



Illinois Campers On Mission

August 2026

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President's letter—

Hi COM family,

We had a good time working at MorningStar Mission in Joliet. You can read the project report on pages 6 & 7. We got a lot done, spent good fellowship time each evening, got to know each other a little better and were once again blessed to be a part of their work. They do an amazing job meeting great needs in the Joliet area. They are certainly being the hands and feet of Jesus and we are glad to help.

As we look forward to serving at the Baptist Children's Home in August, we will again have a good number of us coming to work and probably will have a lot of projects waiting for us. We will send the list as soon as we get it.

Please continue to pray for each other in our COM family as some of our brothers and sisters are struggling with some heavy issues. We know how powerful prayer is and what a comfort it is to each other.

We are being blessed with several new people who are joining our COM family. Get to know them and welcome them to our team. God is blessing the work that He is giving to us to do.

Galatians 6:9: "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." This verse encourages perseverance in good deeds, emphasizing the importance of maintaining faith and effort despite challenges. Thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness.

Fred



COM Officers

President—Fred Riley, 618-508-3917, fred.riley1261@gmail.com

Vice-President (Project Manager) - Richard Evans, 618-218-4546,
akrlevans1@gmail.com

Secretary—Karen Mowers, 309-945-3971, kcc61254@gmail.com

Treasurer—Dick Mowers, 309-945-1477, 728 Cardinal Ct., Geneseo, IL 61254

Chaplain—Jim & Marilyn Diercks, 618-965-9748 or 618-317-2353

Food Supervisor— Francie Lindeman, 618-713-2402

Historian - Irma Burnett, 309-253-8557

National Coordinators—Don & Jan Kragness, campersonmission72@gmail.com

National website: campersonmission.org

August 16—21 Baptist Children's Home

Carmi, IL Work Project

Those who are attending: (please let me know if you are planning to attend and are not on this list)

Fred & Paula Riley

Leroy & Irma Burnett

Terry & Debbie Odum

Jim & Marilyn Diercks & Family

John & Francie Lindeman

Dick & Karen Mowers

Randy & Sandy Tedford

Roger & Vicki Walker

Richard & Anita Evans

Jessica Bonnell & Family

Sonny & Sondra McKenzie

Randy & Kay McClellan

Andy & Marilyn Thompson

Gary & Karen Watson

Harold & Susan Mills

Cathryn St. Dennis

Don & Jan Kragness

Doug & Suzy Kingsbury

We do not have a list yet for the projects we will be doing but I will send it as soon as I get it. We know they only have approximately 6 students at this time but we will plan to have a service with the kids one night, hopefully a block party in Carmi at the Baptist Church and possibly a night out together if we can find a restaurant able to handle our big group.

One project Jake had suggested is to replace the tin roof on the building that we laid cement in last year. Not sure about the logistics of what is needed and if it can be done from underneath instead of on top of the roof.



- | | |
|----|----------------------|
| 1 | Fred & Paula Riley |
| 1 | Andy Thomson |
| 6 | Penny Meese |
| 8 | Paula Riley |
| 10 | Chet Whyers |
| 12 | Ken Ramsey |
| 21 | Glenn Ansley |
| 24 | Harold & Susan Mills |



Tentative 2026 schedule

August 16 – 21- Baptist Children's Home, Carmi
September 20 – 25 - SICC, Makanda, IL
September 19 - Carmi Fall Fest
October 18 – 23 – Lake Sallateeska & Fall Rally
November 12 – 21- Passion Play, Eureka Springs, AR
Dec. 5 – COM Christmas luncheon, FBC Farina
Jan. 18 – 30, 2027 – Piney Woods, TX



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Randy Tedford presented George and Penny Meese with their replacement Lifetime Achievement Award recently. They were originally given the award in 2025 but it was lost in the fire at their house. We are so excited to know that once again this award plaque will be in their home to represent our love and appreciation to them for the work they have done and continue to do with COM.

Campers On Mission National Rally

June 15—18, 2027

Pointing People to Heaven in '27

Matthew 28:19—20

Amana RV Park & Event Center, Iowa

New dates!!!!!! New team leaders!!! NEW IDEAS!!!!!!!

DETAILS TO FOLLOW SOON!

FAITH FOCUS—

Hosea and Gomer

Hosea 1:2-3. *The Lord said to Hosea, "Go marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.*

Have you ever stopped and thought about how strange the book of Hosea is? God comes to a prophet and tells him to marry a woman who will be unfaithful to him. Not that she might be unfaithful. Not that there was a chance things could go badly. God tells Hosea from the beginning that she will leave, that she will chase after other lovers, and that she will break his heart. If I were Hosea, I think I would have spent a considerable amount of time asking if perhaps I had misunderstood the instructions. Maybe I should pray about it a little longer. Maybe somebody else was supposed to get this assignment. Yet Hosea obeys, marries Gomer, and eventually everything God said would happen does.

