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## **Chisago City buys former youth camp**

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By: Kevin Giles

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Chisago City bought a former Camp Fire youth camp Monday, nearly three years after it went on the market.

The 86-year-old Camp Ojiketa, on the shore of Green Lake, will become a regional park after the city completes a plan for its use. The city worked with Trust for Public Lands (TPL) and the Ojiketa Preservation Society -- hundreds of former campers who spent summers at the 70-acre property -- to raise \$3.8 million to buy the land and dozens of cabins and other buildings.

"I'm just like over the moon," Doris Zacho, Chisago City's parks programmer, said of the purchase. "It's a good Christmas present for us, that's for sure."

The park will open formally in about a year, she said.

Camp Fire USA no longer could afford to operate and maintain the camp. Buying the property, however, had its challenges as several developers expressed interest in buying it, and vandals ransacked some of its quaint log buildings in July. But the momentum toward preserving Ojiketa as a park -- once considered a pipedream -- built after the TPL arranged a purchase agreement, Chisago City contributed \$1.5 million and hundreds of former campers dug deep into their pockets.

"Ojiketa will never be a summer camp again but it will live on as a park that through educational nature and outdoor experiences will continue to influence kids for years to come," Preservation Society leader Judy Montgomery told members in an e-mail Monday. "The Ojiketa legacy lives on."

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