

Migis “Meetup” Provides Chance to Connect, Share Summer Experiences Gulick and Erler Awards also presented

Under sunny skies and filled with a spirit of collegiality and connection, 95 Maine Summer Camps members gathered for the MSC Migis Meetup on Wednesday, Sept. 20 at Migis Lodge. After social time and awards presentations, MSC members had the opportunity to attend three roundtable discussion sessions from an offering of eight different topics. They were then treated to Migis’s delectable cookout lunch at the end of the gathering.

MSC President Matt Pines and Executive Director Lucy Norvell welcomed members after forty-five minutes spent reconnecting over coffee and muffins. Attention then shifted to Awards Committee members Pam Cobb and Rich Deering. Cobb, MSC awards committee member and MYCA secretary, presented 21 certificates to camp professionals for 25+ Years of Dedication to Maine Camps. (See p.6 for list of recipients). MSC Awards Committee Chair, MSC Board Member and Past President Rich Deering then began the awards ceremony. After Kristine Snow Millard was awarded the Jack Erler Award for outstanding contributions to Maine youth camping (presented by Jack himself!), Rich Deering presented the Halsey Gulick Award to Catriona Logan Sangster. (See stories p. 6)

The Meetup, organized by the MSC Education Committee, received positive feedback, said Education Committee Chair Karen Malm. “What we wanted to do overall was to allow people to have in-person connection to really meet with colleagues, share experiences, and learn from each other,” Malm said. “A wealth of knowledge exists with camping professionals.”

Another education committee member, Catriona Sangster, said the roundtable concept was particularly timely because during this post-camp stretch “it is so important to reconnect with each other and have opportunities to talk through lived experiences. It brings a wider group of MSC to share so fluidly together,” she said.

In addition, she said, it was helpful to frame each roundtable discussion with a focus. “The way it was structured lends itself to



Many Halsey Gulick Award winners were in attendance at the Migis Meetup. From left to right, Pam Cobb, Mike Katz, Carol Sudduth, 2023 recipient Catriona Logan Sangster, Rich Deering, Lisa Tripler, Jack Erler, Mary Ellen Deschenes, and Ron Hall.



Jack Erler Award winner Kristine Snow Millard with husband Jim, Ron and Susan Hall, and Jack Erler.

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MESSAGE FROM THE MSC PRESIDENT OCTOBER 2023

This newsletter will be reaching you one week, maybe ten days, before the most summer camp “Holiday” on the calendar — Halloween.



Halloween is a big deal in our house. Costumes are planned months in advance (yours truly will be reprising his role as “Oogie Boogie” from A Nightmare Before Christmas). Decorations are taken out of storage promptly on Oct 1st, candy supplies are stockpiled for months previous. The night itself is epic. Our street flows with hundreds of trick-or-treaters, with the local police department maintaining some semblance of traffic flow on the main road. Friends come from other towns to enjoy Halloween on our street and enjoy a bowl of chili.

Why do we love Halloween so much? Because for one night, the whole town acts like they are at camp. Costumes, which are pretty much an everyday thing at camp, get a great reaction. Playfulness becomes the norm, not the exception. Generosity and a spirit of sharing are expected and reciprocated. Friends and neighbors meet and chat. To make the most of it, you have to be outdoors, and participating (you cannot trick or treat online, can you?). Yummy treats are collected, pooled, traded and “borrowed”. Kids get a bit of freedom to run amok, while caring adults keep a close eye on events. Maybe they even get to “try on” a different character, to act differently than they do every day.

In short, the “real” world recedes for a short while, supplanted by a world that is more inclusive, more vibrant, more fun, maybe sometimes a little scarier, and inevitably more memorable. In short, for a few hours at the end of October, every kid has an invite to live an experience like our campers get to live, day in and day out, every summer.

Happy Halloween, everyone. Enjoy this great time of the year, enjoy the opportunity to step out of the “real world” for a few hours, and don’t forget to plan your costume early. Because if you can’t rely on your friendly neighborhood camp professional to know how to dress up and go silly, who can you rely on?

Matt Pines, MSC Board President, Maine Teen Camp Co-Director

MYCA UPDATE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Many of the bills MYCA was following during the First session of Maine's 131st Legislative session were rolled over to the Second session, which begins January 3, 2024. Once again, we will be tracking LD 1156 (known as "The Maine Trails Bond"), LD 324 Prevent Wrongful Firing of Maine Workers, and LD 1190 Ensure a Fair Workweek. Additionally, several important bills for MSC members which have been passed are now in the rulemaking or stakeholder committee process:



- ▶ LD 379 Responsibly Regulate Recreational Boats on Maine Lakes
- ▶ LD 1964 Paid Family and Medical leave
- ▶ LD 513 Overtime Protections for Certain Maine Workers
- ▶ LD 1082 Maine Retirement Savings Program

But the most important pending rulemaking is from the Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS) for RULES RELATING TO YOUTH CAMPS, PRIMITIVE, AND TRIP CAMPING 10-144 CMR 208. Known as camps' "Chapter 208 rules", these licensing regulations have not been fully updated for 15 years and the changes could be significant.

As with any pending legislation or rulemaking that MYCA feels is critical for membership involvement, we will inform you when it's time to contact your elected official or department commissioner. Bills which are voted into law and affect Maine camps will be outlined in a memo to Maine member camps (linked within the Hall Monitor and placed on our website for reference), with details about new rules and regulations.