Gomer leaves. She is unfaithful. She pursues other lovers. She abandons the man who loved her. She does exactly what we would expect to end a marriage. And honestly, that is where most of us would expect the story to end. Because, let's be real, most of us understand forgiveness right up until forgiveness becomes expensive. We understand grace right up until we are the ones paying for it. We like stories where the faithful person is rewarded, the unfaithful person faces consequences, and justice neatly wraps everything up with a bow. But God's stories often go in directions that make absolutely no sense to us. Instead of telling Hosea to move on, God tells him to go get Gomer back. Not because she deserves it. Not because she suddenly realized her mistakes and came running home. God tells Hosea to pursue the woman who broke his heart and love her anyway. He had to buy back his own wife. Imagine standing there while the woman you love is valued so little by the world that she can be purchased like property. Imagine paying the price anyway. Imagine looking at someone who has hurt you, betrayed you, and abandoned you, and deciding they are still worth redeeming.

The reason this story hits so hard is because it is not really about Hosea and Gomer. It is about God and us. We are the unfaithful wife, the ones that wander away and chase after things that promise satisfaction but never deliver it.

Yet throughout all of it, God remains faithful. He continues pursuing his people. The entire book of Hosea is a picture of a God who refuses to stop loving people who continually give him reasons to walk away.

The amazing thing about Hosea is not that Gomer was worth buying back. The amazing thing is that Hosea loved her enough to do it. The amazing thing about the gospel is not that we are worth saving. The amazing thing is that Jesus loves us enough to save us anyway. And if you ever wonder how much God loves you, remember that he did not merely say it, he demonstrated it. He pursued you, paid for you through his death and resurrection and made a way for you to come home.

I encourage you to read the entire book of Hosea.

Heavenly Father, thank you for chasing after our hearts even when we wander. Thank you that we are never too far gone, too broken, or too hidden for your love to find us.
Amen

Jim and Marilyn Diercks, chaplains





The team
assembling a
Gazebo on the
grounds at
MorningStar.

Doug Kingsbury
working on
installing
lockers in the
intake center.

Sonny
McKenzie and
Don Kragness
painting the
dressing rooms
at the Treasure
Chest thrift
store.

COM Project Report—MorningStar Mission
July 19 – 24, 2026

Present:

Fred & Paula Riley	Leroy & Irma Burnett
Dick & Karen Mowers	Gary & Karen Watson
Cathryn St. Dennis	Roger & Vickie Walker
Sonny & Sondra McKenzie	Doug & Suzy Kingsbury
Don & Jan Kragness	

Guests from New Beginnings Baptist Church, Streator
Mike Blakemore, Morgan Miller, Sally Johnson

Projects Completed:

- Assembled a gazebo in courtyard for 180 program
- Worked at Intake Center
 - Installed lockers in Intake Center – build wooden base, assemble lockers, attach lockers to the wall, add vinyl mop board
 - Cleaning and painting walls
 - Sorting, cleaning, moving, arranging items in cupboard
 - Sweeping and cleaning
 - Took apart and cleaned fans
 - Hung toilet rollers
 - Removed doors in hallway
 - Helped unload and spread rubber mulch on the new playground
- Work at Treasure Chest Thrift Store – fundraiser business for mission
 - Remodel employee bathroom – install vanity, new sink
 - Install display hangers in Toy Store
 - Cleaning & sweeping in store
 - Sort merchandise to be displayed for sale
 - Participate in prayer time with staff before store opens
 - Painted 2 dressing rooms
 - Built racks to display tv's for sale and painted
 - Built racks to hold pictures for sale and painted
 - Repaired carts used for donations
 - Painted doors in the office
 - Replaced boards on the garbage enclosure
 - Painted cabinet doors in men's bathroom

(Project report continued)

Worked with the women in the family shelter

Presented daily devotions

Cleaned and repaired sewing machines donated to the family shelter for sewing classes

Distributed pillowcase bags and Gospel Girl dolls

Witnessing to neighbors in the location of our campers and employees at thrift store

Conducted evening daily devotions for 4 days

Participated in staff devotions at the main office on Monday

Cleaned windows at main building

Cleaning laundry room sinks

Sewing ministry

Sewed As You Go Bears – 65 bears

Sewed large drawstring bags to be used in outreach to homeless - 45 bags

Sewed sling back bags to be used in outreach to homeless – 28 slings

Sorted fabrics donated to sewing ministry

Cut and prepared fabric for sewing



New helpers in the Bear and Bag workshop. Roger cut fabric and Karen trying out the serger.



Nightly fellowship and devotions;

Kevin Watson Exec. Director of MorningStar (also Gary & Karen's son),

Doug and Roger working on the gazebo roof,

Roger working on the lockers

the group photo.



Photo of COM team at MorningStar Mission: front row l to r: Sondra McKenzie, Karen Watson, Vicki Walker, Irma Burnett, Jan Kragness, Suzy Kingsbury, Karen Mowers, Paula Riley. Back row: Sonny McKenzie, Gary Watson, Roger Walker, Leroy Burnett, Don Kragness, Doug Kingsbury, Cathryn St. Dennis, Fred Riley. Missing from photo (& photographer) Dick Mowers.