

Faith's Lodge 2011 Annual Report

"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to come here and grieve. We had an amazing time. Coming, we were nervous and didn't know what to expect but it was absolutely delightful."

A note from our board chair:

Thank you to our extended family of supporters and friends!

Greetings to you as we finish our fourth year of what we believe is invaluable work serving parents and families who are grieving over the loss or the health of their child. Over 116 volunteers helped Faith's Lodge serve over 220 families in 2011 which results in over 900 families served since opening our doors in 2007. Exit interviews from our guests were overwhelming positive with almost everyone indicating Faith's Lodge helped bring hope to their lives.

2011 will certainly be remembered as one of our major transitional years for Faith's Lodge. Long-time executive director Anna Stier left in early 2011; Jackie Lee Stone, our indispensable events contractor, helped the board by adding interim executive director duties to her work. And then at the end of the year, we were most fortunate to secure Curt Peterson, our current and ongoing interim executive director, who is overseeing tremendous building and infrastructure development for our foundation.

A highlight of key accomplishments last year includes:

- 1st annual Restore the Hope Tree Planting for Faith's Lodge families and supporters following a devastating July 1 storm that ripped through NW Wisconsin. Event helped to restore the hope and the grounds at Faith's Lodge in a more literal way, through the planting of trees throughout the property.
- Raising nearly \$300,000 at 4th annual Hope Rocks event in September at EPIC Event Center. The event brought together more than 750 Faith's Lodge supporters and featured music from local artists Lynhurst, Rocket Club and Jeremy Messersmith.
- Paying tribute to all the special children who have touched our lives at the Holiday Tribute Ceremony in December at the Minneapolis Woman's Club. This intimate ceremony offered moments of reflection and togetherness for families who have endured the loss of a child.

To help as stewards of your support, we are making our 2011 Annual Report available entirely online at (www.faithslodge.org). This allows us to direct our resources toward the parents and families we serve. If you would like to view the report in an alternative format, please contact us.

And of course, we could not do any of this life-changing work without the support of our many hundreds of donors. [Thank you from all of us here at Faith's Lodge](#); we couldn't provide the services we do today without your crucial support. We recognize all of our supporters in the back of this report – please take a minute to visit those pages.

Thank you for all you do to continue our mission of helping those who have lost a child or are facing a child's life threatening illness.

With Faith.

Sincerely,

Mark Lacek
Board Chair, Faith's Lodge

*"Thank you to the bottom of our hearts we finally felt like the majority – not the minority for 1 weekend. We weren't alone fighting this daily battle we call grief."
"We feel nothing could have made this stay at Faith's Lodge better, we are so thankful this place and the staff. We truly can't thank you enough!"*

Who we are...

Faith's Lodge is a Minnesota non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides a place for hope and healing for families facing one of life's most difficult circumstances: the loss or life-limiting illness of a child. Located on 70 acres in the north woods of Wisconsin, Faith's Lodge has been featured on the TODAY show and many other media programs, and now welcomes families from across the Midwest and across the nation. Time in this beautiful setting, together with other families in similar circumstances, provides families a unique opportunity to reflect and connect. Professional grief counselors, a wealth of holistic healing experiences, and shared activities also help families heal, renew, and re-engage with life despite the struggles. More than 314 volunteers and a wide array of generous donors provide support to Faith's Lodge to serve approximately 990 individuals from 220 families each year. Faith's Lodge will operate its 2012 programs with a budget of \$775,000.

Faith's Lodge History:

Faith's Lodge was established in 2007 by a bereaved Twin Cities couple in remembrance of their daughter Faith. Since then, the beautiful Faith's Lodge has nurtured over 850 families who are enduring challenges they never imagined. Rooted in personal experience, Faith's Lodge combines parent-to-parent compassion together with professional grief counseling, holistic therapeutic experiences, and fun group activities to help families heal during a time set apart from daily life.

Faith's Lodge Mission and Goals:

The mission of Faith's Lodge is to provide a place where parents and families facing the serious illness or loss of a child can retreat to reflect on the past, renew strength for the present and build hope for the future.

Our vision is that by gathering families in similar circumstances together with support, we can create transformative opportunities for healing and new hope to grow.

