

Winter Workshop Draws 125 Camp Professionals

Nick Teich and Emily Golinsky present “Leading with Confidence: Managing Emotions, Behaviors and Well-Being in Today’s Camp Environment”

The annual Winter Workshop, created by the MSC Education Committee and held on Wednesday, February 4, brought together 125 camp professionals from a full range of camp types. In a morning of presentations, breakout groups and a Q & A session, workshop attendees heard from Nick Teich and Emily Golinsky, both camp consultants with broad and deep education and experience working with youth camps.

The record number of registrations demonstrated great interest in the workshop topic as well as the appeal of in-person gatherings, Education Committee chair Karen Malm shared. “[They] deepen relationships, strengthen trust, and make it easier for people to reach out to one another throughout the year when questions arise or encouragement is needed.”

Malm credited Teich and Golinsky for their investment of time and energy in planning the program. “Having presenters who are ‘camp people,’ who understand the rhythms, pressures, and realities of camp life allowed the conversation to be practical, grounded, and deeply relevant,” Malm said.



Jessica Paquette photo

Winter Workshop keynote speakers Nick Teiche and Emily Golinsky with MSC Executive Director Lucy Norvell.

Malm said the presenters met multiple times with the Education Committee’s “mental health vs. behavioral/social matters” exploratory group then built a workshop that was tailored to the specific wants and needs of Maine camps.

Winter Workshop continues on page 4

Business Networking Extravaganza “A Win for All”



Business Committee Member Mark Lipof, Camp Micah, chats with Jack Day and Brian Siebert from Norway Savings Bank, a longtime Business Networking Extravaganza sponsor.

MSC Business Committee Chair Arleen Shepherd called the annual Business Networking Extravaganza, held on February 4, “a huge success.” With 64 vendors (including four MSC tables), all “eager to sell and service camps, and a packed house of camp personnel eager to buy, it was a perfect match,” Shepherd said.

Shepherd says the most appreciated element of the event is the opportunity for vendors to meet face-to-face and build relationships with camp professionals.

“It’s the ideal kickoff to the upcoming camp season,” Shepherd said. “Meeting each vendor and learning about their products motivates me to schedule, buy and order for 2026.”

Business Networking Extravaganza continues on page 6

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MESSAGE FROM THE MSC PRESIDENT

MARCH 2026

My least favorite sound is a hard plastic camp cup being dropped onto the polished concrete Dining Hall floor. I cringe and state to those around me "someone needs to teach them to hold the stack from the top and bottom!" At this time of year, I long for that noise!



I want to fall asleep to the owls, be woken by the loons, and smell pine needles baking in the sun when I trek from my cabin to the Office before anyone else is out and about.

I am counting down the days to laughter, slamming screen doors, the crack of a bat hitting a ball, the splash of a canoe in the water, and the first off-key Taylor Swift song at Opening Campfire.

Registration and Recruitment season is always a reflective time for me. I love to see the campers and families who have put their trust in us and return year after year. Emails that say "they loved last year so much and haven't stopped singing" bring a warmth to these long winter days. It's also a great time to remind ourselves of the "why" of our work while we still have peaceful moments.

The world can be a hard place right now and providing a soft space for our kids and staff to relax, refresh, and reenergize will be a key to success this summer. We need to prepare ourselves for difficult conversations, for participants who have been exposed to scary situations in places they considered safe, for egregious behaviors that were once disrespectful and are now celebrated through media. As camp professionals that care deeply, we will continue to provide a safe emotional and physical environment where we encourage kids and staff to have fun, to play, to rediscover the magic that makes camp so special.

When that first cup bounces off the floor I am not going to be annoyed this year. I am going to remember that we, as Maine Camps, are bringing joy to thousands of kids as they disconnect from screens, flourish inside the camp bubble, strengthen life skills, develop good character, try new things, learn from their mistakes, and feel safe and happy and supported by positive relationships and memories they will carry with them for a lifetime.

I encourage you to take a few moments to reflect on the things you are most looking forward to and do something nice to reward yourself for the endless work that happens during this season to benefit the campers and staff that will soon surround you, bringing the spirit of camp back to life.

Take Care,

Terri Mulks
Director, Camp Susan Curtis
President, Maine Summer Camps

MYCA UPDATE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2026 is a big election year in Maine. Not only will we elect/re-elect 35 state Senators and 151 state Representatives, as we do every two years, but we have a busy Governor's race with no incumbent candidate. Additionally, we have the U.S. Senate race with five-term incumbent Senator Collins, and the U.S. Congressional race in Maine's 2nd district, with no incumbent candidate.



