

Past Recipient of the Jack Erler Award

For outstanding contributions to organized camping

Laura Blaisdell, MD, MPH FAAP – 2021 Jack Erler Award Recipient

It is fitting that the inaugural recipient of the Jack Erler Award has demonstrated through vast expertise and passion a profound influence upon policies affecting Maine youth camps.

A pediatrician, public health expert, researcher, and camp medical director, the 2021 recipient of this award has effected change in childhood vaccine policy. She has made broad contributions both regionally and nationally on issues related to camps' communicable diseases policies. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began 18 months ago she has utilized her full range of medical, research, and communications expertise to guide camps, camping organizations, schools, and policy makers in implementing comprehensive and effective policy measures to keep children healthy and safe. The impact of these efforts has proven invaluable, particularly for the Maine camping industry to which she has longstanding personal and professional connections.

This year's Jack Erler Award recipient was instrumental in helping to ensure the broad childhood vaccination requirements through her work with Maine Public Law, Ch. 154 in 2019. She was well equipped through her nascent consulting practice to redirect her energies in 2020 to addressing camps' and organizations' needs for expert leadership on issues surrounding COVID-19. Since then, she was lead author of a national CDC MMWR study on camps' handling of the pandemic and has assisted both the American Camp Association, the Association of Camp Nurses, federal and state CDC personnel, Maine state officials, camps and public and private schools across the U.S. in managing COVID-19 responses and prevention and mitigation efforts.

The impact of her commitment and abilities has been vast. Like Jack Erler himself, this year's award winner has brought a combination of professional excellence, an understanding of camps' needs, and a spirit of true care for Maine youth camps' missions.

Maine Summer Camps cannot credit this recipient enough, for the successes Maine youth camps experienced these past two summers in implementing communicable disease plans to navigate the challenges of COVID-19.

Acknowledging her profound and positive influence on camps' pandemic landscape, Maine Summer Camps awards the 2021 Jack Erler Award to Laura Blaisdell, MD, MPH, FAAP.