Additionally, MYCA:

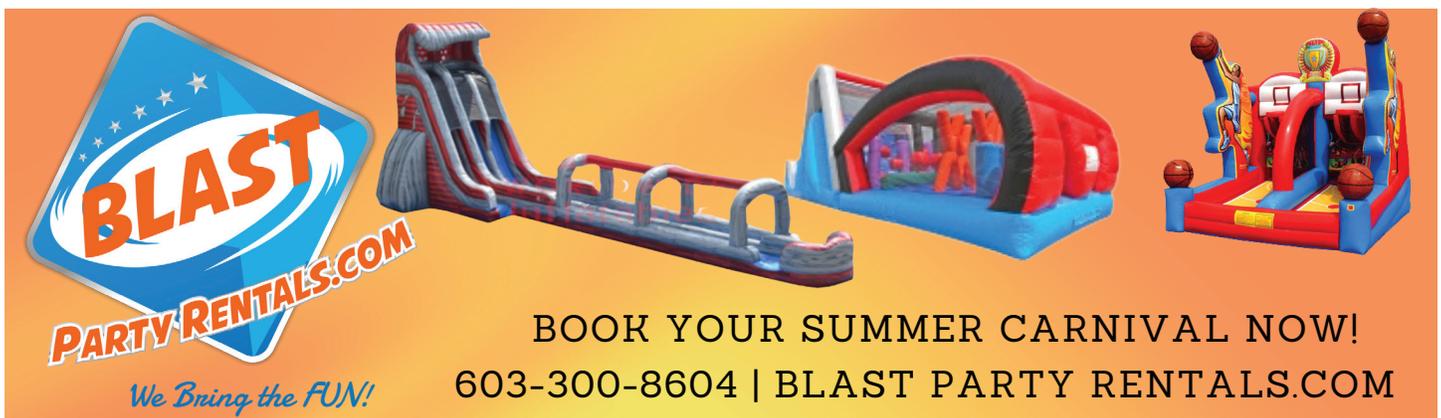
- ▶ is preparing a spring webinar to review all pertinent Maine state regulations for licensed youth camps
- ▶ is monitoring forgivable loans from the Thrive Maine program, rounds #1 & #2
- ▶ has a board member as part of a stakeholder group to review completed studies relating to wake boats and their effects on shoreline property and the environment (LD 379, amended)
- ▶ is monitoring a federal lawsuit against a Maine school district for assisting a student with social gender transition without consulting the student's parents, as well as proposed Maine Department of Education ruling re: School Counselor Confidentiality
- ▶ is connecting with Maine Career Exploration Program: a 2-year, \$25 million initiative to connect 6,000 young people with future career opportunities in the state

All of this information and resources would not be possible without each member of the MYCA Board, and their hard work. Thank you all for serving.

Laura Ordway
President MYCA Board
Winona Camps, laura@winonacamps.com



MYCA (Maine Youth Camp Association) is an affiliated organization to Maine Summer Camps (MSC). MYCA's mission is to monitor, publicly comment and interpret state and federal legislation on behalf of MSC, with the purpose of furthering the welfare of camps in Maine. We maintain relationships with agencies and policy officials for camp advocacy. Additionally, our 501(c)(4) non-profit status allows for limited activities supporting political campaigns. As a member of MSC, your camp is also a member of MYCA. The LDs and laws in rulemaking above have been more thoroughly explained in the most recent Legislative Report which is sent to members prior to the annual and semi-annual membership meetings.



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L.L. Bean Funds Second Summer of Camp Experiences

165 Youngsters Benefit from Grant

We are grateful to L.L. Bean for its second summer of playing a pivotal role in making summer camp experiences possible for more than 160 of Maine's most underserved children. This gift leveraged an additional \$230,000 of campership funding, tripling its impact.

LL. Bean's thrilling announcement last spring that MSC would again receive \$100,000 in funds earmarked for underserved Maine children to attend camps in Maine as well as \$25,000 in funds to support the administration of MSC's Level Ground Initiative (which makes camp experiences possible for children who are New Mainers), kicked off efforts to benefit as many children as possible.

In response to news of the grant, Lucy Norvell, MSC executive director, said, "A child who receives the gift of a summer camp experience receives the gift of childhood. Summer camp is childhood at its finest." Camps provide a community where children belong and where their developmental needs — emotional, social, physical, and cognitive — are met by carefully selected adults able to teach a range of skills in an environment designed exclusively for children. The place-based and largely unplugged educational setting of camp offers significant opportunities for peer interaction, character education, and social emotional learning unavailable elsewhere in today's world. Throughout its 100+ year history, camp has been a place where children have always thrived. And camp experiences have never been more vital as families and schools continue to recover and compensate for the losses children have experienced since the pandemic, individually and collectively. "A repeat gift of this size validates the impact and importance of camps' collective contributions to the growth and development of children of all ages." Norvell said.

"A repeat gift of this size validates the impact and importance of camps' collective contributions to the growth and development of children of all ages."

– Lucy Norvell, MSC Executive Director

In this second year of funding, MSC was fortunate that the Maine Camp Experience, a group of private camp owners in Maine, again donated funds to support this project. For the second year, both gifts from L.L. Bean and the Maine Camp Experience provided the gift of camp for 165 Maine children in need.

In Summer 2023 MSC was able to expand funding priorities. For new campers, the campership award amounts were, for residential camps, up to \$1,000 for two weeks or less, or up to \$1,500 for more than two weeks, per camper. Day camp camperships ranged from \$250-\$400 per camper (regardless of session length). Camps agreed to cover the balance. For returning L.L. Bean campers from Summer 2022, the campership award amounts were, for residential camps, \$500

for two weeks or less, and \$750 for more than two weeks per camper. Day camps received \$125-\$200 per camper (regardless of session length). Camps agreed to cover the balance of tuition.

