

# Lifeline



**An “AH-MAZING” Summer**  
*Thanks to You!*



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... and so much more!



Get the privilege of witnessing this every summer. God takes kids from everywhere (across America) brings them out to the middle of nowhere (Golden, Missouri) to introduce them to somebody who loves them more than anybody — Jesus Christ. This summer was no different.

It was *AH-MAZING* — full of fun and laughter, restored hearts, and transformed lives. Even when the days were long and HOT, the circumstances challenging, God was there. He always works things out for the good of those who love Him. One special group from La Habra (East Los Angeles) found His mercy at camp. Make sure to read about it on page 12.

Registrations were way up — by nearly 40%! (Mainly because we reopened KAA 1, our camp for ages 10-12, for the first time since the pandemic.)

→ We witnessed the love of Jesus to **3,751 kids and teens and 613 Kaleos from 28 states and 383 cities.**

→ Kaleos were welcomed with the newly completed Kaleo Oasis. They spent their evenings on the patio chatting, learning from each other, and singing praise songs together.

→ We continued the KAA Elite camps ... providing a structured, empowering, and encouraging time for coaches and their players.

→ We took KAA Connect “on the road” to Little Rock and Atlanta.

Altogether, camp was a *huge success*, and we are looking forward to hearing stories of the seeds planted with us bearing much fruit in the days to come!

Thank you for helping us reach our mission and vision — *to see lives and cities transformed for Christ.*



**Camp by the numbers: 3,751 campers**



# Dacari's Life-Changing Moment

Dacari, age 15, says he was “losing it back home.”

His pain was enormous, his grief, overwhelming. After losing his older brother less than a year ago, he was struggling. His entire family was struggling.

When his mom asked him if he wanted to go to church, it just “felt right” to say yes. He hadn't been in years. There, he heard about Kids Across America, and again, it just “felt right” to sign up, to maybe give himself a break from the pain of life for a week. Little did he know the break would become a *breakthrough* moment for him.

At KAA, Dacari found hope!

Dacari admits to keeping his guard up at first. His cabinmates and counselors wouldn't have it. “My cabin put me in my zone,” he explains. “They brought me out of my shell. I didn't know what to say, and I didn't know anyone. Now, I know everyone.”

Through “conversations and keeping it real,” Dacari's counselors helped him regroup and redirect his course. They impacted his heart so much.

During *Cross Talk*, Dacari gave his life to Christ. What was intended to be a week's worth of *distraction* led to this moment of total transformation. *He found Jesus!*

Dacari tells everyone ... “If you want to strengthen your faith in God and have fun while doing it, then come to KAA!”





# Global Impact

## Former Camper Now Missionary to Ethiopia

*“The vision of Kids Across America is to transform urban youth to impact their communities for Christ, but God’s vision is much grander than we can ever conceive.”*

Tesa remembers her powerful, life-transforming week of camp well! She dove into the Bible studies and prayer ... and the praise dance team. She had never worshipped with kids her age ... and she loved it! While she had a relationship with Jesus before, camp sparked a thirst for God’s Word that continued to grow.

Fast forward 15 years. Tesa earned her degree in veterinarian medicine and, while working in a vet clinic, discovered a second calling: teaching English as a second language to immigrants from Ethiopia, El Salvador, and Haiti. While in Ethiopia on a

short-term mission trip, she felt God’s tug ... she needed to be there for the long haul, to teach English and be a voice for those who do not have one.

Tesa moved to Ethiopia in 2018 to teach English. She launched her ministry *All Children Count* when public schools closed due to the pandemic, to provide children of poverty with education equality, and equity through financial assistance, tutoring services, technology integration, resources, and support.

And God is blessing her many efforts! *All Children Count* tutored 400 children and 80 teachers on ESL this past year, hosted a pop-up library, and provided clothing, shoes, backpacks, and other essentials for 60 children.

“The hope is that they see Christ in us and see the light shining through us,” explains Tesa. “We also want to see a change in the education system.”

To learn more or get involved with *All Children Count*, go to [allchildrencountinternational.com](http://allchildrencountinternational.com) and click on “get involved.”



## A God-Connection

This past winter, KAA President & CEO Randy Odom and his wife, Kelandria, traveled to Ethiopia on a mission trip. They happened to attend Tesa’s church. Because it is so unusual to encounter Americans in her remote town, Tesa approached the Odoms and introduced herself. And the common bond of Kids Across America was discovered!

