



# Saint Louis County

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Camp Esquagama reports progress in capital improvements, programs**

“We’re 78-years-new and growing. We’re adding programs. Camp Esquagama is a traditional summer camp and that is not changing.” Those are the words of Roy Connaughton, CEO of Arrowhead Center which is one year into a long-term contract to manage the camp near Biwabik. Connaughton, along with Camp Executive Director Steve Popowitz provided a progress report to St. Louis County Commissioners during a Board workshop Tuesday in Eveleth.

Much of the first year was focused on getting the camp up and running while laying the groundwork for significant capital improvements at the camp. In addition to hosting nearly 350 campers, the camp finalized plans and attained permits, built five new cabins, and made significant improvements to the camps kitchen and infrastructure.

Looking forward to the 2014 camping season, Popowitz expects an even more vibrant year with expanded outreach and programming. “Kids need time to be kids. That’s what we provide at Camp Esquagama and that’s what we will continue to do,” said Popowitz.

Additional physical improvements expected to be completed by the end of 2014 include the addition of an indoor climbing wall and a low-transmission camp radio station, replacing the main lodge’s roof and adding a deck, winterizing key buildings to allow for year-round programming, digging a new well, safety improvements and other upgrades to make the camp compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Specialized camping opportunities also are in the works, expanding the reach of young people who can enjoy the camping experience. New programs include an Explorers program for 12-13 year olds, an Adventure Program for 14-15 year olds and a Leader-in-training program for 16-17 year olds. Also new this season will be a weekend grief camp for children and families. A new website for the camp, which includes online registration options, also was recently launched.

“I am absolutely amazed at the amount of work that has been completed out there, physical-wise,” said St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson. “When you start looking at the details – how things have changed – it’s revolutionary. And yet you’ve kept the camp’s historic integrity.”

Camp Esquagama has been a summer youth camp tradition in St. Louis County for more than 75 years. The county has historically supported camp operations and facility improvements and maintenance. Early last year, the county negotiated a contract with the Arrowhead Center to manage and operate the camp on the County’s behalf. The \$2.1 million contract included significant investment in capital improvements.

For more information about the camp and its camping opportunities and programs, visit [campesquagama.com](http://campesquagama.com) or call 218-865-6589.

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