As in summer 2022, 75 percent of the campers receiving camperships attended nonprofit camps. Once again this summer, 25 percent of the funds went to independent camps that received the maximum funding of \$1,500 for more than two weeks of camp and \$1,000 for two weeks or less. Each of 34 camps received at least one campership. Participating camps leveraged the funding they received by offering an additional \$230,000 of campership funding from camp donors and their own campership coffers, thus tripling the impact of the original donations.

At a time when too many of Maine's children are living in poverty — and percentages of those struggling are higher than in other states — this program providing the gift of camp experiences earmarked for them is even more important.

Many camps made up the tuition gap between the true cost of tuition and the campership amount. In some cases, this meant a \$1500 grant from the program leveraged another \$9,000 of funding from other donors and the camp itself. MSC balanced serving as many new campers as possible while also supporting campers who experienced camp through this program in 2022 and wished to return.

Camp professionals understand the gains for children who return to camp for more than one summer. Camp Beech Cliff, a day camp on Mt. Desert Island, once again hosted campers who benefited from the L.L. Bean grant. John Izenour, the camp's office manager said, "The advantages of hosting returning L.L. Bean-funded campers are significant. Campers gain from a summer experience among children of a broad range of backgrounds." Returning to camp allows children to continue those friendships. All camps that applied on behalf of returning campers for Summer 2023 received campership funding.

At a time when too many of Maine's children are living in poverty — and percentages of those struggling are higher than in other states — this program providing the gift of camp experiences earmarked for them is even more important. At summer camps in Maine there is an abundance of food, fun, fitness, and life lessons — all overseen by adults who are hired to focus exclusively on their campers' needs and interests. Campers' basic needs are met and much, much more. Several children who received camperships from this program are growing up in foster care, come from families that are unhoused, or come from low-income families burdened with

L.L. Bean Funds Second Summer *continues on page 14*

Migis "Meetup" continued from page 1

sharing what worked and challenges in a way that was looking to solve problems and seek solutions," Sangster said.

The roundtable conversations covered a broad range of topics, including weather impacts, parent communications, DHHS inspections, a nonprofit camp circle, problem solving, challenges and changes in camper behavior, "things you did differently this year" and favorite camp stories from 2023.



MSC members enjoyed several outdoor roundtable discussions at the Migis "Meetup."

"It couldn't have been a more beautiful day. [Migis] was so generous with what they offered us, all these great venues on the campus," Malm said, adding that participants appreciated the choices they were offered. And although impromptu conversations occasionally made for late arrivals to the roundtables, she said, "they were very engaged in sessions."

One particularly popular session focused on DHHS inspections, facilitated by Laura Ordway of Winona Camps. Malm said Ordway's ongoing interaction with DHHS in her capacity as MYCA President made her an ideal facilitator. MYCA is continually gathering information and appreciates hearing about camps' experiences with DHHS. The information was also helpful for camps who did not host inspectors this summer, Malm said.



Migis "Meetup" participants shared their favorite stories of the summer in a waterfront discussion.

Weather impacts on camps also spurred helpful discussions, she said. In fact, the education committee may consider having a session at the Winter Workshop in January at which facilities managers could discuss specific ways climate change is affecting camps.

"It couldn't have been a more beautiful day. Migis was so generous with what they offered us, all these great venues on the campus."

– Education Committee Chair, Karen Malm

Malm said that another topic that may feed into future workshop planning is camps' communication with parents, including camps' traditional communication practices and changing parental expectations.

Like Malm, Sangster said the issue of parent communication is full of potential for future discussions. Everything from the challenges of distributing information to establishing processes for how parents are going to hear from camp and/or their children during the summer season are worthy of conversation, she said. There are also philosophical elements to the issue, she said, including dialogue around "how important it is for parents to separate and trust others."

The Migis Meetup gave MSC members a chance to renew and establish connections among fellow camp professionals, offer and receive insights on a broad range of issues camps are currently facing, and truly experience what it means to be part of Maine Summer Camps. ■

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Catriona Logan Sangster Receives the Halsey Gulick Award

Citing exemplary leadership and vision, tireless contributions to MSC, and a commitment to campers and camps that reaches beyond Maine, the MSC Awards Committee awarded **Catriona Logan Sangster** the 2023 Halsey Gulick Award. Sangster received the award at the Migis Lodge Meetup on September 20.

At the helm at Camp Wawenock with her husband Andy, Catriona Sangster as MSC president helped inaugurate the MSC Book Club, has been vital for years to the efforts of the MSC Education Committee, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, and most recently the Native American Working Group (NAWG). She is also instrumental to the Level Ground Initiative, which collaborates with community partners and camps to send New Mainers to camp free of charge.

As the citation stated (read by 2022 Gulick Award winner Mike Katz), Catriona’s efforts have not only been far-reaching,

but impactful. Her work with NAWG, whose efforts include educating and guiding camps and campers around issues of cultural appropriation, has been tireless. The group’s Indigenous Appropriation Assessment is helping camps reflect on their histories and traditions and consider how they can assess the issue of cultural appropriation and work to teach campers, staff and alumni.

Halsey Gulick Award continues on page 8



[Click here to learn more — the Halsey Gulick Award winner](#)



[Click here to learn more — the Jack Erler Award winner](#)



[Click here to learn more — Dedication to Camping Honorees](#)

Jack Erler Award Presented to Kris Millard

The Jack Erler Award, acknowledging outstanding contributions to organized camping, was presented to **Kris Millard** at the Sept. 20 Migis Meetup. As the second ever recipient of the award, Kris was commended for her broad range of efforts, ranging from her written work to her volunteer efforts in support of the MSC programs and events to her support for the Level Ground Initiative.