Now feels like a good time to remind membership MYCA's role during election years. As a 501c4 nonprofit organization, MYCA contributes to PACs (political action committees) on behalf of membership only at the state level. We contribute equally to the Democrat and Republican PACs for statehouse Senate and statehouse House of Representatives. We also make equal contributions, after the primaries, to the Democrat and the Republican candidates in the Governor's race (in a field with multiple independent candidates, MYCA makes a campaign contribution to the top candidate).

MYCA does not make contributions to national PACs (i.e., no U.S. Senate, Congressional nor Presidential candidates); our focus is the state level. However, we do realize the important work being done on all camps' behalf by ACA (American Camp Association) in D.C. and MYCA will be making a 2026 contribution to ACA's Camp Caucus, which focuses on educating members of Congress on the benefits of summer camp, with the goal of expanding summer camp affordability and accessibility opportunities for children.

New resources for members:

■ MYCA recommends camps create or update their **immunization policy**. For more information go to the most recent Hall Monitor, or the MSC website resource page.



Click to access to access immunization policy information.

■ April 8 at 10am, MYCA will host a virtual Casual Conversation for members. We will review current topics, such as what to do if you have a bat in a sleeping area, medication administration by UAPs — unlicensed assistive personnel — and Eating & Lodging Licenses for weddings & rental groups. Join us and bring your own questions for our panel.



Click here to register for the Virtual Casual Conversation.

Laura Ordway, Winona Camps
President MYCA Board
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.

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NICK TEICH: Use of Language at Camp; Levels of Response; Importance of roadmaps

“Nobody understands how hard it is to run a camp,” Teich, owner of Fairwinds Camp Consulting, told the gathering at the beginning of his presentation. “It’s getting harder and harder.” While the issues that campers and staff bring to camp are growing in complexity and challenge, “camp is more important than ever,” Teich said.

Conversations stemming from language that campers and staff use in certain circumstances are therefore vital, he said. For example, campers and staff may use the terms “traumatized,” “triggered,” or “OCD,” in a variety of situations without the presence of those words’ clinical diagnostic meaning.

Because their words “may not be what they mean,” a key question to pose is: “What is going on for you right now?” Teich said. That question can be directed from leadership to staff, or staff to campers.

Teich described a system of green, yellow and red categories helping to determine the level of involvement on the part of counselors, middle-management and top leadership. Green describes situations that front-line staff, i.e., counselors, should be able to initially address, including missing home, small conflicts or teasing. Yellow situations require support from unit heads or other supervisors, Teich said, and red demand top leadership’s attention “ASAP.”

“Staff want scripts,” and having specific examples of issues and responses can be helpful, he said.

Teich also addressed the importance of presenting information about the camp and gathering information about potential campers. The more specific the questions for parents – along with an explanation of why camps seek detailed information about children – the better prepared the camp will be for potential issues that arise over the course of a summer.

Roadmaps for camps are key, Teich said. If a camp knows how it will respond in certain situations – with roles established for each level of leadership – it will be better prepared. The debrief of the situations will also be streamlined, he said.

EMILY GOLINSKY: Utilization of Personnel; Addressing/ Assessing Stressors; Staff Skills

Emily Golinsky, owner of Bright Moose, LLC, told workshop participants that a key question to ask in leading a camp today is “what’s going on behaviorally?”

In addressing and assessing situations, another vital question is “what do you need?” Golinsky said. For example, if a staff member states that they don’t feel “safe” in managing a physical argument between campers, Golinsky says it is essential to determine “what’s actually happening,” and acknowledge the nervous system response the staff member is experiencing.

This requires staff backup, giving directions, and granting “permission to step back without judgment,” Golinsky said. It also begs the question of whether the staff member is experiencing “fear from the behavior or from not knowing what to do.” A staff member should “return to baseline” before they go back to their responsibilities. “You shouldn’t ignore their actual needs,” Golinsky said, but it is important to assess whether the staff member’s response was “appropriate versus out of range.”

“It’s calibration without condescension,” she said. It is also important to validate the staff member’s experience, lowering “the intensity without shame or judgment.” The staff member’s experience can be “reframed as a leadership skill,” Golinsky said.

Steps that set up staff for success include defining team roles and promoting a “try three before me” approach when counselors address situations before seeking leadership staff assistance. Giving staff members a toolkit is essential, as is creating “culture of confidence and support,” Golinsky said.

