

# 40 years of Camp Dawson



By Jacob Lindsey

IN JULY 1981, CAMP DAWSON WAS FOUNDED UNDER DR. EDGAR M. ARENDALL, FORMER SENIOR PASTOR AT DAWSON.



The camp was originally a horse farm owned by a young Irish couple. There were no trees on the property, just a large open piece of land that was fenced in. There was also a house with five-bedrooms, a pool, and a barn. Around 1975, the owner of the farm inherited a large amount of wealth and a castle in Ireland. Upon accepting the inheritance, the owner and his wife separated. She kept the farm while he moved to Ireland, but soon she decided to sell the property. Luckily, some of Dawson's church members knew that Dr. Arendall had always envisioned a large church camp where events and gatherings could take place.

Dr. Arendall, along with several deacons and their wives, traveled to Montevallo to view the camp after learning that it was for sale. After inspection, the group agreed that this would be a great location for Camp Dawson. On March 23, 1981, an anonymous donor gave a generous gift to purchase the property for Dawson. Years later, it was brought to light that the donors were Neal and Kitty Newell. They were also the ones who originally found the property and saw its future possibilities for ministry.

After acquiring the property, hard work began under the supervision of Bob Gladney, who then served on Dawson's staff as the Recreation Minister and then later as the Business Administrator. A team of volunteers from the church went to work planting 24,000 pine trees, renovating the house which would become the lodge, and turning rooms into bunkhouses. They added the big room, built the pavilion, filled in the original swimming pool to make a shallow one, and then dug a new deeper pool.

Since the original renovations, several repairs and updates have taken place at the camp. In 2018, Dawson member Grant Langston restored a nature trail at the camp for his Eagle Scout Project. The trail was paved with gravel, signs were placed with Scripture and directions, and benches were made and installed. The building of this trail has created a space for individuals to rest and to spiritually rejuvenate, and where Grant says, "You can be alone with your thoughts and God."

Since its founding, Camp Dawson has been used and loved by many families and groups, as well as countless outside organizations. Thousands of people of all ages have reaped the benefits from the camp over the past 40 years. From Life Groups and Ministry Retreats to Family Reunions, to summer Day Camps, Camp Dawson has been a place for life change and renewal. Today, Camp Dawson continues to be used as a ministry tool for the Dawson Family of Faith. Here's to another forty years!

If you would like to learn more about what Camp Dawson has to offer, please visit [dawsonchurch.org/campdawson](http://dawsonchurch.org/campdawson).



**Jacob Lindsey** is Dawson's Communications and Creative BETA Intern. He is currently enrolled at Samford University pursuing a degree in Journalism Mass Communication. Jacob has a passion for all things behind the camera and getting a complete story told through visual and written media.



**Phillip Lucas**, the camp caretaker, said that he has seen God move through groups at the camp over the 22 years he has been there. He looks forward to seeing all of the people who visit and catching sight of God blessing them all.