“She has exceptional talent and skill sets that co-workers, collaborators, MSC board and committee members, camp members, camp staff, campers and families rely upon,” the citation stated. “And she has used them to provide exceptional support for Maine Summer Camps. She makes every effort to enable others to shine as she prefers to stay out of the spotlight.”

Kris has supported MSC’s efforts since 2015 in a variety of roles, including newsletter production, grant writing, editing and proofing, and supporting such programs as JMG and Level Ground. An annual visitor to JMG testing camp, Kris has taken countless photos of aspiring JMGs. In her work with Level Ground, she worked with camps and community partners to enable children who are New Mainers to attend camp free of charge. Her blogging for the *Bangor Daily News* touched on all aspects of youth camping in Maine.

“Jack has made such extraordinary contributions to youth camping. Receiving the award created in recognition of that work is so special,” Kris said. “I am honored to be recognized.”

Dedication to Camping Honorees 2023

Alex Jackson, Camp Runoia, 27 years
 Serena Ard, Hidden Valley Camp, 25 years
 Jodi Sokoloff, Camp Micah, 25 years
 Eric Joelsson, Birch Rock Camp, 25 years
 Mike Churwin, Camp Micah, 25 years
 Mark Lipof, Camp Micah, 30 years
 Kaesoon Kim Park, Hidden Valley Camp, 25 years
 Dani Katsir, Hidden Valley Camp, 25 years
 Cindy Edgcomb, Hidden Valley Camp, 25 years
 Christopher Darling, Camp Susan Curtis, 25 years
 Alan Kissack, Kingsley Pines, 36 years

Pat Coughlan, Kingsley Pines, 35 years
 Dick Morris, Kingsley Pines, 27 years
 Laura Jo Cunningham, Kingsley Pines, 25 years
 Jack “Pineman” Leydan, Camp Timanous, 40 years
 Maureen “Moe” Bromley, Camp Tapawingo, 31 years
 Whitney Ryan, Wyonegonic, 25 years
 Andrew Kearns, Wyonegonic, 25 years
 Mary Ellen Deschenes, Camp Susan Curtis, Girl Scouts of Maine, MYCA/MSA, 33 years
 Sondra Kaminsky, Camp Micah, 27 years
 Ken Wadness, Camp Micah, 31 years

Level Ground Initiative Continues to Send New Mainers to Camp

Campers came from a range of cities and towns and LG community partners continued to expand

Dozens of children from Maine's immigrant and refugee communities once again enjoyed a summer at camp as part of MSC's 2023 Level Ground Initiative. Camps welcomed these youngsters via their own connections to communities as well as through placement by Level Ground community partners. While still gathering data, we can report that more than 60 New Mainers had tuition-free experiences at nonprofit and private camps across the state.

Camps' commitment to Level Ground continues to grow as more camps welcome more campers, a longstanding goal of the Initiative. In all, camps contributed nearly \$200,000 in tuition this summer; campers' attendance varied from one week to a full season. Campers came from a range of cities and towns and the number of Level Ground's community partners continue to expand.

"What a great summer for Level Ground. New community partners, new camps, LG campers on staff, more and more LG youth at camps, support from L.L. Bean again."

– Mike Douglass, Level Ground Committee Chair

During the spring and summer, interim Level Ground Initiative Coordinator Kris Millard collaborated with longtime community partners Portland Community Squash and King Middle School, as well as new partners Boys and Girls Club of Southern Maine, Memorial Middle School (now South Portland Middle School), and East End Community School in Portland. Through those relationships, campers were placed at Camp Bishopswood in Hope, which has welcomed campers since Level Ground's inception in 2018, Agassiz Village in Poland, and new camp partner Y Camp of Maine in Winthrop. A total of 43 youngsters attended these three camps via Level Ground.

Lisa Carter, executive director of Agassiz Village, wrote in an email, "In general I would say that we truly value our partnership with Maine Summer Camps and Level Ground. That's what Agassiz is here for, to serve the under-served so to have a partner that helps us to reach more kids in need is amazing. We would be honored to provide summer camp experiences for as many kids as possible so keep sending them our way."

Level Ground's efforts and impact are not limited to these camps, however. Many other camps across Maine welcome New Mainers and provide them with tuition-free camp experiences. Winona Camps in Bridgton hosted nine campers, as did Hidden Valley Camp in Freedom. Hidden Valley Camp, whose first Level Ground campers were placed by volunteers supporting the Initiative, now brings Level Ground campers via "word of mouth," says Director Peter Kassen. Camp Wawenock also hosted a Level Ground camper, whose has returned for several summers after first attending Camp Bishopswood in the inaugural Level Ground summer. MSC is in the process of gathering information from



Camp Bishopswood Director and Level Ground Committee chair Mike Douglass takes a break with two Level Ground campers.

member camps statewide to assess just how many New Mainers are experiencing the opportunity to attend camp thanks to the tuition contributions of hosting camps.

The impact of the Level Ground Initiative grows as the issue of housing security of New Mainers become more dire. Many campers this summer resided in greater Portland hotels. Three siblings were unhoused, meaning Agassiz Village was their true home for the six weeks they were enrolled while their father attempted to secure housing. Many Level Ground campers this summer moved to Maine just within the past year. They have hurdled language barriers, adjustments to a new culture and new schools, and have often served as interpreters for their families. The opportunity to live in Maine's natural beauty, meet friends from all over the U.S. and the world, and learn brand-new skills – as well as play the games they know well – was a challenging and exciting experience.