Our goals are to help families through their darkest hours by creating a nurturing setting together with other parents who have experienced the same kind of tragedy or who live with the same struggles. Set apart from daily life and from others who may not understand exactly what they are going through, and nourished by the beautiful and welcoming environment, families feel emotionally safe and supported to reflect, renew, and emerge with new strength and hope.

Faith's Lodge Programs:

Faith's Lodge offers an array of programs serving parents and families of children who have recently lost a child (age 19 or younger), or who have a child with a life-limiting illness:

- **Bereaved Parents Retreats** support individuals and couples who have lost their only child. Specific weeks address infant loss, miscarriage, loss of an older child, and needs of moms/dads.
- **Bereaved Families Retreats** support whole families who have lost one of their children. Activities help address the needs of both parents and siblings and help bring the surviving family members together.
- **Families with Seriously Ill Children Retreats** provide a respite of "normality" and connection for the whole family free of treatments and hospitals, as well as the chance to connect with other families who understand what the family is going through.
- **Custom Retreats**, whether planned by disease- or circumstance-specific groups or simply planned by each family during "open" weeks in the calendar let families use Faith's Lodge in the way that best helps them heal.

Faith's Lodge Partnerships and Collaborations:

Faith's Lodge partners with several different stakeholder groups to engage and serve families. Health care partners including Fairview Health Systems and mental health providers provide patient referrals. Nonprofits with related missions, including Ronald McDonald House Charities and various grief and loss groups also refer families to Faith's Lodge, and we refer families to them for ongoing support. Many family foundations and small non-profits (often established in memory of a child) leverage their impact by fundraising for expanded facilities, services and scholarships at Faith's Lodge. Membership with Community Health Charities Minnesota helps us connect with employee charitable giving and volunteer programs.

Finally, outreach to parent groups supporting a broad array of disease or circumstance-specific issues brings more families to Faith's Lodge and empowers them to customize their own programming. Faith's Lodge is accredited by the Charities Review Council and meets all standards.

Faith's Lodge Board, Staff and Volunteers:

Faith's Lodge is governed by a ten-member Board of Directors chaired by parent and co-founder Mark Lacek. The Board is responsible to preserve the mission and financial well-being

of Faith's Lodge. Daily operations are managed by a small staff including an executive director, lodge operations manager, a special events and partnerships coordinator, and an office administrator. Contracts for grief counseling and other professional services provide additional support. Faith's Lodge is also honored by the support of more than 150 volunteers annually. These dedicated volunteers serve on our Family Outreach Committee, provide office coverage and landscaping help at the Lodge, collect food for the communal kitchen, and devote many hours to the annual Hope Rocks fundraising event.

The Need for Faith's Lodge:

When a child becomes seriously ill or dies, everything changes. Families endure challenges they never imagined. Some face months or years of exhaustive medical treatments, developing expertise they never thought they'd have and traveling on paths not of their choosing. They fight these battles even knowing the outcome is still likely to be terminal. Though many people may try to help, few understand, and times of respite or connection with others can be few.

For other parents, the whole fabric of their lives rips in an instant at the loss of a child due to miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death, accident, or illness. If anything, this experience can be even more isolating. Friends and relatives, jobs and daily lives continue on, but for the family, there is a gaping hole of loss. Parents must reconcile their need to grieve and honor their child's passing with their equal need to take hold of renewed hope and engagement in life. Often, they feel tremendously alone.

Pain, shock and sadness often overwhelm parents and families when a child becomes seriously ill or dies. There is no clear path to follow to return to hope and life after such a tragedy. Yet this hope and healing are essential. The consequences of unhealed emotional wounds can have lifelong implications, including the breakup of families. On the other hand, emotional healing can bring parents and families back to strength and resilience for the lives that do go on. Many families need a time set

Comments from Guests at Faith's Lodge

From those whose child is ill:

This is our second visit to Faith's Lodge since our daughter Charlotte was diagnosed with Leukemia. Charlotte loves the Lodge and talks about it at home all the time. We will always have beautiful memories of our time at this place of healing and hope. Thank you. It's a respite away from the stresses of home, treatment, etc. for all of us.

It was so wonderful to spend time with others who understand our challenges, fears, and exhaustion. Faith's Lodge is such a special place-it's so beautiful and serene. Thank you for sharing it - God bless you.

It is an incredible break and a relief to have a normal week, one without a trip to the doctor. I haven't seen my child smile like that in a long time.

