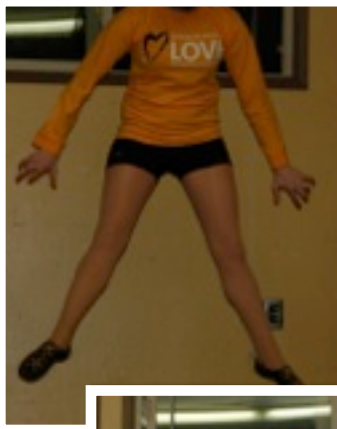
CISPUS PHOTO, PG. 1, BY PAUL C

FRIENDS, PG. 6 BY MARTHA N.

CHARM, PG. 8 BY ERIK M.

STRANGLE MONKEY, PG. 8 BY THE BLOGGESS

RED SUN, PG. 8 BY NICK T.



## CHARMING!

NEWCOMERS TO CON THIS YEAR GOT SOMETHING SPECIAL: A CHARM, COMMEMORATING THEIR FIRST CON. THE ONLY OTHER WAY YOU COULD GET THIS WAS TO TAKE ON A SPIRIT CORPS SHIFT... AND SHOW UP FOR IT.



## R-E-S-P-E-C-T

WE'RE BIG ON GIVING PEOPLE SPACE AND MAKING SURE THEY'RE COMFORTABLE. WHICH MEANS YOU NEED TO REMEMBER: THERE'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN HUGGING AND STRANGLING.

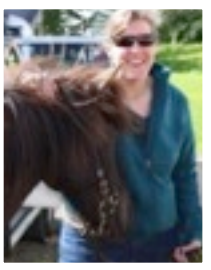


## BEAUTIFUL

RAIN OUTSIDE, SHOWERS INSIDE... CONDENSATION, SUNSET, TREE... BEAUTIFUL AND UNUSUAL PHOTO BY NICK T.

# In Gratitude

Anne-Marie Davidson, PNWD Con Consultant



It is hard to translate what my heart wants to say to my typing hands, so I will try to translate the images...

When I first get to Con, during setup, I see this map in my head, with the Con site in the middle of it. Around it is our district, and all along the roadways and freeways and lines on that map are vehicles: cars, vans, one very rowdy bus, and they are all driving toward Con, all on their way there, full of expectation, anticipation, apprehension. When they arrive, they will see we are there, waiting for them, ready to welcome them; they will know that this is where they want to be.

In my mind, during con, I see this spiderweb. The spiderweb is my mental map, the connections that form the weekend. Some are people, some are tasks, some are events, some is time... it is vast and beautiful, interconnected, fragile.

Between people, I see the light within each of us reaching out toward others, sometimes tentatively, sometimes readily. With our affirmations of one another, those energies touch and interact and grow until that inner light becomes our halo, surrounding us in light.

This is what you mean to me. You are the welcomers. You create the web, form the connections, send energy that strengthens. You are the light bearers, illuminating the path for others, helping them find their own... you are why this community is what it is.

I am ever grateful for all that you do, in this community, and for all your acts of service.

The very long list of thank yous:

Deans: Nick T & Elissa M

Spirit Corps Captains: Devon B & Riley H

Con Chair: Annie S

Worship: Lydia P & Emma C

Touch Groups: Martina H and Alice R

Workshops: Libby H and Ava K

Registrar: Seriah M

T-shirts: Emma R

Mug Books: Emily L

Site ops / No-Talent Show Host: Logan G

Chaplains: Quinn H & Lorelei P (youth), Kristin D and Job R (adults)

Adult Advisors/Helpers: Ann C, Erin Z, Erich B, Liz S, Amanda R, Eric V

Head Sponsor: Ward R

Nurse: Sharon T

Workshop leaders (not already mentioned): Jeff P, Bill F, Barrie O, Kevin C, Tracy Y, Andy B

Newcomer Orientation Leaders: Owen H and Kevin P

Touch Group Leaders (not already mentioned): Helena K, Sara B, Ben K, Hannah H, Cass B, Elizabeth H, Ethan R, Fernando K, Audry F, Sasha I, Zoe V, Laura J, Dane M, Jake B, Leigh F, Veronica S, Abbie G, Ian G, Brenna Y, Taylor O, Erika D, Makayla V, Kati H

Sponsor sitters (not already mentioned): Haven B, Carson P, Lewis B

That's 63 people, and I didn't even get to those who served on Spirit Corps.

To any and all of you who served this weekend, or whom I may have inadvertently forgotten: THANK YOU!



# CONTINUITY STAFF



ABOVE, L TO R: WARD, LORELEI, EMILY, RILEY, EMMA C, EMMA R, ERICH, ELISSA, ANNE-MARIE, NICK, MARTINA, LIBBY, AVA, ALICE, LOGAN, ANN, SERIAH, LYDIA, ERIN, ANNIE.

## ATTENDANCE:

- 26 CONGREGATIONS
- 202 PEOPLE

## WORKSHOPS:

- Creating Inclusive Communities - Jeff Philip
- Leadership skills - Anne-Marie Davidson
- Meditation on Appreciation of Community - Mary Peterson
- Singing Workshop - Tracy Ylingling and Andy Bartels
- Occupy What? - Bill Fry and Barrie Oukes
- The legacy of youth leadership in the UUA: Kevin Clark and Anne-Marie Davidson

## MAIN WORKSHOP SPEAKERS:

- Kevin Clark - Registrar, Common Ground 1&2
- Anne-Marie Davidson, PNWD Con Consultant
- Elissa & Nick, Deans, EmotiCON attendees
- Ward Ramsdell, 22 cons as a sponsor, ~20 as a youth
- Bill Fry and Barrie Oukes, EmotiCon Head Sponsor / Advisor