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## **UPDATE from Camp Speers in the Poconos**

Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA  
George Painter, Executive Director

What an exciting start I have had at my new home on Lake Nichecronk. I have been working a few weeks at our amazing Camp Speers and I wanted to send an update to board members, alumni, staff, and friends. We are now officially and legally merged with the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA. Here is what has been accomplished so far:



Sept 30 - I began moving into Chrono Cabin and have been busy with cleaning, organizing, and setting things up. I am thrilled to be living at Camp.

Oct 1 - The YMCA paid off over \$2.7 million in Camp Speers debt. A new chapter has started.

Oct 7 - The Camp Staff Team had a day-long planning retreat at the Grey Towers National Historic Site in nearby Milford. This is the amazing estate and landscaped grounds of Gifford Pinchot, first chief of the US Forest Service and twice governor of Pennsylvania. Pinchot was a noted conservationist and progressive leader. We spent the day getting to know each other and talking about the opportunities at Camp Speers. This world-class facility and campus in our neighborhood inspired our own dreams and plans to make Camp Speers a world-class YMCA Outdoor Center.

Oct 8 - Some Camp Staff met with the YMCA marketing team outside of Philadelphia. We toured 3 of the 17 YMCA branches and spent the afternoon working on our marketing strategies for the next year including our website, print materials, Camp displays in all branches, and electronic promotions to all YMCA members

Oct 9 - YMCA Board Summit in Philadelphia area where over 200 volunteers and staff from 18 branches (including Speers) gathered to share best practices in volunteer efforts. Everyone saw a Camp Speers presentation and our name was mentioned many times throughout the event. The Camp Speers board chair, secretary and two staff attended.

Oct 10 - YMCA technology experts arrived (4 times this month!) to help set up new cable service, new computers, new wireless, and soon a new phone system. The IT support has been fantastic.

Oct 11-13 - Board meeting and Alumni Reunion Weekend at Camp. This was my first opportunity to meet the Camp Speers Board of Advisors (formerly the Speers-Eljabar Board of Directors) and many alumni. WOW! I was so impressed and inspired by the dedication, passion, and caliber of people all weekend. I spent a lot of time listening. We will be working on our strategic plan in the months ahead. Get ready for some exciting plans to be announced in January 2015.

Oct 20 - Repairs begin on the Camp Speers dining hall. The YMCA has approved \$500,000 to fix the dining hall, replace the roof on the Hay Dining Hall in Eljabar, and address deferred maintenance. Repairs will be complete by spring 2015.

Oct 23 - I presented to the YMCA executive committee with a rough draft of a proposed Camp Speers master site plan and capital campaign we hope to launch in January. The Camp Speers board will review and add ideas in November before it goes back for approval to the YMCA board of directors.

Oct 24 - I met with YMCA fund raising and human resource departments in Philadelphia to get their help and insight into our plans and projects. All pre-merger Camp Speers staff remain in place with our first new payday today.

I look forward to sharing more with you next month. Stay tuned!



Lake Nichecronk during Alumni Weekend