And from those who have lost a child:

All the couples commented on how safe we felt. It was hard to leave, but it was wonderful to be able to share our story with other couples and to remember our son Evan throughout the days we were here.

We loved making tangible and beautiful things in honor of our son. We were able to express our emotions in a different way and leave with mementos that we will treasure forever. We are also leaving a part of ourselves and Max here through the heart stones. The activities are a great informal way to get to know others.

For the first time we could connect with other bereaved parents - and when someone would talk it was almost like they knew exactly what was in our hearts.

apart with others who have had similar experiences where they can acknowledge their grief yet still regroup and heal enough to feel that some of the weight has been lifted. They need Faith's Lodge.

Response to the Need / Program Activities:

Faith's Lodge was created to bring parents and families who have experienced the serious illness or loss of a child together to share their strength. "Time apart" at Faith's Lodge provides a special space where reflection, connection, and healing can occur. As the only retreat facility in the country specifically for families and parents experiencing the serious illness or loss of a child, Faith's Lodge is a national leader in designing healing environments and activities. Eight suites accommodate two to six people each. Key elements of the Faith's Lodge approach include:

- **Time apart.** Breaking away from normal routines and environments sets aside time for emotional healing. Families can stay from one to five nights, once a year, for up to three years as needed. "Time apart" in retreat serves as a marker and transition point in the process of grieving for struggles and renewing strength for life.
- **Nurturing, welcoming and beautiful natural setting.** Parents and families are often hurting when they come to us. The beautiful north woods setting and welcoming buildings and staff of Faith's Lodge enfold families in a feeling of being cared for as they experience the healing grace and quiet of nature.
- **Others with similar experiences.** Faith's Lodge takes great care to bring together parents and families whose experiences are as similar as possible, for example, type of illness the child is experiencing or the circumstances of the family's loss (child's age at loss, whether the parent has other children, etc.). This close matching provides the essential element of helping participants feel emotionally safe to give and receive understanding.
- **Opportunities for personal reflection and healing experiences.** Holistic healing experiences scattered throughout the building and grounds—the Path of Inspiration, the Bridge of Hope, journals in the rooms, places to display keepsakes, heart-shaped personalized stones, therapeutic art projects, tree planting, and more—provide concrete actions that honor and celebrate loved ones.
- **Grief and loss counseling.** Parents who have lost a child experience feelings of loss. Licensed mental health professionals lead groups and provide individual attention to parents and families to help them heal, build strength, and recover hope.
- **Integration into normal life.** At Faith's Lodge, participants are encouraged to prepare meals together in the communal kitchen, eat as a group, and participate in scheduled recreational activities even as they grieve. This blending can help parents and families get "unstuck" and re-emerge into life, even though their feelings of struggle or loss may go on. It helps give permission and hope that the simple joys of life with family and friends can return.

Faith's Lodge cannot cure illness, nor can we bring back loved ones. But by giving parents and families the chance to celebrate the lives in our midst and to honor those lost, Faith's Lodge can help preserve families and relationships by providing a path to hope and healing. Because of generous community support, we are able to make these experiences accessible for all by keeping costs to a recommended donation of \$35/night per family, with no one turned away due to inability to pay. A referral process through healthcare practitioners, mental health professionals, clergy and other nonprofits helps ensure that services reach parents and families most in need of the healing Faith's Lodge can provide. Few of us have walked in the shoes of families facing the serious illness or loss of a child, but all of us can help surround them with compassion, hope and healing.

Faith's Lodge is committed to ensuring that its programming accomplishes its goals of comforting and healing families and renewing a sense of hope. Exit surveys test the assumptions of our model. In 2011:

- 98% of families felt welcomed when they arrived at Faith's Lodge
- 100% felt staff was responsive and easily accessible.
- 100% said the opportunity to experience the natural surroundings of Faith's Lodge enhanced their experience.
- 95% said being around others with similar experiences was comforting.
- 100% said participation in therapeutic activities was helpful for them.
- 98% said scheduled activities provided a way to connect with others.
- 100% would recommend Faith's Lodge to other parents and families (94% said they would do this "as often as I can").
- 84% rated Faith's Lodge as a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 and 16% rated it a 4.
- 100% of participants reported feeling more hopeful after their stay – even those who rated their level of hope as a "1" upon arrival.
- 48% reported their increase in feelings of hope as a 5 on a scale of one to five and 41% gave it a 4.

