

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs):

Q: Did Joe White and Kanakuk leaders receive reports of Pete Newman’s predatory behavior prior to Newman’s Spring 2009 confession regarding the sexual abuse of multiple children?

A: Yes. There were several concerned camper and community parents who reported Newman’s hot tub Bible studies with children (Even Katie Newman, wife of Pete Newman, [expressed concern](#) about this to Joe White), nude four-wheeling with boys, “streaking,” nude swimming with boys and nude basketball with boys—all activities that qualify as child sexual abuse by definition and all terminable and reportable offenses. Newman was put on probation as a result of his pattern of predatory behavior and abuse, documented in this [2003 disciplinary action](#).

Q: Did the [2003 disciplinary action](#) that Newman agreed to include language around not being naked with children?

A: Yes. It explicitly stated:

- “Never spend the night alone with a child;”
- “Never suggest or be involved with any sexual or nude behavior;”
- “Never touch a child in a way that might be perceived as sexual in nature;”
- “No sleepovers;” and,
- “No further visits from out-of-state-kids,”

among other appalling recommendations that are very detailed and would seem necessary only to enact with an employee who had specifically breached said rules or behavioral standards.

Q: Has there been documented abuse at Kanakuk since Newman?

A: Yes. Two years after Newman’s confession (and after the implementation of the “[Kanakuk Child Protection Plan](#)”), [Lee Bradberry](#) was charged with (and convicted of) multiple counts of child sexual abuse at Kanakuk Kamps. Ed Ringheim, a Kanakuk bus chaperone and KLIFE Orlando leader, was [indicted in 2011](#), coinciding with the Newman and Bradberry cases coming to light. Since FactsAboutKanakuk.com launched in 2021, we have received over **190 allegations** of Kanakuk-affiliated abuse against **57 unique perpetrators** ([10 formally charged or convicted](#)), dating from the 1950s to today. Some victims report abuse by more than one perpetrator. [USA Today](#) exposed decades of abuse at Kanakuk, with sources claiming mishandled assault incidents as recently as 2017. For a condensed “Timeline of Known Abusers,” click [here](#).

Q: Was Pete Newman the first child abuser at Kanakuk?

A: No. Pete Newman abused children throughout his tenure at Kanakuk from 1996-2009, where he began as a counselor and was ultimately promoted to Director of K-Kountry by 2005. However, Newman was neither the first nor the last Kanakuk affiliate [known to abuse kids](#). Prior to Bradberry, Newman, and Ringheim, Chuck Price and Corbie Dale Grimes had been terminated from Kanakuk for “inappropriate behavior” with minors in the 1980s/1990s. Kris Cooper testified in Grimes’ case to confirm that Grimes was released from Kanakuk for

“inappropriate behavior.” A victim of former Kanakuk counselor Paul Green came forward with his story of abuse in the 1990s in [this article](#). In 2000, Joe White’s private plane pilot, [Robert John Morgan](#), was indicted on charges of sodomy of a minor. [Paul Kerr](#) worked at Kanakuk from 1998-2005, and victims have now alleged he abused boys in his cabin, although he wasn’t arrested until 2011 for crimes at a daycare. These are just a few examples of [known abusers](#) affiliated with Kanakuk before, during, and after Newman’s tenure, and more victims continue to come forward regularly with additional allegations and news of associated arrests.

Q: Was Newman promoted *after* Joe White and Kanakuk leaders were made aware that he had gone nude four-wheeling with boys, “streaking,” nude swimming and played nude basketball with boys?

A: Yes. He was promoted from Father-Son Retreat Leader and Assistant Director of K-Kountry to Director of K-Kountry in 2005 *after* leadership received reports about all of the above activities that qualify as child sexual abuse by definition and are all terminable and reportable offenses. Newman’s direct supervisor, Will Cunningham, recommended his termination in 2003 (as sworn in [this affidavit](#)), but that was overruled by Joe White, who continued promoting Newman internally and externally until Newman’s written confession to Joe White in Spring 2009.

Q: Was anyone fired as a result of Pete Newman’s crimes against children? Does the White family still control the camp?

A: No one was terminated as a result of Newman’s arrest or conviction, despite dozens of negligence and fraud lawsuits against Kanakuk and its leadership. Joe White remains the CEO and Board Chair of Kanakuk Ministries to this day (which was restructured as a “church” in 2016). His wife, Debbie-Jo White, remains Vice President of the Board, and their son, Cooper White, is on the Board of Directors as well. Daughter Jamie Jo White Braner Johnson has served as the Director of Alumni Engagement for Kanakuk, since her camp, K-Colorado (later rebranded “Kivu”), closed. A [MinistryWatch article](#) highlights the White family’s “suspicious pattern of self-dealing.” Doug Goodwin (formerly Executive Director) is now President and COO. Several Kanakuk leaders, including Joe White and Doug Goodwin, were made aware of Newman’s patterns of nudity with children, yet they promoted him up the ranks and neglected to share warnings with parents regardless. Some executives involved in the Newman situation left Kanakuk for other jobs, but none were terminated due to Newman’s known misconduct.

