

At KWE, our most important responsibility is safeguarding the well-being of our campers and students. As confident as we are in our current leadership and the policies and procedures in place to protect the children in our care, there are important and painful lessons to be learned from the past.

On two separate occasions over the past six years, the Board of Trustees has retained outside investigators to help shed light on historical sexual abuse at Kieve. In 2017, we retained the law firm of Drummond Woodsum to help us identify past incidents of sexual misconduct. In early 2023, we retained the law firm of Bernstein Shur to conduct a second and more in-depth investigation focused on a particular former employee, Bill McCook, after learning this former employee was implicated in numerous abuse reports from the 1960s and 1970s and was present at Kieve for decades thereafter.

We embarked on this second investigation for two reasons. First, we sought to understand the full scope of McCook's abuse and to support any victim-survivors who elected to come forward. Second, we sought to identify the conditions and structures that enabled McCook—a known child abuser—to remain a part of the Kieve community for so long, so we could address those issues and prevent them from ever reoccurring.

To help us achieve this second goal, we engaged child safeguarding expert Wolowitz Consulting to evaluate KWE's policies, procedures, leadership and governance structures over time, to help us identify why McCook was not removed from the KWE community earlier, and to recommend appropriate training or changes to KWE's policies and procedures.

Bernstein Shur's investigation was extremely thorough, involving interviews of approximately 50 individuals and the review of hundreds of thousands of pages of written materials. While the answers to some questions may never be known due to the passage of time and inability to interview witnesses who are now deceased, we have significantly more information now than we had in January of 2023. Consistent with our commitment to the community at the outset of this investigation, we are now sharing what we have learned.

Bill McCook is a serial predator who sexually abused multiple boys between the ages of 10 and 14 in the 1960s and 1970s. As explained below, there were individuals affiliated with Kieve over time who knew that McCook presented a risk to the children entrusted to our care and there were others who should have been informed. None took timely steps to fully sever his relationship with Kieve.

McCook's Presence at Kieve Over Time

McCook attended Kieve as a camper from 1952 to 1955 before becoming a Kieve counselor in 1956. KWE records reflect that McCook served on the Kieve staff from 1956 to 1960, 1963 to 1965, 1968 to 1970, and 1975 to 1976. McCook purchased land from Kieve and built a home adjacent to the Kieve campus in 1976.

Prior to Bernstein Shur's investigation, we received information that McCook was promptly terminated upon leadership's receipt of a first-hand sexual abuse report from a camper in the summer of 1976. Today, we know that Kieve leadership likely learned of two separate incidents

of sexual abuse involving McCook in the summer of 1976; and McCook was not immediately fired. Rather, the evidence suggests McCook remained at camp through the conclusion of the 1976 summer season. Though McCook never returned to KWE in a paid employment capacity after 1976, he continued to volunteer in various capacities for the next 30 years.

Between 1977 and 1996, McCook traveled away from Maine frequently during the summers and was therefore in the proximity of camp only intermittently. When at his home next to camp, however, he was welcomed as a neighbor, alumni, and volunteer. In 1996, McCook lost his long-time job as a teacher at the Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts, where he had been spending the non-summer months. At this time, McCook took up year-round residence at his home next to camp and assumed a more official and active volunteer role at Kieve that lasted until 2007.

Between 1996 and 2007, McCook was involved in many of the camp's day-to-day operations and was a regular presence at camp during the summer. He supported a wide range of administrative tasks, including maintaining the website, providing IT assistance, assisting with staff orientation, drafting manuals, serving as the point of contact for cottage rentals, and managing the "campermail" e-mail account. He also performed camper-facing functions and spent time with or near campers, including photographing camper activities and camp-related events, driving campers to and from wilderness trips in KWE vehicles, parking his camper at the Bremen property during junior camper overnight trips, and entertaining campers with his guitar, ghost stories, and tarot card readings.

In 2007, KWE took steps to restrict McCook's volunteer activities and presence on campus, though his relationship with KWE continued. Between 2007 and his 2016 admission to a retirement community, McCook continued to perform administrative tasks for Kieve leadership and was present on KWE property for 9/11 Family Camp, alumni reunions, and to assist with events at the Kennedy Learning Center.

Information Known or Available to Kieve Over Time

Kieve's Director at the time, Dick Kennedy, was made aware of McCook's abuse of a camper or campers in 1976. The investigator identified a handful of other people whom Dick Kennedy directly informed of McCook's 1976 abuse at Kieve. These individuals were KWE Board members or Directors. The investigation also revealed that Dick Kennedy and some of the individuals he told about the abuse continued to maintain a personal relationship with McCook thereafter. Despite this knowledge of McCook's past misconduct at Kieve, no steps were taken to prevent McCook from returning to Kieve in an official volunteer capacity between 1976 and 2007.

In 1991, Dick Kennedy officially stepped down as Director and his son, Henry Kennedy, assumed leadership of the camp, though his father continued to live and be present at camp until his death in 2016. Dick Kennedy and Henry Kennedy knew of McCook's separation from Middlesex in 1996. Dick Kennedy passed away in 2016 and it is therefore unknown whether he was aware of the reasons for this separation. Henry Kennedy reports that, if his father knew the reasons, he did not share them with him. Henry Kennedy reports he assumed McCook had been

fired from Middlesex for some type of misconduct, possibly involving a student. He also reports that Dick Kennedy never shared with him the fact that McCook had abused a camper or campers at Kieve in 1976.

