

# Business prospers near lake

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The Janesville Gazette Staff

NEWVILLE--Schnapps, a miniature Pomeranian, quietly checks out visitors on Judie and Sam Visconti's porch at Lakeland Camping Resort.

On the campground road in front of the trailer home, golf carts, some as noisy as motorcycles, chug by on their way to or from the camp beach on Lake Koshkonong. An hour earlier, the road was choked with the little vehicles, and with foot traffic.

The sides of the camp roads had been lined with card tables with knickknacks, craft projects and assorted other offerings. Holiday weekends during the warm months feature flea markets, and this is Sunday, July 5, one of the biggest days of the year at Lakeland Camping Resort.

Porches, Pomeranians, golf carts and flea markets? Telephones, air conditioning, television satellite dishes? Thousands packed into a couple of square miles with access to the lake and beach?

This is camping?

For increasing numbers of people from Rockford, Ill., Chicago, Milwaukee and points in between, Lakeland Camping Resort is as close as they want to come to roughing it.

"It's an hour from home," says Judie Visconti, a hairdresser from Woodstock, Ill. "We used to take a mini-motor home with friends up to the Dells. We saw this on the way up and tried it."

That was 23 years ago. The Viscontis started in a pop-up camper and now they have a trailer, with porches and air conditioning. And as they aged, they traded in their speed boat for a lumbering, comfortable pontoon boat.

And Lakeland has evolved right alongside them.

The campers, who rent spots for their trailers for the season, want to get away from city life, says John Torstveit, one of the campground partners. They want to introduce their children to a different life.

"They're out in the country; they're away from the rat race," Torstveit says, at his busy general store near the entrance to the grounds.

One Chicago man became a Lakeland renter when he realized his children had never seen a fire, Torstveit says.

"In the '70s, a study showed that resorts that would be successful would provide a country club atmosphere," Torstveit says. "The campers are middle and upper

middle class. You can tell that from their toys."

Torstveit and his partners saw the boom in upper middle class trailer living coming, even before the study he referred to. They bought the land from a farmer in the fall of 1968.

"We started from nothing 30 years ago," Torstveit says. "There were 35 heifers here, grazing on a hillside, and people said we were nuts."

The Lakeland people built the roads, planted thousands of trees and then went to RV shows in the big cities to advertise what they had done. "It has grown from a campground to a village," says Betty Edwards of Winnebago, Ill., a neighbor of the Viscontis at Lakeland for 17 years. "This wasn't developed down here at all, she says, gesturing from her chair on the Viscontis' porch.

"We come out every weekend we can," says Phillip Nafziger of Rockford. "We come out and decimate the beer population. We have boats and Sea Doos. We like to fish. Finally the white bass are coming back.

"Most of it, though, is not so much the water. We have so many good friends out here. We're a big old happy family."

Ron Adcock, a Chicago man, agrees.

"You move in, you get to know the neighbors, and all hell breaks loose," Adcock says. "It's the atmosphere. The people."

To Adcock, Lakeland feels like northern Wisconsin.

"It's basically the same," he says.

Darin and Keith Chambers, sitting in a golf cart and watching their children play in the sand and lake, agree.

"You get the same effect of getting away without the drive," Keith Chambers says.

The proximity of the lake and its size is the big attraction to Keith of Ingleside, Ill., and Darin of Wonder Lake, Ill. Their parents and another brother each have trailers at Lakeland.

"You drive up for the weekend without driving four hours," Darin says. "And this big lake, we have pontoons, waver runners, a speed boat. We wouldn't have come down here permanently if not for the size of the lake."

The Chambers can ski or boat on the lake without running out of room or driving in narrow circles. And the shallowness of the lake appeals to them, because they have small children.

"You don't have to worry about it," Darin says, sipping a beer under the golf cart awning. "Everybody watches everybody else's kid."

"It's big," says Julie Cloyd of Rockford, sitting in another golf cart with her husband, Randy.

The Cloyds are watching the busy boat launch near the swimming area.

"You can drive to the other side and be far away from everybody," she says.

The size of the lake means that even on one of the busiest days of the year, the lake doesn't look that crowded, Randy says.

The Cloyds have rented at Lakeland for 11 years. Their 19-year-old twin daughters spent the summers of their childhood at the campground. Today, the young women are at the outdoor pool with friends they made long ago.

The Cloyds use Lakeland as a base, too. Randy Cloyd took his 8-year-old son to the Vilas Zoo in Madison from the campground. The whole family embarked on a canoe-camping trip down the Wisconsin River.

The beach before the Cloyds is a scene of bikinis, bronzed flesh and beer. Little kids smeared with sunscreen cavort in the waves. The sounds of boat motors fill the air.

Judy Visconti, though, lounges in the shade on her porch with Schnapps at her feet and her friend, Betty Edwards, at her side.

"The TV," she says. "You've got to have that for a rainy day. We really don't think of this as camping. They've added so much at the store. You don't have to go to town. I have a telephone. I have a Prime Star satellite dish. I have two decks."

"It's almost like a little city now, and I'm part of it," adds another friend, Barbara Annen of Janesville, who has been coming to Lakeland for 24 years.

She wrinkles her nose as a particularly noisy golf cart grinds up the road away from the beach and toward the store, pool and tennis carts.

"But some of these carts have got to go."

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