This was no coincidence! “God had something in mind,” Tesa says. “It had to be something God ordained!”

Tesa has reconnected with camp. The Odoms keep in touch to encourage and pray with her, and the KAA staff organized a book drive for the pop-up library.

Over the summer, Tesa visited KAA and had the opportunity to share her story of Kingdom impact with Kaleos and counselors.

“Often in life, you stumble into a God moment,” says Randy. “That was such a moment when we met Tesa in Ethiopia. Nothing is by chance. God used this moment to remind me that while our name is Kids Across America, we have an impact across the world. We never know where these kids are going or who they are going to become to change the world. Some plant, some water, but God brings forth the increase.”

*Thanks for being part of KAA, Tesa’s story, and the lives of so many others you’ve helped transform over the years!*





# Second Year for KAA Elite

## Impacting teams for Christ

KAA Elite was held for the second amazing year this summer. KAA Elite is a special sports camp that provides a structured, empowering, and encouraging time for coaches and their teams.

Darius's football team from Dallas was eager to come again this year, because of the team bonding that took place last year. He shares ...

→ "It really brought me closer to God. Some things I thought I couldn't do I found that I could do here, and it helped me start caring about others on my team. I left as a man of God and came back [to camp this year] a man of God."

While at KAA Elite, teams lift weights, work out on the field, scrimmage, and do drills. Teams also experience some challenge courses that build stamina, mental and physical acuity, and maybe most importantly, build trust among teammates and God.

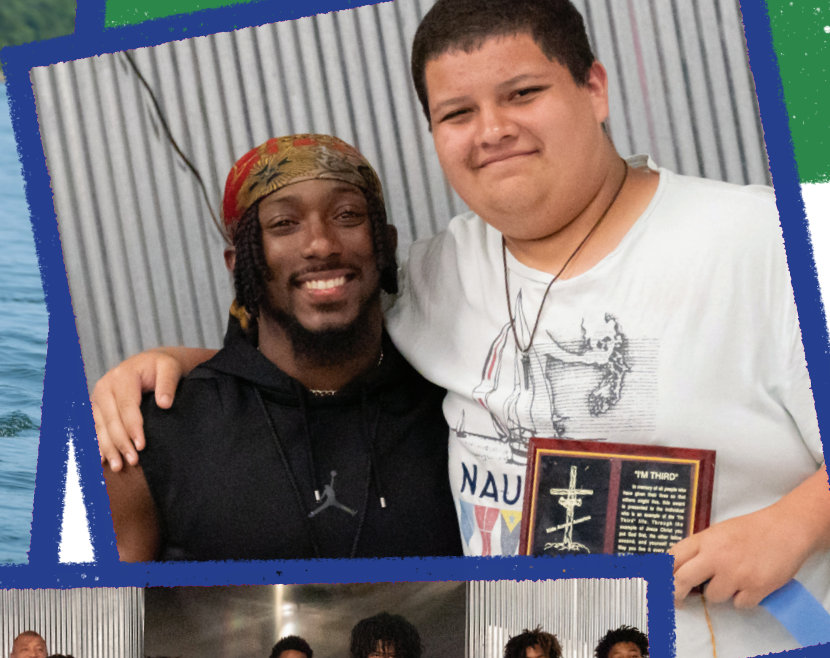
### The Navy Seal Competition

This challenging course consists of ...

- Team members are broken out into groups and move a 35 lb. rubber plate the length of the football field without allowing it to touch the ground. After the first in line hands off the plastic burden, he changes position to last, and it keeps rotating that way until the end zone is reached.
- A 200-team push-up challenge.
- A 200-team squat challenge.
- Final challenge — the team must perfectly recite a scripture verse.

When Davonta first learned what the Navy Seal Competition would entail, he wasn't sure he wanted to participate. It seemed overwhelming — too hard. He recounts, "Then, when we were going through it, we realized we could do it as a team. We could get through it together."

Thanks for empowering KAA Elite ... and the incredible ELITE athletes and coaches we inspire to new heights in sports, team building, and developing a personal relationship with Christ.







## KAA 1 Back Open for Business!

**A**h-mazing news! KAA 1, for kids 10-12 years old, was open this summer for the first time since the pandemic. A newly refreshed KAA 1 was filled with laughter, and fun, and JESUS all summer long!