Following the presentations, workshop participants transitioned to breakout groups. They then returned to the Sebago room for a brief period of Q & A.

“The level of engagement throughout the day was remarkable,” Malm said.

Malm added that the virtual MSC Casual Conversation held Monday, February 9 “was a wonderful extension of this work.” The one-hour gathering offered about 15 participants the opportunity to process the Winter Workshop together. “It was exactly the kind of environment we hoped to foster: a space to ask, share, listen and connect with peers in a meaningful way.”

“I’m incredibly grateful to the presenters, the Education Committee (pictured below), and to Lucy, Raine and Kris for all the behind-the-scenes work that made it possible,” Malm said. ■



Education Committee members: front row, Beigette Gill, Jake Henry-Hill, Becky Alford; back row, Karen Malm, Terri Mulks, Lucy Norvell, Lisa Tripler, Heidi Kreiger, Carissa Chipman, Nick Teich, Laura Jo Cunningham, Anne Soto. Other Education Committee members include: Kathy Jonas, Matt Pines, Peter Kassen and Clay Miles.

Pilgrim Lodge, West End House Girls Camp Receive ACA Grants

Two MSC camp members have been awarded grants totaling nearly \$200,000 for implementation projects funded by the **ACA Character at Camp initiative**. Pilgrim Lodge will receive \$100,000 over two years, while West End House Girls Camp was granted \$98,292 over two years. The camps are among 77 recipients chosen as part of the ACA's competitive national Character at Camp initiative supported by Lilly Endowment, Inc.



PILGRIM LODGE was granted \$100,000 over a two-year period to “support the character traits of integrity, community-mindedness and leadership,” through a number of avenues, said Pilgrim Lodge director Elizabeth Charles McGough. To help implement the camp’s plans, the grant will help to fund two new positions — a Challenge Program Specialist (for the camp’s soon-to-be expanded low ropes course) and a Leadership Mentor for a new Leaders-in-Training Program for high school-aged youth, McGough said.

“We are so honored, so excited, and really grateful,” she said. “To be able to do something multi-year and on this scale is a big opportunity for us.”

“Every camper at Pilgrim Lodge will benefit from some of our enhanced program across all age levels,” she said. Plans also include implementing “on a small scale, restorative practices for community building and harm repair,” McGough said.

With the Leaders-in-Training Program “our hope is to equip our campers through creative experiential learning,” she said. The program will include a capstone project, a creative project demonstrating participants’ reflections on their experiences, McGough said. “We want camp to feel different [for participants] and have a different impact for them.”

The grant will also support “outreach to welcome campers from underserved populations with funds to support equity of access to camp,” she said.

The character initiatives will extend beyond the grant term, McGough said. “Through curriculum development and training for staff, we aim to implement quality improvement and evaluation measures that help us sustain our enhanced program beyond the two-year period of the grant,” she shared. ■



West End House Girls Camp Executive Director Laurie Palagyi and West End House Girls Camp Director Betsy Brown

The ACA Character in Camp initiative awarded **WEST END HOUSE GIRLS CAMP** \$98,282 over two years, an implementation grant that will support the camp’s commitment to “love of learning, drive, and responsibility.”

“We very much have a culture of character,” said Executive Director Laurie Palagyi. The grant will enable the camp to develop a specific program with evaluation metrics. That program will be centered on a low ropes course adventure challenge, she said, adding that that adventure challenge will serve as “scaffolding” for learning the stated character goals.

The character education will be “wrapped around touchpoints throughout the year,” reinforcing its lessons and enhancing their impact on campers’ home and school lives, Palagyi said.

Palagyi said conversations about building the ropes course are currently taking place, and the camp plans to hire a seasonal, “hopefully recurring,” employee — an “Adventure in Character Coordinator.” During the first year of the grant, the new program will focus on the camp community, Palagyi said. By the fall of year two the camp hopes to extend the ropes course experience to the “community outside camp,” including schools and other nonprofits. The camp also plans to offer ropes course opportunities to businesses and other entities.

“We will be bridging the gap between summer camp and the community,” she said. That effort will be a way of saying ‘we’re not just a camp in your community but a camp for you as well.’ ■

Thank You to Our Winter Workshop Sponsor Tavezio!

Maine Summer Camps extends its sincere gratitude to Tavezio and its president, Josh Cohen, for once again sponsoring the annual MSC Winter Workshop.

As a former camp professional, Cohen knows what MSC camp members need to operate and succeed. Support between the camping industry and businesses like Tavezio “should go both ways,” he said.