Q: Was Newman given *more* access to children after Joe White and Kanakuk leaders were made aware that he had gone nude four-wheeling with boys, “streaking,” nude swimming and played nude basketball with boys?

A: Yes. Not only was Newman promoted to Director of K-Kountry in 2005, he was also allowed to lead para-ministry Bible studies, encouraged to stay with camp families around the country during off-season, “Winter Trail” visits, host boys in his home on weekends with Joe White’s blessing, and was promoted as a leader on Kanakuk International mission trips to China, Haiti, and other locations abroad, where it is [alleged he created child sexual abuse material](#) (“CSAM”)

of his victims. Parents were never informed by Kanakuk leaders of Newman's documented probation for nudity with children. Only the families and victims ("John Does") who entered civil litigation against Kanakuk could gain subpoena access to Newman's employment files and [hear leadership's testimony](#) in legal depositions (which are undertaken under oath). Facts About Kanakuk has made the truth [available to the public](#), as more and more victims come forward with their stories and evidence.

Q: Did Kanakuk and Joe White have child sexual abuse victims sign NDAs?

A: Yes. Although Kanakuk denied the practice of silencing victims in civil litigation, there is a plethora of evidence to the contrary. Once [survivors spoke out](#) to CBS about being silenced with NDAs, Kanakuk changed their position to state that yes, the NDAs exist but only at the request of plaintiffs. This was also untrue, so [survivors continued to speak out](#) about the misuse of NDAs against them as child sexual abuse survivors, which is [institutional abuse](#). Finally, after more media attention, and the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) naming Kanakuk Kamps to their ["Dirty Dozen" list](#), Kanakuk [acknowledged their use of NDAs](#) against child sexual abuse survivors, yet put the onus on their insurance companies, once again deflecting responsibility. One family [refused to sign the NDA](#) clause in their settlement agreement, so Kanakuk tried to sanction them (costing the victim family an additional \$40,000 in legal fees and exhibiting the forceful tactics of Kanakuk and its agents to enforce silence). An unknown number of victims who survived horrific and countless crimes as children remain under Kanakuk NDAs with no relief. Kanakuk put another Newman victim under an NDA as recently as **January 2023**, which they claim was a "clerical error" on Kanakuk's end. The settlement offers victims have received, some as low as just a few thousand dollars, are nominal compared to the lifelong cost of trauma and necessary therapies. Many families feel forced to accept these "deals" to move on and avoid the emotional toll of a trial. Some articles may lead readers to assume victims are getting [\\$20 million settlements](#), but those are default judgements and not payable. A [petition for the release of NDAs](#) has garnered more than 26,000 signatures and a [VICE News documentary](#) on the abuse and NDAs [won an Emmy](#) in 2022, bringing even more credibility to the voices of survivors.

Q: Did Joe White speak and write about teen purity, masturbation and other sexual topics?

A: Yes. For decades, Joe White has aggressively [promoted himself](#) as "America's expert on raising godly teenagers." His books, mostly published by Focus on the Family, promote themes about teen purity and sex. Titles include *Pure Excitement*, *Passionate Love*, and *Irresistible Love*. He has written and spoken about praying over female sexual assault victims to restore their purity, among other topics such as masturbation and teen dating. Although Joe White is not a licensed counselor, he has historically invited private sessions with children and teens to discuss these intimate matters, and when abuse is disclosed (according to those involved) it goes unreported. Christian celebrities such as Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Lecrae, Tim Tebow, Ted Cunningham and Dr. Gary Smalley have written forewords or co-authored books with Joe White, although none of them or their teams have publicly revoked or commented on their affiliations, despite national media attention over the last two years exposing [decades of abuse at Kanakuk](#).

Q: Is it true that Joe White harassed victims to the point of one family needing to file a federal restraining order against him?

A: Yes, multiple victims and their families have reported receiving lavish gifts from Joe White before and during litigation, including iPads, offers of trips to places like Disney World, fruit baskets, hunting trips, free camp, and even thousands of dollars in cash. Victim families describe these “gifts” as feeling like bribes or extortion. They also report receiving Kanakuk-related marketing and donation solicitations despite active and past litigation and requesting cease and desists. At one point, Joe White refused to stop contacting a minor victims directly, so one family filed a [federal restraining order](#) against him, which a judge granted.

Q: Are there abuse allegations beyond the Missouri-based Kanakuk Kamps?