Camps and community partners have offered many suggestions for enabling the Level Ground Initiative to a broader impact and facilitate even more positive experiences for campers.

Helping families become more familiar with camp generally, and the camps they will attend specifically, will support recruiting and placing more campers. For example, community partners have offered to host camp representatives and interested families for information sessions, similar to such an event at Portland Community Squash in early 2023. By inviting parents, with the support of interpretation services, families will be better equipped to truly understand the camp experience.

The Level Ground Initiative will also continue to benefit from the generosity of L.L. Bean, which last spring awarded MSC a second \$25,000 grant helping to support the administration of the Initiative. The first such funds, awarded in 2022, have enabled MSC to fund the part-time Level Ground Coordinator position.

Level Ground Initiative continues on page 8

Level Ground Initiative *continued from page 7*

The future is bright for Level Ground and MSC is always seeking more camps to participate in the Initiative. Additionally, MSC would like to know what member camps have hosted New Mainers through other channels to provide tuition-free camp experiences.

Level Ground Committee Chair Mike Douglass sums it up perfectly: "What a great summer for Level Ground. New community partners, new camps, LG campers on staff, more and more LG youth at camps, support from LL Bean again. This was an incredibly successful summer for LG, and now the work starts to make it even better for the summer of 2024!" ■

Community Connections Group Plans Fall Meetup

The MSC Community Connections Group is having their first post-camp meetup. If you are local (or can make the drive) and love connecting with folks in camping, this group is perfect for you. We hope you can join us!

When: Tuesday, October 24, 3-5 pm

Where: Kamp Kohut, 151 Kohut Road, Oxford

RSVP is not necessary but if you plan on joining us or have questions, please reach out to co-chairs, Carissa Chipman (cchipman@chalmersinsurancegroup.com) or Rory O'Connor (rory@kampkohut.com).

Halsey Gulick Award *continued from page 6*

Cat's colleagues were effusive in their praise. "Her ability to consistently think ahead to what's next is admirable. She can anticipate upcoming challenges on an industry level and gives generously of her time to help all camps strive to better serve our campers and staff," one fellow camp professional stated. "She anticipates what young people will need by thinking critically about what's going on the world and how that will impact youth development."

Her accomplishments "are born of our recipient's 'thoughtfulness and people-first perspective,' the citation stated. "She has a 'warm and welcoming presence' both as a colleague and mentor and 'never rests on her laurels.'"

"The gratitude she expresses for her daily life and work is equally matched by our gratitude for her limitless devotion to her peers and profession," the citation concluded.

"Obviously I was completely surprised and overwhelmed and am also very touched," Cat said.

"The thing about the MSC community is that I truly feel so many people are deserving of accolades."

Cat said that from the time Garth Altenburg asked her to be the board secretary many years ago, "I kept on being challenged in new and exciting ways." ■

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Upcoming MSC Webinars – Indigenous Appropriation Assessment and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Panel Discussion



Using MSC's Indigenous Appropriation Assessment Tool Workshop

Wednesday, November 8, 1-2pm via Zoom

Hear from a panel of your colleagues in Maine about their experiences in reviewing and assessing their camps regarding issues related to Native American Culture. They'll share details about their process, the challenges they faced, how they made decisions about changes, how they communicated and sought support from constituents (parents, campers, alumni, board members etc...), and more!

There will be time for questions and for participants to share too. Even if you don't feel your camp has appropriated any aspects of Native American Culture, all our camps sit on large swaths of land which were once inhabited by Indigenous People, many of whom died of diseases brought by European explorers or were forcefully removed by colonization. Join us for this unique opportunity to gain greater knowledge about our indigenous neighbors.



[Click here to register and view the November 8 webinar](#)



A DEI Panel Discussion: Spotlighting Initiatives & Programs from Summer 2023

Wednesday, November 29, 12-1pm via Zoom

Join MSC's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee on Wednesday, November 29th from 12-1pm EST for a forward-looking conversation about concrete ways in which camp programs have progressed toward greater diversity and inclusion.

Various camp leaders will share their camp's recent DEI initiatives in programming, hiring, and training from recent summers. You'll have an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and share your own camp's DEI staffing and program ideas for 2024 and beyond. Join us for this unique opportunity.

Photo provided by Hidden Valley Camp



[Click here to register and view the November 29 webinar](#)

SAVE THE DATE! Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Winter Workshop and Business Networking Extravaganza

MSC's 2024 Winter Workshop & Business Networking Extravaganza is slated for Wednesday, January 24, 2024, in a new venue, the DoubleTree by Hilton Portland, located at 363 Maine Mall Rd, South Portland, near I-95, I-295, and the Portland Jetport. The

new venue affords more room for both workshop participants and business members.

The Winter Workshop will be held from 9:30am-12:30pm, with coffee at 9am. From 12:30-3pm, we will enjoy lunch and the Business Networking Extravaganza.

