

Abusive priests had ties to summer camp



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USA TODAY NETWORK

The Outpost was a popular summer camp.

Run by the Evansville Diocese, it drew hordes of Catholic kids in fifth to eighth grades who wanted to go boating or fishing or hiking on 33 lush acres outside Lincoln State Park in Spencer County.

But it also attracted predator priests.

On Feb. 22, the diocese released the names of clergy who have been “credibly accused” of sexual misconduct against minors. There were 12 names in all. Two of them – John Breidenbach and Mark Kurzendoerfer – worked with the camp, while a third – Michael Allen – reportedly had sexual encounters with an under-aged boy there.

The Rev. David Fleck coordinated some aspects of the camp in his post as vocations director. He’s also been accused of misconduct, but his case is still winding through the diocese. He’s denied the charges.

Breidenbach

Breidenbach served as co-director of The Outpost in 1992, according to archives of diocese newspaper The Message. That year drew a record 340 campers.

In a July 10, 1992, story, Breidenbach said it was his job as director to make sure every child was taking part in camp activities. He sought out loners, he said. “Someone with a problem or in pain.”

He worked there at least two other summers, according to The Message. He would sometimes go to

diocese schools to recruit campers.

Breidenbach admitted to sexually abusing minors “prior to his ordination as a deacon,” the Feb. 22 release stated. He was removed from public ministry in 2014.

Kurzendoerfer

As part of the vocations team, Kurzendoerfer directed a “peer ministry” weekend at The Outpost in 1989. It was directed toward kids and young adults who might be interested in serving the church, according to The Message archives.

He also helped coordinate summer programs for seminarians working toward the priesthood, as well as overseeing “confirmation retreats” for young people at Harmonie State Park.

The Feb. 22 release listed four credible accusations against Kurzendoerfer, two of which he admitted to. He was kicked out of public ministry in 2002.

Allen

1975 was a terrible turning point.

That’s when Michael Allen’s victim said the relationship between he and the longtime Evansville priest turned abusive.

He and Allen had a sexual encounter at The Outpost that summer. The abuse continued for another year, he told the Courier & Press in 2002.

The victim eventually went public with the allegations, and Allen admitted to the abuse in 2002. Then-Bishop Gerald Gettelfinger initially stuck by the priest anyway, making sure he remained pastor at St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Celestine.

The diocese was forced to remove him from the pulpit later that year, when the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a “zero-tolerance” policy for abusive priests in active ministry.

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