



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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County Board gets progress report, tours Camp Esquagama

The roof is brand new. So is the well, the electrical wiring and the plumbing. Camp Esquagama is nearing completion of \$1.4 million in renovations and improvements, and today the St. Louis County Board got a sneak peak at the progress before the 2015 camping season begins. The County Board held its regular weekly meeting at the camp.

Among the improvements: five new cabins have been built, and the kitchen has been updated with new appliances and flooring. From the back wall of the dining room, visitors can look down to see children using the new climbing wall.

“This is the new Camp Esquagama,” said Commissioner Keith Nelson. “This camp has been reborn. This jewel that was given to St. Louis County all those years ago is still paying dividends for our children. This is a place where you want to send your kids.”

The upgrades to the camp, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, are a blend of old and new. For instance, the original log trusses still span the dining hall, supporting the roof and providing a rustic feel. But attached to them are all new tongue and groove wood panels that make up the ceiling.

The 40-acre camp on the shore of Lake Esquagama near Biwabik, has been a summer tradition for generations of kids growing up in St. Louis County. St. Louis County has historically supported camp operations and facility improvements and maintenance. However, in 2013, the county negotiated a contract with the Arrowhead Center to manage and operate the camp on the County’s behalf.

Renovating the camp has required creativity and patience in overcoming challenges. “One year ago, right now, I could see the sky through the old roof as it was under construction,” recalled Steve Popowitz, director of Camp Esquagama. “Every time we open a wall or roof, we discover new

things. In an 80 year building, you discover a lot.”

But the perseverance is paying off. Roy Connaughton, executive director of the Arrowhead Center, announced today that the camp will offer new programming this summer, including a three-day bereavement camp for children. The camp is being offered in collaboration with Children’s Grief Connection. Other future special programming may include camps for families with children who have autism, and for families of veterans experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Online registration for the 2015 camping season is available now. For more information about the camp and its camping opportunities and programs, visit campesquagama.com or call 218-865-6589.

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Roy Connaughton, executive director of the Arrowhead Center, updates the County Board regarding new programming that will be offered at Camp Esquagama this year.