The Education Committee will be announcing the workshop topic later this fall. Business members will be able to register for the Extravaganza in late October. Snow date: Thursday, January 25, 2024. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for details. ■

Maine Camp History

Dr. Joel W. Bloom of Camp Powhatan Inducted into Maine Jewish Hall of Fame

By Henry Paul Johnson, Maine Summer Camp Historian

Joel W. Bloom, the Director of Camp Powhatan for Boys in Otisfield, Maine for nearly half a century, was posthumously inducted into the Maine Jewish Hall of Fame in a ceremony which took place in Portland, Maine on May 21, 2023. The Maine Jewish Hall of Fame was created by and through the efforts of the Maine Jewish Museum in 2018 to bestow recognition among outstanding Jewish leaders from throughout Maine who have brought distinction and honor to the State of Maine or beyond. Dr. Bloom was elected into the 2003 class by the nominating committee of the Jewish Hall of Fame with an understanding that he reflected the “Jewish value” of making the world a better place through outstanding accomplishment and/or humanitarian and philanthropic endeavor. The 2023 inductees, in addition to Dr. Bloom, included leaders in the field of entertainment, business, law, politics, community service, environmental, and other facets of daily life.

I knew Dr. Bloom personally both from many roles during my fourteen years at Camp Powhatan from camper to CIT to Junior Counselor to Counselor and ultimately Program Director. Dr. Bloom, this Historian can say unequivocally, influenced and touched the lives of so many of campers and staff through his wonderful ability to create a camp environment that uniquely provided the opportunity for all campers and staff to feel great senses of self-worth. The legacy of Dr. Bloom lives on not only through the Camp Powhatan Facebook page but significantly through the great desire by Camp Powhatan alumni and friends to continue to gather and, in many regards, pay tribute to Dr. Bloom. Last summer, by means of example, through the gracious and cooperate efforts of Seeds of Peace (the former sight of Camp Powhatan), Camp Powhatan alumni and friends had the opportunity to celebrate the 100th year anniversary of Camp Powhatan and the Joel Bloom legacy.

Dr. Bloom was born on May 7, 1916 in New York City and at the age of 5 in 1921 he became a camper in Bunk One in the first year of a then new camp called Camp Powhatan for Boys which his father, Ira “Chief Bloom”, had founded. In 1941, Dr. Bloom received his Masters degree from Columbia University’s Teachers College and thereafter enlisted in the military. During War War II, Dr. Bloom was the skipper of various PT boats and saw combat in both North Africa and the South Pacific areas.

After the war, Dr. Bloom returned to New York City and became the Director of Camp Powhatan in 1941. In October of 1947, he met a young bookkeeper named Evelyn Kerner and, ultimately, Evelyn and Dr. Bloom married on June 24, 1948. Beginning in 1949, Evelyn assumed her longstanding role as Camp Bookkeeper.

Dr. Bloom is often thought of as having a progressive vision of the entire camping community. He served as President of the New England Camping Association and the Maine Camp

Directors Association and Vice President of the American Camping Association. He also served as President and Founder of the Pleasant Lake Parker Pond Association.



Left to right: Mark Bloom, Henry Johnson, Tim Wilson, Mike Dennis, John Walzer, and Jane Ira Bloom

Dr. Bloom was a pioneer in the integration of summer camps both racially and socioeconomically. In the 1950s, he hired his first African-American counselor and over the next forty years continued to hire diverse staff from his first year counselors up to his Head Counselor including Tim Wilson. It is noteworthy, that Tim Wilson, who himself is a pioneer and visionary of Maine Summer Camping, was the Keynote Speaker at Dr. Bloom’s induction into the Maine Jewish Hall of Fame.

In 1971, Dr. Bloom worked with the then Governor of Maine, Ken Curtis, to create the Susan Curtis Foundation which was founded on the belief that summer camp is a critical element in a child’s education and that underprivileged students were excluded from this opportunity.

The recent induction ceremony of Joel Bloom was well attended by members of Dr. Bloom’s family including his son, Mark Bloom (who accepted the award on behalf of Dr. Bloom and a former Camper, Counselor, and Assistant Director of Camp Powhatan) as well as his daughter, Jane Ira Bloom, who was a former Camper at Camp Woodlands in Bridgton, Maine and who for several years served as a Water Skiing Counselor at Camp Powhatan.

The picture included with this article reflects the attendance at the induction ceremony of John Walzer (former Camp Powhatan Camper and son of long time and well respected Camp Doctor Stanley Walzer), Mark and Jane Bloom, Mike Dennis (who has been most instrumental in keeping the spirit of Joel Bloom and Camp Powhatan alive on Pleasant Lake as well as through his organization of alumni events for Camp Powhatan) as well as myself.

The celebration of Dr. Bloom’s life reminds us of the wonderful tradition of camp directorship in the State of Maine. ■

Noted author and Maine Summer Camp Historian, Henry Johnson attended and worked at Camp Powhatan in Otisfield, Maine beginning in 1966 through 1973 as a camper, counselor, and ultimately, program director. Mr. Johnson writes about the history of Maine summer camps. You may submit information relating to Maine camp history at: hjohnson@henryjohnsonlaw.com



Two competitors face off at the annual MSC Chess Tournament

West End House Boys Camp Hosts Third Annual MSC Chess Tournament

Sponsored by Bangor Savings Bank, Cornish Branch

With exuberant campers outdoors, there were only hushed voices coming from West End House Camp's Margolin Center in late July as representatives from several camps came to compete in the Third Annual MSC Chess Tournament.

Campers gathered on July 27 for enthusiastic competition among campers of all ages. Sponsored by the Cornish branch of Bangor Savings Bank, the day-long event – with the junior championship extending to the next morning – matched campers from Camp Wigwam, West End House Boys Camp and a solo representative from West End House Girls Camp.

While some matches were flurries of moves, others involved long – but timed – moments of contemplation before decisive action. The competitors, while serious about their play, shared friendly banter and compliments away from the chess boards. Campers fueled themselves with snacks provided by the host, and Bill Margolin and his wife, Bryna Leeder, Bob Strauss (Camp Wigwam), and several counseling staff, oversaw the competition.