“I think first and foremost we are one of the companies where camp is a large majority of our business,” Cohen said. “It’s important to really support the industry and associations like MSC. They are doing so much for not just our clients but camps in general.”

Tavezio’s mission is “to optimize supply ordering for our members with proprietary technology that enables streamlined order, reporting and invoicing to save time and money.” The company was founded in 1997 as H&H Purchasing Services.

Summer 2026 Update

In brief remarks during the Winter Workshop, Cohen reported that “as of today, we do not have any major crazy things to be worried about,” adding “that could change tomorrow.”

Cold weather in southern states could impact produce prices, he said, and the cost of beef is “trending higher.”

The good news, he said, is that “eggs [prices] are the lowest we’ve ever seen.” ■

Business Networking Extravaganza continued from page 1



Ajay Henry-Hill took the stage to choose raffle winners at the Business Networking Extravaganza.

“There are thousands of vendors out there, but as a camp director, I feel best supporting those who attended the MSC Business Networking Extravaganza,” she said. “**These are the businesses who care enough about summer camps to become members, so camps choose them to do business with. It’s a win for all.**”

Raffle News

The Business Networking Extravaganza concluded with the Annual Raffle. Nearly two dozen prizes were donated by participating vendors, and lucky winners took home prizes ranging from travel mugs to sweatshirts and gift cards to golf balls – plus the perennial Stickers and More guitar. The Mega Prize, a two-night stay at the Inn at Ocean’s Edge in Lincolnville, donated by Migis Lodge, went to Andy Lilienthal of Camp Winnebago. ■

Thank You to Our BNE Sponsors!



Bruce McDonald Joins JMG Leadership Team

Will join Bill Southwick and Lynn O'Donnell in directing program

The leadership of the Junior Maine Guide program has evolved since longtime director John “Moose” Curtis stepped down after the 2023 encampment. Ron Fournier of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife served as lead director for the past two summers, but his responsibilities at the Department preclude him continuing in the leadership role, though he will stay involved with the program.



Caitlin Southwick photo

Bruce McDonald

For 2026, longtime Junior Maine Guide examiners Lynn O'Donnell, Bruce McDonald, and Bill Southwick will direct the encampment. All three are Registered Maine Guides who have been a part of the program since their candidate days during the summer of 1981. They have trained candidates for the program, developed teaching resources for camp use, and mentored staff and campers alike for many years.

Lynn, Bruce, and Bill are excited for the opportunity to continue Moose's legacy and to shepherd the program into the future, including the 90th year of JMG in 2027. They are fortunate to be joined by a veteran and passionate group of examiners who will help ensure the programs continued success and relevance.

The 2026 JMG test encampment will be held from July 27 to 31 at the Stephen Phillips Memorial Preserve in Oquossoc. As always, please reach out to the MSC office with questions about the JMG program.

–Bill Southwick



Interested in Developing a Camp Craft Program?

Learn more about the Junior Maine Guide Woodscraft programs

The Junior Maine Guide Program, an outdoor skills program for youth ages 9-18, was founded in 1937 by an act of the Maine State Legislature. A joint program of Maine Summer Camps and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, it promotes the use of the Maine wilderness for recreation and environmentally responsible land use practices. The JMG program may be best known for its annual test encampment, where candidates ages 14-18 seek formal certification as Junior Maine Guides. But test encampment and JMG certification are the end of a skills progression that begins with the Woodscraft programs. The Junior Maine Woodscraft and Maine Woodscraft curriculum is designed for younger campers interested in developing outdoor living skills. Want to learn more? The program curriculum is set forth in *The Art of Outdoor Living*, the JMG resource manual now in its 7th edition. For more information, contact the MSC office. The book is available for purchase. Click on the live link and enter \$34 (book price). Then type in credit card number and name. In the notes field, indicate you are purchasing the book and provide name and address. We will send it to you!



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MSC 2026 Directory Reaching Mailboxes!

The MSC 2026 Directory distribution process is well underway. Camp and Business Members received copies and a pdf of the print version is now live on our website.