- Zamareah was *super happy* that KAA 1 reopened, because it has a pool with a waterslide. She also loved archery, tubing, and kayaking, but the highlight for her was Cross Talk. *That's when she said Jesus knocked on her heart.*

"All the things we do at camp and all the work we put in is for those precious moments where young men and women get to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ," shares KAA 1 Director Dalton Moore ...

*"Our first week of camp the bell rang for 30 minutes straight [indicating decisions for Christ]! Perspective is everything. God is redeeming souls here and we got a front row seat."*



## KAA Connect Campers reaching campers ... Ah-mazing!

**K**AA, assisted by Higher Ground campers — our three-year Christian leadership camp — took KAA Connect to Little Rock and Atlanta this summer.

Connect campers experience a week of awesome activities, like a rock-climbing wall, inflatables, sports, and parties in their hometowns. They also learn camp cheers and dances, as well as have Bible study time each day.

"Connect gives kids eight hours, Monday through Friday, to just be a kid, have fun and be surrounded by encouraging and nurturing counselors," explains KAA Connect Director David Arechiga.

- In Little Rock, KAA collaborated with Step Ministries, a Christian youth mentoring ministry. The area KAA and Step targeted is known for having the highest rate of crime, fatherlessness, and children in poverty in the nation. "KAA Connect has been a catalytic event to bring and pour light to this neighborhood," says Marycarol Peterson, executive director of Step Ministries.
- Kayla, a second year HG camper, assisted with the KAA Connect in Atlanta and really loved seeing the kids grow in their understanding of God. "They learned how they can trust God in all things."



# All Things Work for the Good ...

Ministry can be messy — especially youth ministry. First, you are dealing with fallen people. Plus, you are working with young men and women who are still trying to figure things out. Satan will use every trick up his sleeve to keep them down. *But God's mercy endures.*

David Greer from La Habra, in East LA, California has been bringing kids to KAA since 2016, many of them unchurched. More than half of his group this summer had never stepped foot in a sanctuary or been exposed to the gospel.

One young man came with a huge chip on his shoulder. He resisted camp culture, was hot-tempered, and stubborn. He was having problems with other campers all week. David sat down to counsel with him, and the young man opened up ...

"I've never been to a camp," he explained. "I know it's supposed to be a Christian camp. I'm having fun, but I don't think I believe in Jesus. Why should I believe in him? My life is hard."

David listened. He prayed with the young man, asking God to reveal Himself, and shared Romans 8:28, "All things work

together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

A few hours later, that young man asked Jesus into his heart, just before being attacked by some other boys. And David reminded him again of Romans 8:28.

Fighting is taken seriously at KAA, and camp leadership immediately separated the boys involved from the rest of camp. God spoke to KAA President Randy Odom's heart. He felt called to walk with them and use camp to show them God's love, and mercy, and grace.

Camp leadership came up with a schedule for the boys from La Habra to swim, boat, use the new weight gym and more. And the counselors spent special time ministering to them, loving them, pouring scripture into them, and praying with them.

Despite Satan's attack, by the end of the week, the entire group was ready to sign up for camp next year. Before they drove out of the camp gates, the young man asked David, "*This is an example of how God works things out for the good, isn't it?*"





# Kingdom Impact



**V**ivian Fisher started bringing kids to KAA for the first time in 1997 ... and she's never stopped. Now she brings the children of the kids she first exposed to camp!

D'Shaunna Garrett came with Vivian when she was 10 years old, more than 20 years ago. Camp made such an impact on D'Shaunna's life that she now serves as a Kaleo, bringing campers to camp and serving as a mentor to them the remaining 51 weeks out of the year.

This summer was her eighth summer bringing campers. "I keep coming back because I love to bring the kids. I love what it does for them," she says.

Last year, she bonded with one young lady,

and they stayed in touch after camp, too. D'Shaunna was contacted by the authorities because this girl was displaced from her home ... and when they asked her who she wanted them to call, she told them to call her Kaleo, Miss D'Shaunna.

By the grace of God, D'Shaunna was able to go through expedited foster classes and is now fostering her camper, pouring the love of Jesus into her life!

Vivian and D'Shaunna are committed to helping young people grow in their walk with the Lord! "We want to show them, 'here's Jesus, and here we are, too,'" D'Shaunna said. Through their actions and their words, Vivian and D'Shaunna are impacting kids for Christ.