Faith's Lodge truly does have expertise that no other organization has to provide retreat-based healing experiences for bereaved parents and families coping with a child's serious illness. We are able to sustain our programs through a robust mix of individual donations, fundraising events, partnerships with health care groups to sponsor their participants' visits, modest earned income from paying retreat groups, and generous corporate and foundation support.

"Thank you this stay has made us feel like we can move forward with our grieving."

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Jadin Bragg

Boulay, Heutmaker, Zibell & Co.

Dr. Elizabeth Fazendin

VA Medical Center

Steve Helland

Fredrikson & Byron

Kristin Pardue

Reve Consulting

Jeff Patrias

Thomson Reuters

Tanya Turner

Carlson Marketing, a division of Groupe Aeroplan

Dr. Robert Wieland

Allina Health System

Elizabeth Costello

Costello-Communications

"I feel like what the storm did to the area around the Lodge is a perfect metaphor for what loss does to our lives. All around us it seems like everything is broken, and we are left standing, like the lodge. We are to pick up the pieces and rebuild out new normal. There are still many beautiful things around us."

Administrative Staff:

Anna Stier - Executive Director - (Jan. 1, 2011 to June 1, 2011)

Jackie Lee Stone - Interim Executive Director/Partnership & Event Coordinator
(March 21, 2011 to Dec. 1, 2011)

Curt Peterson - Interim Executive Director - (Dec. 1, 2011 to September 1, 2012)

Evelyn Nyberg - Manager of Operations

Marquetta Nickols - Office Administrator

Family Grief Counselors:

Karen Peterson

Dianna Diers

Linda Lehmann

Night and Weekend Managers:

Courtney Bares

Carol Borman
 Jane Swenson
 Marlene Black
 Amy Belland
 Kate Blochinger
 Rachel Larson
 Anna Winter

House Keeping Staff:

Sarah Nyberg
 Melissa Gustavson
 Shirley Zajac

Landscaping and Maintenance:

Greg McIntyre
 Amy Belland

“Faith’s Lodge is awesome, from the décor to all the accoutrements in the rooms. We feel very privileged to have met everyone and to have been part of each others experiences.”

“Coming to Faith’s Lodge is like Heaven on Earth for us ~ an opportunity to be close to our precious angel daughter. This was our 2nd time here and was equally as great as our first”

Statement of Financial Position

Year ending December 31	2011	2010
Assets		
Current Assets		
• Cash and Cash Equivalentts	358,890	177,590
• Pledges/Grants Receivables	<u>20,150</u>	<u>38,250</u>
Total Current Assets	379,040	215,840
Other Assets		
• Pledges/Grants Receivables	38,050	43,300
• Property/Equipment	<u>2,656,565</u>	<u>2,753,719</u>
Total Other Assets	<u>2,694,615</u>	<u>2,797,019</u>
Total Assets	3,073,655	3,012,859

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current liabilities		
• Accounts payable	8,584	9,148
• Accrued expenses	8,290	14,160
• Debt- current	<u>162,600</u>	<u>55,600</u>
Total Current liabilities	179,474	78,908
Long term liabilities		
• Debt, net of current portion	<u>1,749,267</u>	<u>1,912,589</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>1,928,741</u>	<u>1,991,497</u>
Net Assets		
• Unrestricted Net Assets	1,059,014	914,812
• Temporarily restricted net assets	<u>85,900</u>	<u>106,550</u>
Total net Assets	<u>1,144,914</u>	<u>1,021,362</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u>3,073,655</u>	<u>3,012,859</u>

Statement of Activities

<i>Year ending December 31</i>	2011	2010
<u>Support and Revenues</u>		
Contributions	385,150	351,104
Special events and other	<u>265,513</u>	<u>181,935</u>
Total Support and Revenue	650,663	533,039
<u>Expenses</u>		
Lodge and Program Services (73%)	384,791	432,973
Administration (11%)	57,982	65,243
Development (16%)	<u>84,338</u>	<u>94,898</u>
Total Expenses	527,111	593,114
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	123,552	(60,075)
Net Assets – Beginning of the year	<u>1,021,362</u>	<u>1,081,437</u>
Net Assets – End of the year	<u>1,144,914</u>	<u>1,021,362</u>