Please request additional directory copies by emailing Raine in the MSC office. Educators at elementary, middle, and high schools; career offices and faculty members at Maine's colleges and universities; and Chambers of Commerce across all 16 counties have also received their copies. They are now in the process of requesting additional copies in addition to rack cards featuring the QR codes for the Find-A-Camp tool and for the MSC Job Board. In addition to the MSC office, an array of partners and supporters across the state and all eight Maine State Information Centers are helping to distribute our 2026 Directory. It's a popular resource within Maine's camp community and also among those in the external world who are curious about Maine camps. MSC is grateful for generous advertising support of our 2026 Directory. Huge thanks to: Chalmers Camp Insurance, CampMinder, Norway Savings Bank, Brio Custom, Buckspan Deering REMAX Shoreline, Camp USA by Interchange, Curtis Thaxter Attorneys at Law, DownEast Magazine, Migis Lodge, Northeast Charter & Tour Company, Pierce Atwood LLP, RegPack, Wingspeed Adventures & Take Flight Aerial Adventures.



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MSC is Committed to Providing *Real Resources*

A note from Lucy Norvell, Executive Director

The MSC tagline is: *Real Kids. Real Camps. Real Maine!*

We live by and work by this tagline. However, as our staff, both boards, and key leaders focus on providing the most up-to-date information and the best forms of support to our member camps and the camp professionals connected to member camps, it is essential to consider the most **secure** and **efficient** methods of protecting and sharing resources as we provide access. Top of mind right now is improving how to provide *Real Resources* securely and without creating a sprawling “link farm” to navigate the variety of links and documents we must share. There is a need to explore documents like the upcoming Employment Memo that are created and provided through the efforts of MYCA, to explore documents and reminders from HIP that Lisa Silva and other state personnel share with MSC (including the 208 Rule itself), and to explore resources that accompany workshops and webinars and those that include best practices for our profession. All our resources are shared because they are Maine-specific or because they need to be viewed with a Maine lens. They’re shared because something about them is important for Maine camp professionals to know.

While *Real Resources* may not be part of our tagline, providing them to you is a part of my job that I take seriously. I’m working on improving how we aggregate and organize resources on the

website. I’m also working on creating access for those MSC members who should have it while preventing access by non-Members. This challenge is not uniquely ours, but it is a challenge, nonetheless. I’m also focusing on efficiency. Last spring we introduced some evergreen documents. Once you have the link, you will be able to access the document on an ongoing basis, including the most recent updates to it. An example of this kind of resource is our annual Certifications and Trainings document. Raine reached out for updates and camp reps are entering their own session details. Contact office at office@mainecamps.org for the form. Raine, Kris, and I will also be working to ensure that resource content included in the Hall Monitor will be loaded onto the website. So, the next time you’re looking for a memo like the Immunization Memo from the late February Hall Monitor, you can navigate to the website to find it, rather than searching for it in your email.

If you have resources to share with other Maine camps or if you have searched for—but have been unable to find—resources you or members of your team expected to find on our website, please email to let me know what they are! (camps@mainecamps.org) I’m also open to and grateful for any other additional thoughts, feedback, and suggestions. Thank you. ■



Leaders Aren't Born at Camp. *They're Made.*

At Chalmers, we understand that strong leadership is the foundation of a safe, thriving camp. That’s why we go beyond insurance—offering expert-led webinars, in-person trainings, insightful blogs, monthly newsletters, and regular check-ins. We’re here to support the leaders who make camp unforgettable.

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► IENA

IENA's Summer Camp program is a J-1 cultural exchange program that helps U.S. summer camps recruit qualified international staff while promoting meaningful cross-cultural exchange. Camps are matched with motivated counselors, activity specialists, and support staff from around the world who bring diverse skills, perspectives, and energy to camp life.

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► THE MAINE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Maine Championships is a one-day tennis event, created to be the crown jewel of inter-camp competition. This season, The Maine Championships will be held at the University of New England in Biddeford, Maine. Nestled at the mouth of the Saco River, UNE boasts 6 championship level, fully lit tennis courts, as well as a press box, and stadium court. Participating campers will receive a shirt, swag bag, ribbon, medal, or trophy, and an unforgettable day of inter-camp competition!

mainecampships@gmail.com
(857) 316-6364

New Business Members continues on page 11

► PINE STATE RECREATION

At Pine State Recreation, we help summer camps create outdoor spaces where kids can play hard, stay safe, and make memories. From commercial-grade playgrounds and park amenities to residential-style play options, we carry a wide range of equipment built for durability, performance, and long-term value.

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MSC Committee Briefings

MSC benefits from the work of several amazing committees as evidenced by the success of the recent Winter Workshop & Business Networking Extravaganza that was powered by members of the Education and Business Committees. This Winter, several committees are undertaking new or expanded initiatives to serve the needs of the membership. These two summaries will bring you up to date on some of their activities until a broader group of Committee Reports is provided at the time of the Virtual Semi-Annual Meeting on Wednesday, May 6 at 10am.