In the end, the following campers emerged victorious. From West End House Boys Camp, the 12 & under champ was Daniel and runner-up was Cole. Camp Wigwam swept the 13 & over category with winner Walter and runner-up Izzy.

As the tournament wound down, discussions were already underway for the 2024 competition, including the possibility of holding the MSC spelling bee and the chess tournament together for a day-long event.

Congratulations to all the participants! ■



Mark your calendar!

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, October 24

Community Connections Group Meetup at Kamp Kohut: 3-5pm

Monday, October 30 - Wednesday, November 1

ACA Virtual Staffing Summit

Wednesday, November 1

MSC Board Meeting: 550 Forest Ave., 10am-12pm

Tuesday, November 7

ACA New England Fall Seminar: Waltham, MA 9:30am-3:30pm

Wednesday, November 8

MYCA Virtual Board Meeting: 10am-12pm

Wednesday, November 8

Using MSC's Indigenous Appropriation Assessment Tool Workshop: 1-2pm via Zoom

Wednesday, November 29

A DEI Panel Discussion: Spotighting Initiatives and Programs from Summer 2023: 12-1pm via Zoom

Thursday, December 7

MSC Book Club: 9am, Hybrid – in-person at the MSC office and via Zoom

Wednesday, December 13

MYCA Virtual Board Meeting: 10am-12pm

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

MYCA Virtual Board Meeting: 10am-12pm

Tuesday, January 23

MSC Board Meeting DoubleTree by Hilton Portland: 2-4pm

Wednesday, January 24

Winter Workshop & Business Networking Extravaganza, DoubleTree by Hilton Portland Workshop: 9:30am-12:30pm Lunch and Extravaganza: 12:30-3pm



Chris Thurber coaches young camp leaders at his Camp Wawenock program in July.

Chris Thurber Returns to Camp Wawenock for Camp Counselor Program

Nearly 70 participants from eight camps gathered at Camp Wawenock's Ussher Lodge on July 11 for psychologist and camp educator Chris Thurber's annual program for CITs and new counselors. This year's program focused on how to address and manage camper behavior and included both presentation and extensive small group discussion allowing participants to practice the skills Thurber recommended for a wide range of situations requiring counselor support.

"The 2023 MSC staff training workshop at Camp Wawenock was our best yet," said Thurber in an email. Thurber said that mixing staff from different camps for the duration of the program, as well as including content that was "100 percent driven" by challenges young leaders had faced early in the 2023 summer season. Thurber said the scenarios enacted by participants allowed him to both "identify leadership strengths and coach alternative approaches."

"Based on participants' feedback, the chance to make new friends and learn from professional peers at other camps was as valuable as refining their behavior management skills. I'm already looking forward to 2024!" he reported.

"I think the staff who came showed that they can be challenged," said Camp Wawenock Director Catriona Sangster.

And Camp Wawenock CITs, who participate in pre-camp staff training, reported that the material Thurber taught, and information revealed by discussions and role playing "was endorsing all the things they had learned," Sangster said. "They felt like 'wow, this legitimized things we had already talked about.' There's nothing wrong with that, either."

Garth Altenburg, director of Camp Timanous, added that the program has a number of helpful elements. First, "they show we value investing in our young staff, and it can be a fun outing for them as a group," he wrote in an email. The program also helps staff members realize "they are not alone" in facing challenging

camper behavior, he wrote. The small group discussions and role-playing also shift learning opportunities away from theoretical conversations to acting "in the moment."

"I think [Thurber] has figured out the balance of him talking and letting people work together," Sangster said.

And there was plenty of working together. Thurber mixed participants into groups and charged them with applying the skills he'd suggested. After performing short skits, the groups benefited from positive feedback and ideas for improvement.

Sangster said the small group focus was a key to the program's success. "If I've learned anything recently, staff this age group do not want to sit and listen," she said. "Mixing it up and making them be the active learners is really important." ■

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The 2023 JMG staff gathered at the entrance of the Testing Camp site in Oquossoc.

Junior Maine Guide Program Has Successful Testing Camp, Strives to Include Additional Camps

“The summer overall was great.”

Junior Maine Guide (JMG) program director Ron Fournier reports that “excellent staff,” supported by the longtime team of JMG testers, engaged candidates, and participation by eight camps all contributed to a successful 2023 season. Testing camp, held from July 24-28 at the Stephen Phillips Memorial Preserve in Oquossoc, resulted in a fifty percent passing rate among the 39 JMG candidates. Fournier is enthusiastic about the program’s trajectory.

“I feel like we are still building back after COVID,” he said. “Camp programs changed, but we are in a good place. We’re moving in the right direction.”

Fournier says that the eight participating camps – Arcadia, Birch Rock, Bryant Pond, Kawahnee, O-AT-KA, Runoia, Winona, and Wyonegonic – sent fewer candidates than in years past. Conflicts, such as other camp activities, including trips, posed challenges to having larger groups of participants from camps, he said.

“We still have a robust group of camps sending kids,” he said.

Fournier is encouraged by the potential for additional camp participation in the JMG program in coming summers. Camp Beech Cliff, on Mount Desert Island, may increase its outdoor living skills programming. Fournier met with the camp’s new skills director, Kareem Dieng, this summer, and Junior Maine Woodcraft participants “in the trenches.”

“It seemed like they were committed to the JMG program,” he said. “I don’t know if they will be there next year or not, but they are moving in that direction.”