Actual knowledge of McCook's 1976 sexual abuse and employment separation at Kieve appears to have been held by only a few individuals. While not universally known amongst the KWE community, the investigation revealed that when McCook volunteered in the 1990s and 2000s, a number of Board members, staff and even campers heard rumors or speculation suggesting that McCook was a child molester.

In 2007, Henry Kennedy and the then Chair of the Board took steps to restrict McCook's volunteer activities after they received a credible report that McCook had abused a non-camper on Louds Island in the 1970s. As noted above, however, McCook continued to provide administrative support to leadership, attended alumni and social gatherings, and was occasionally seen on campus thereafter. Some members of the Kieve community expressed concern about McCook's continued involvement with the camp after 2007, however limited and apparently removed from campers.

Known Victim-Survivors

At this time, KWE believes that McCook sexually abused at least ten individuals in the 1960s and 1970s, when they were children. These victim-survivors include five Kieve campers and five non-campers, and the known abuse occurred both on and off camp property. The known victim-survivors were between the ages of 10 and 14 at the time of the abuse, and many of them experienced similar transgressions, including the ruse of a back massage, genital fondling over and under clothing, and other sexualized conduct. All instances of known or reasonably suspected abuse have been reported to the appropriate authorities.

In addition to the ten victim-survivors described above, the investigation revealed several third-hand reports of suspected abuse that could not be confirmed. These third-hand reports were also limited to the 1960s and 1970s. As explained above, McCook was present at or near Kieve until 2016. The investigation did not uncover any incidents of abuse after the 1970s, however.

Individual and Systemic Failures

McCook's continued affiliation with the camp after individuals in leadership at KWE were aware of his abuse cannot be tied to any one failure or any one point in time. Rather, the investigation revealed repeated failures to communicate knowledge of the risk and failures to restrict McCook's access to the camp over a period of more than thirty years.

While we are not aware of any abuse by McCook occurring after the 1970s, there were members of leadership over time who had direct knowledge that McCook abused one or more children and there were others who should have been informed that he presented a risk. These individuals ought to have taken swift and unequivocal action to ban McCook from the premises and sever his relationship with Kieve, but they did not.

KWE has been governed by a Board of Trustees since its transition from family-owned to a non-profit organization in 1974. The Board had inadequate governance and administrative structures, did not exercise sufficiently independent oversight, and at times failed to identify and eliminate conflicts of interest. Consequently, there was no procedure to ensure that information about McCook's abuse would be documented and available to future camp leaders, and no process for ensuring that such information was reported to the Board in a timely and transparent manner.

Critical information about a child abuser was neither documented nor formally transmitted to the Board as a whole or over time, but rather held by a small group of individuals, many of whom had personal connections with each other and with McCook. These systemic and individual failures of leadership we have identified made it possible for McCook to stay involved in the camp for years after the first incidents of abuse were reported to camp leadership.

Actions Taken, Recommended, and Underway

In 2021, prior to this investigation, KWE made governance-related changes, which have collectively served to facilitate key information sharing, including information about safety risks. They have also strengthened the Board's role of oversight. For example, the Board increased the number of meetings from two to four per year and reconstituted its committee structure, eliminating the Executive Committee. To ensure the organization benefits from fresh views and perspectives over time, the Board reinstated term limits and has applied a more robust process to the recruitment and orientation of new Board members.

From an operations perspective, KWE has long employed rigorous screening and selection procedures—*e.g.* criminal background checks, personal interviews, reference checks—designed to identify and eliminate consideration of applicants for employment who are at risk to abuse. Standing alone, however, screening and selection procedures are insufficient. During this investigation, KWE worked closely with David Wolowitz, an expert in youth-serving organizations' abuse prevention and response measures, to assess and improve upon our policies, training, and internal and external reporting procedures. Mr. Wolowitz made a series of relevant recommendations, described below, which we have implemented.

Consistent with our expert's recommendation, we crafted and adopted [Staff Standards of Behavior](#), which govern all interactions between adults and children at KWE, whatever the context. These standards emphasize the importance of adults maintaining clear and appropriate roles, setting and promoting awareness of appropriate boundaries, using their authority to promote healthy child development, and holding themselves and others accountable for compliance with the standards. These standards are more than a policy; they are a lens through which we view all adult / child interactions and the language we now use to educate staff and to address inappropriate or harmful behavior before it crosses the line into abuse.

KWE takes its mandatory reporting obligations very seriously and has long trained staff to do the same. The goal, however, is to prevent abuse in the first place. To that end, we have expanded our staff training and made several relevant changes to our Employee Handbook, requiring employees to report not only suspected abuse and neglect but any behaviors or practices that deviate from KWE's Staff Standards of Behavior, and emphasizing clear and well-defined

reporting structures. We have also standardized our record-keeping and Board reporting practices, ensuring allegations and suspicions of child abuse and the organization's response are both recorded and tracked in a form accessible to future administrators as well as conveyed to the Board of Trustees.

Policies, procedures, and training, while critical, are only as effective as organizational culture demands. KWE's leadership team and the Board of Trustees are wholly committed to continuous improvement and to maintaining a culture that values the healthy development and safety of youth participants above all else.