## Kaleo Oasis Welcomes Kaleos

**T**he adult leaders (Kaleos) that brought kids to camp found rest at the beautiful, brand-new Kaleo Oasis!

Three, two-story buildings situated around a central courtyard became home to more than 600 Kaleos over the summer. Each level features sleeping quarters large enough to accommodate 30 people, a large community bathroom, Kaleo shepherd's private room

with bath, and a Bible study/chat room. It's a wonderful place for Kaleos to connect, rest, pray and worship together!

Mariah Murray has been bringing campers from Louisville since 2015 and really enjoyed the new space for Kaleos. She describes the Oasis as being "like one big family reunion — people from all over fellowshiping."

Everybody congregates on the patio in the evenings for hours and it's not uncommon to hear the group singing worship music together. The new environment creates the opportunity for more camaraderie and connection than ever. "You really get to know people," Mariah shares. "You can learn from each other and then take it back home!"

*Your support for this new facility made all this possible. Thank you!*





## Alumni Weekend 2023 Nostalgic Memories

The first annual Alumni Weekend was *ah-mazing* as KAA alumni gathered, connected, and celebrated their special KAA bond!

“I knew personally that KAA had many tremendous and impactful moments for me on my journey with Jesus,” say Gladys Alexander, alumni liaison. “Lifelong friendships and conversations with the Holy Spirit are just some of the blessings that have come from my experiences. Helping to plan alumni weekend just confirmed through so many other alumni that KAA is a special place where the Lord meets you, stretches you, and reminds you just how much He loves you.”

Throughout the weekend, fulfillment and

gratitude filled the hearts of all alumni attendees. The Alumni Weekend served its purpose in rekindling old connections, fostering new friendships, and reigniting the passion we all felt during our time serving at KAA.

The memories created and the experiences shared during this unforgettable weekend will continue to inspire and motivate us to remember why Kids Across America is such a special place!



## They say the only things you can't avoid are death and taxes. But there's ONE (astonishingly simple) way you can ...

## Legacy Award 2023 “A Lifetime of Achievement”

The KAA Alumni Legacy Award is a recognition given to an individual for their significant contributions and lasting impact on Kids Across America.

This year's recipient is Stephan Moore.

“Stephan was one of the foundational leaders and forces to shape KAA,” says Randy Odom, President & CEO of KAA. “Countless leaders were molded and shaped by Stephan over the years, me included. We can still call him for wisdom, support, and dependability.”

Beyond his foundational accomplishments, Moore's true impact lies in the lives he has touched and the inspiration he has provided. A natural mentor, he has selflessly guided countless campers, counselors, and Kaleos to Christ. His genuine care and unwavering support have left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of those fortunate enough to have crossed paths with him at KAA.



By creating a will or estate plan ... and including Kids Across America!

No, it's not glamorous. Maybe it even seems like a chore or a hassle. But there's a way to ensure that you can continue to provide for your loved ones and impact youth from under-resourced communities with KAA. You may also avoid unnecessary taxes, probate fees, and other burdens for your surviving loved ones!

And the process is surprisingly fast and easy ...

You can extend your gospel legacy for generations to come, and gain the confidence of knowing your wishes are clearly expressed through your will, by ...

- Establishing a bequest of a certain amount
- Or giving a percentage of your after-tax estate.
- Simply provide your attorney instructions, our formal name (Kids Across America) and tax ID #: 83 - 1966879

For more information on these or other strategic giving options, contact Marsha Miller at 417-266-3129







## KAA 3 Update

### Campers Enjoy New Ninja Warrior Course

A Ninja Warrior Course, an updated weight room, and air conditioning in the gym were just a few of the *ah-mazing* new things at KAA 3 this summer!

KAA 3's Ninja Warrior Course includes a cargo climb, pegboards, bar hopper, climbing wall, rings, a spider wall, *and more!* Every activity featured at camp leads to a teachable moment for campers. This one is no different. Instead of one-on-one competitions, campers take on the Ninja Warrior Course as a team.

Omari says, "It was cool seeing kids encouraging other kids to keep pushing! We learned to lean on each other to get through difficult trials."

The expanded weight room was also a welcome treat for campers. For athletes on an exercise regimen, the upgraded weight room ensures they do not lose progress.

Quincy says, "I'm an athlete and I thought I was going to go this entire week without exercise," he shared. "Now I'm going to be able to go back and tell my coach I exercised all week."