A: Yes. Facts About Kanakuk has received allegations of abuse at most organizations founded by Joe White and considered a part of Kanakuk’s “[Family of Ministries](#),” including [Kids Across America](#) (KAA), [KLIFE](#), [Kanakuk Institute](#), and [Link Year](#), as well as several affiliated churches. Kanakuk claims to have a presence in over 40 international locations, including Lebanon and Haiti, and the global victim count remains unknown. Because the [average age of disclosure](#) for child sexual abuse victims is 52, many survivors may not come forward for decades, if ever. Survivors have also [testified](#) in front of legislative bodies, and at a recent hearing, one 1980s victim claimed that her abuser was terminated from Kanakuk Kamps for molestating her and another camper, only to be invited back to [Kanakuk property in 2017](#) then hired at Kanakuk affiliate, [Urban KLIFE](#) in St. Louis, where he remained until at least February 2022.

Q: Who does Joe White consider his mentors and friends?

A: Joe White writes in his book *Irresistible Love* that [his life was changed](#) at a [Bill Gothard](#) conference in 1974. Gothard was removed from the organization he founded due to sexual abuse allegations, as featured in the documentary, [Shiny Happy People](#). White has also publicly spoken about his friendship with brothers Jack and Pete Herschend, whom he says he has known “most of my life.” Joe White has referred to Jack Herschend as a “[wise older mentor](#).” Jack Herschend, also a [Kids Across America \(KAA\) Board Member](#), has been named in [lawsuits](#) related to sex crimes and a murder associated with [Lives Under Construction](#), a Christian residential facility for “troubled boys” in Stone County, Missouri. Pete Herschend, a former Missouri Board of Education member, [testified in favor](#) of a convicted sex offender in his 70s, (who was sentenced for possessing 174,000 images of “child porn,”) stating that the criminal had been his friend for 30 years and “has been changed since his arrest.” Joe White similarly testified for his private plane pilot Robert John Morgan, convicted of sodomizing a five-year-old, to be rehabilitated outside of prison (and invited him to live on Kanakuk property while awaiting trial). The [Herschend Family Foundation](#) has been a longtime donor to Kanakuk Ministries, and the Herschend brothers own [Herschend Family Entertainment](#), founded in Branson, Missouri, which runs amusement parks such as Silver Dollar City and Dollywood. Other close friends Joe White claims are [Dr. James Dobson](#) of [Focus on the Family](#) and [Dr. Gary Smalley](#) of [The Smalley Center](#), where Newman was allegedly scheduled for a psychological evaluation at one point.

Q: Is Joe White an ordained pastor, PhD, or licensed professional counselor?

A: Joe White’s only post-secondary education is an undergraduate degree in Biology from SMU ([Southern Methodist University](#)). After SMU, he was an assistant football coach at Texas A&M University before working at Kanakuk Kamps, which he assumed the helm of from his parents, Spike and Darnell White in the 1970s. Joe White has published books as [Dr. Joe White](#), although his doctorate “degrees” are honorary only, from Belhaven University in Jackson, Mississippi, and [Southwest Baptist University](#) in Bolivar, Missouri. Although he claims expertise in counseling, Joe White was never educated or licensed in that field. Kanakuk is “non-denominational;” however, White was honorarily ordained by an [SBC church](#), University Baptist Church of Fayetteville in Arkansas. The [SBC denomination](#) has a known track record of covering up child sexual abuse, as noted in [this recent investigation](#) that exposed 700 victims in the last 20 years.

Q: Are there current lawsuits against Kanakuk, or is the abuse in the past?

A: Yes. In November 2022, the [Yandell family sued Kanakuk for fraud](#), claiming that Joe White and other Kanakuk leadership lied about Newman’s known patterns of nudity with children to reach a quick settlement. The Yandell family claims they would never have agreed to the settlement for their minor child had they known the facts available today from [recent reporting](#). Due to a short civil statute of limitations in Missouri for child sexual abuse victims (Must file by age 26 against institutions and by age 31 against direct perpetrators), many survivors who have learned more about Kanakuk’s role in abuse coverups are unable to file lawsuits. [Kanakuk survivors](#) and others have joined forces with [CHILD USA Advocacy](#) to change the civil statute of limitations in Missouri and other jurisdictions so that child sexual abuse victims can have access to the courts. Until then, there is no justice or accountability available through civil litigation.

Q: Do any former Kanakuk staff support survivors?

A: Yes, multiple former Kanakuk executives and staff members have come forward to affirm and corroborate survivors’ stories, both on and off the record. Even Pete Newman’s direct supervisor, Will Cunningham, signed an affidavit in a [fraud lawsuit](#) filed against Kanakuk and Joe White in November 2022, confirming under oath that he recommended Newman’s termination in 2003 due to ongoing patterns of nudity with children.

Q: What do the Kanakuk abuse survivors want now?

A: Dozens of survivors collectively drafted a [petition](#) and [open letter to Joe White](#), requesting three things: **Admit to Known Failures; Release NDAs; and, Invite an Independent Investigation.** Survivors want to finally be seen, heard and believed, and—most of all—for the crimes and coverups they’ve endured to never happen to other children. If you are a survivor of Kanakuk abuse, you are not alone, and vetted resources are available [here](#). You can contact Facts About Kanakuk via email at info@factsaboutkanakuk.com, or submit a [Contact Form](#).

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