In Winthrop, the YMCA Camp of Maine also plans to join the JMG program. Fournier says he and veteran JMG examiner Katie Curtis have met with YMCA Camp of Maine Director Jeff Gleason and toured the camp property. “Since then, we’ve been in communication with their folks,” about equipment and other program requirements. “It’s gaining momentum,” he said.

Maintaining relevancy

Fournier says JMG program leaders are well aware of competing opportunities for teens and want to be more intentional about keeping the program “relevant and accessible.”

“We want to be sure we are looking progressively,” he said. “We see JMG as a potential career pathway for folks that want a deeper outdoor skill set.”

“This program really does give [candidates] the chance to demonstrate skills at a high level of respect and responsibility,” he said. That brings invaluable credibility to college and job applications he said. “It’s got some weight to it.”



Patches for the renamed JMG programs for younger campers.

Learning more about the program

Fournier, who serves as the recreational safety supervisor at the Maine’s Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, encourages interested camp directors to reach out to him for more information about the program. “It’s a well packaged model,” he said, not something camps have to “create out of thin air.”

Fournier said he would likely be the person camps would meet with, and the one to connect directors to JMG program testers who live close to their camp. These examiners can help camp staff who teach the curriculum, and even candidates preparing for test camp.

“It’s a solid curriculum, and proven curriculum and a distinctive program,” he said. “This has really proven its worth.” ■



MSC is grateful to the Enterprise Holding Foundation, which made a \$3,500 gift to the JMG program.



Camp Fernwood was one of several camps that sent spellers for both age groups to the 16th Annual Spelling Bee

Spellers Gather at New Venue for 16th Annual Spelling Bee

July 6 was a perfect summer day – i.e., *not raining!* – at Bradbury Mountain State Park in Pownal as close to a dozen teams competed at the 16th Annual Spelling Bee sponsored by Bangor Savings Bank and Maine Summer Camps. With picnic lunches, plus snacks provided by Camp Wigwam, the spellers were well equipped to compete.

Divided into two age groups and teams of five spellers each, campers competed thanks to the expert efforts of Spelling Bee organizers Neal Goldberg and Bob Strauss of Camp Wigwam. And the competition was stiff. With Camp Wigwam counselors choosing from long lists of challenging words, each team competed in three rounds before both age group pools were whittled down.

All participants did their camps proud. Winners were presented with wooden medallions to recognize their victories.

Winners in the team competition were Camp Fernwood (12 & under) and Camp Wigwam III (13 & over). The Individual Junior Champion was Lindley from Camp Fernwood, followed by Junior Runner-up Elinor from Camp Arcadia I. The Individual Senior Champ was Ayla from Camp Fernwood, followed by Senior Runner-up Leo from Camp Wigwam III.

Congratulations to participating camps and campers, and a big thanks to Bangor Savings Bank for their sponsorship of the event. ■

L.L. Bean Funds Second Summer *continued from page 5*

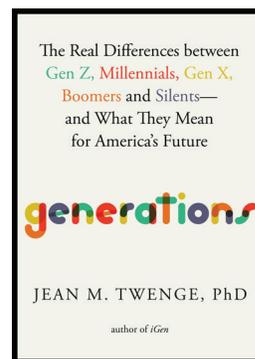
financial and other worries and demands. The opportunity to attend a summer camp in their home state of Maine provided multiple gifts of childhood.

Thank you notes from participating camps poured into the MSC office expressing deep gratitude on behalf of the campers who were funded and appreciation for the assistance in reaching camps' goals to serve more Maine children in need. Garth Altenburg, camp director of Camp Timanous, wrote, "The award from L.L. Bean to support a camper from Maine to attend Timanous aligns perfectly with our mission to serve more deserving campers from a wider variety of backgrounds."

More Maine children deserve the chance to experience summer camp in our state with such immense natural beauty—rivers and lakes, rugged mountains, and nearly 3,500 miles of coastline. The natural landscape in combination with the knowledge and deep experience of Maine camp professionals combines to provide an incomparable setting for outdoor learning and adventure that attracts children and camp staff from around the country and the world.

MSC will need to increase future campership funding to an amount that meets the need. Norvell says that some camps themselves have campership budgets in the low six figures; this fund will need to increase exponentially to meet the overall need state-wide. "MSC will invite additional corporate, foundation, and individual funders and donors to join MSC's significant efforts to make summer camp experiences possible for Maine's children who face barriers to attending camp," Norvell said. "With generous support for a second year from Maine Camp Experience and L.L. Bean, we are off to an excellent start." ■

MSC Book Club Sets Fall Selection and Meeting Date



The MSC Fall Book Club meeting will be held at **9am on Thursday, December 7 in person at the MSC office (550 Forest Ave., Portland, Suite 203) AND on Zoom.** Jessica Decke of U Maine 4-H at Tanglewood and Laura Jo Cunningham of Kingsley Pines, who co-chairs the book club, will lead the discussion of *Generations* by Jean Twenge. Migis Meetup debriefs revealed that members are interested in learning

more about connecting with staff members from other generations. Email Laura Jo at laurajo@kingsleypines.com if you plan to attend in person.



Click here to attend the Dec. 7 book club meeting via zoom



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For more information and/or to place an ad, please contact Lucy Norvell at camps@mainecamps.org.

January 2024 Newsletter

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Quarter-page vertical

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IN MEMORIAM

Over the last year, MSC lost several members and icons of licensed youth camping in Maine. At our Migis Lodge Meetup in September and again during the Virtual Annual Meeting in October, members observed a moment of silence to remember and honor our colleagues and friends.



[Click here to watch a brief memorial video](#)

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