Overwhelming heat will never be a distraction again now that the gym is air conditioned! This is where most of the programming for campers is held, including Cross Talk and Covenant Family talks ... and will bring JOY for years to come!

## Just What the Doctor Ordered

Because we are a bit remote, and an hour's drive from the nearest hospital, it's imperative to have a medical provider *on-site* ready to respond to any medical emergency.

Sprains, sunburns, and abrasions are some of the commonly treated maladies at our various camp health centers. Occasionally, our volunteers get to mend broken hearts, too.

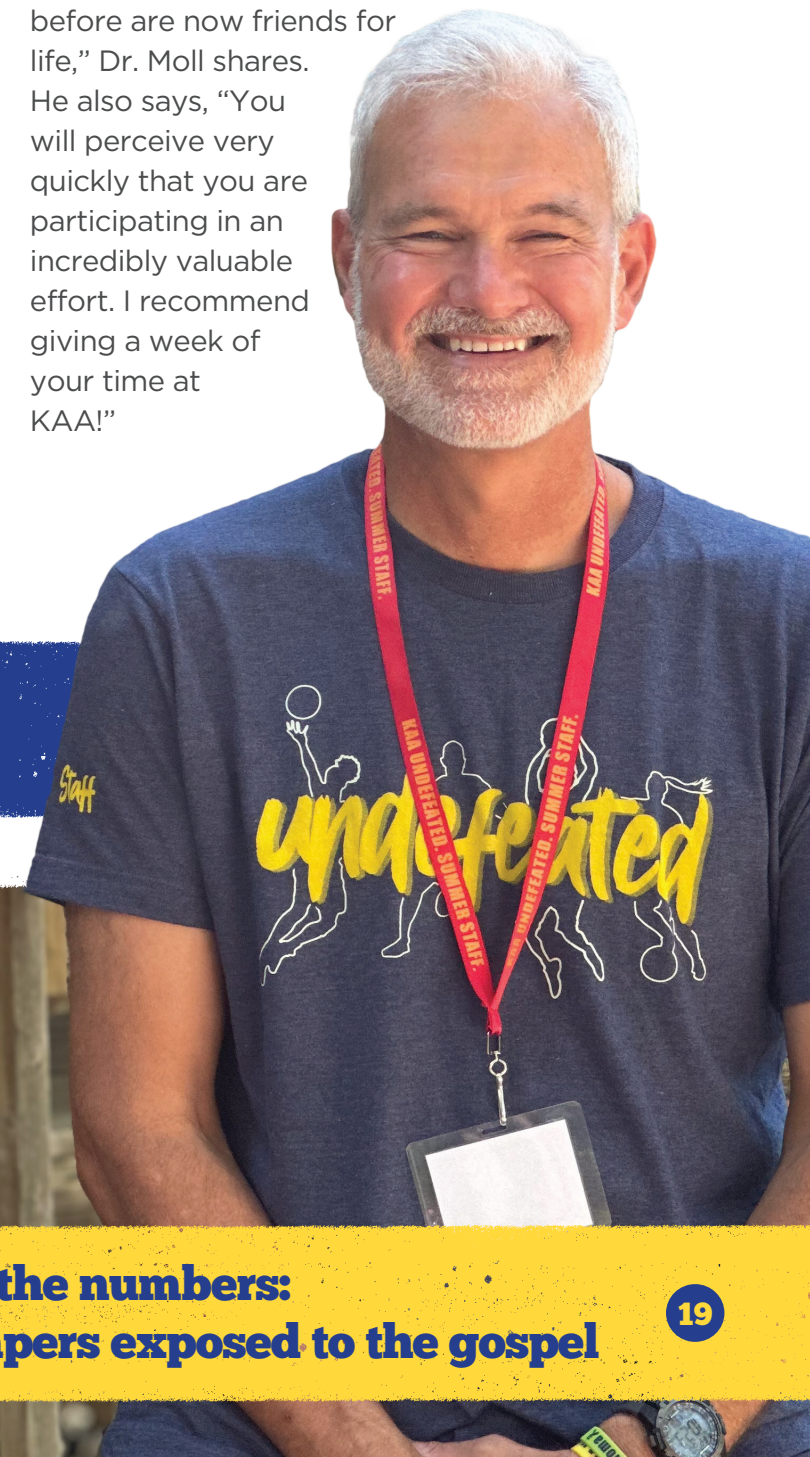
Dr. John Moll, Jr. is just one of many doctors who donate a week of time to camp. To provide a safe camp environment, KAA relies on 36 doctors, 144 nurses, and 72 volunteers to operate the camp's three health centers and care for campers, Kaleos and staff.

Dr. Moll treated a camper who had passed out from the heat. He and the staff got her rehydrated and kept her overnight in the clinic to make sure she was alright. When he checked on her the next day, she shared what was going on at home. Dr. Moll used

this opportunity to comfort her.

Being able to serve the Lord in this way was a highlight of the week for him. He was also blessed in an unexpected way. Dr. Moll met a couple of Kaleos on his morning run. They invited him to join them for Bible study on the dock. He loved it so much, he joined them for the rest of the mornings he was there! "Two guys I had never met before are now friends for life," Dr. Moll shares.

He also says, "You will perceive very quickly that you are participating in an incredibly valuable effort. I recommend giving a week of your time at KAA!"



If you would like to volunteer to serve in the Health Center next summer (2024), please contact Dave Janke at [dave@kaakamps.org](mailto:dave@kaakamps.org).





# Golf with Us...

## Great courses!

## Tremendous fellowship & fun!

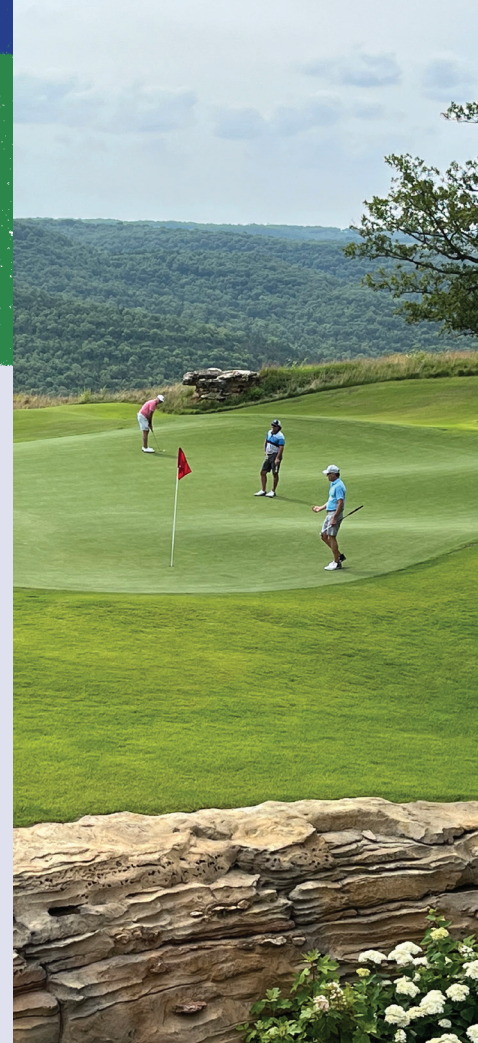
**O**ur KAA Golf Outings provide unique experiences to enjoy the game of golf on beautiful courses with other players who share your heart and want to make a difference in the lives of youth from under-resourced communities.

For more information or to participate in one or more golf outings, contact Mark Parry at 417-263-0128 or [mark@kaakamps.org](mailto:mark@kaakamps.org).

If you love golf and KAA, you are invited to join us for one or more of these phenomenal events:

**Dallas Golf Outing - Spring 2024**

**Payne Stewart Memorial/KAA Cup (Branson) - June 16-18, 2024**



## KAA Pheasant Hunt

**Y**ou are invited to join KAA Outfitters for an awe-inspiring excursion outdoors! Plan now to participate in one of our upcoming hunts — where encouraging relationships are built, and funds are raised to send campers for a life-changing week at KAA.

These events have a suggested donation of \$5,880, to fully sponsor a cabin for a week.

For questions or to book your outdoor adventure, contact Dave Janke at 417-263-1800 or visit [kaakamps.org/outfitters](http://kaakamps.org/outfitters).

Pheasant Hunting in Hanston, Kansas:

January 16-18, 2024

Arriving for dinner at 6 p.m. through lunch on January 18

February 25-27, 2024

Arriving for dinner at 6 p.m. through lunch on February 27

\*Sign up soon—each hunt only has 10 spots available.



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[kaakamps.org](http://kaakamps.org)