DEI COMMITTEE: MSC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is focusing on coordinating an in-person workshop for MSC camp professionals before everyone scatters across Maine to hold pre-camp training and to welcome campers in summer 2026. The workshop topic will be: **Supporting our Neurodivergent Staff and Campers**. While having attended the recent Winter Workshop is not a requirement, for those who did, this session will build on fundamentals discussed by Emily and Nick. The workshop goal is for attendees to walk away with several practical session ideas that can be customized for pre-camp training at individual MSC member camps. MSC consultants and business members, Emily Chaleff, of Chaleff Consulting, and Haley Pogachefsky, of Hummingbird OT LLC are collaborating to create this session exclusively for MSC.

MSC Committee Briefings continues on page 12

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Mark your calendar!
2026 Upcoming Events

BOARD MEETINGS (Virtual unless otherwise noted)

- Wednesday, April 8, 10am-noon — MYCA Work Session
- Wednesday, April 29, 10am-noon — MSC Board
- Wednesday, May 13, 10am-noon — MYCA Board

MSC EVENTS & MEETINGS

- Thursday, March 19, Virtual MSC NonProfit Circle (NPC), 10-11am
- Friday, March 27, Maine State Meeting & Social, 5-6:30pm, NE Camp Conference, DoubleTree, Manchester, NH, Penstock
- Wednesday, April 8, Virtual Casual Conversation with MYCA Panel reviewing current topics, 10-11am
- Thursday, April 9, NonProfit Circle (NPC) In-person Meet-Up, Camp Mechuwana, Winthrop, 10am-2pm; 12:30pm lunch included. MSC Members only; no cost
- Thursday, April 30, Supporting Our Neurodivergent Staff and Campers. Smith Center at Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment, Freeport, 9am-12:30pm
- Wednesday, May 6, Virtual MYCA/MSC Semi-Annual Meeting, 10-11:30am

ACA CONFERENCE DATES & LOCATIONS

- Thursday, March 26 – Saturday, March 28, New England Camp Conference, DoubleTree by Hilton Downtown, Manchester, NH
- Monday, March 30 - Tuesday, March 31, Virtual ACA Climate Symposium, 11:30am EST start time both days

Virtual Casual Conversation for MSC Members with a Panel of MYCA Board Members

MSC members are invited to join a panel of MYCA board members for a Casual Conversation on April 8 at 10am.

We will review current topics, such as:

- ▶ What to do if you have a bat in a sleeping area
- ▶ Medication administration by UAPs - unlicensed assistive personnel
- ▶ Eating & Lodging Licenses for weddings & rental groups.



[Click here to register for the Virtual Casual Conversation](#)

MSC Committee Briefings continued from page 11

SAVE THE DETAILS: Supporting our Neurodivergent Staff and Campers, Thursday, April 30 at the Smith Center at Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment in Freeport, (home of Farm Camp, a MSC member). Coffee at 9. Session begins promptly at 9:30 and ends at 12:30. Registration opens soon. This workshop is happening thanks to the dedicated members of the DEI Committee: Co-Chairs Cara Bergantino, Camp Encore Coda, and Peter Kassen, MSC board member, and committee members Katie Williams, Farm Camp; Ajay Henry-Hill; Macy Galvan, Mid-Coast Youth Center; Lydia Hoffman, Pilgrim Lodge; Camille Dion, Camp Tekakwitha, and Rene Cote, Kingsley Pines.



Member Engagement Committee members at the 2026 Winter Workshop. Josh Holland, Alyssa Mehl, Rory O'Connor, Laura Jo Cunningham, Matt Cornish, and Reed Rathgeber.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT: MSC board member Laura Jo Cunningham of Kingsley Pines has just taken the helm of the committee formerly known as the Membership committee. With a new committee name and two additional MSC board members on board (Secretary Matt Cornish of Camp Beech Cliff and Josh Holland of Camp Winnebago), the group will focus on exploring expanded, new, and meaningful ways to engage MSC camps, their leaders, and members of their staff and camp communities. They will also explore some of the back-office systems and organizational practices that could help support this important work. We are grateful to have the following camp professionals also serving on this committee: Rory O'Connor, Kamp Kohut, Alyssa Mehl, Camp Cobbossee, and Reed Rathgeber, Wohelo Camps. A survey of your ideas, suggestions, and preferences is in our future. The Member Engagement committee invites your suggestions on how MSC can involve and support our members and your thoughts about what continues to make Maine camps so special. Please reach out to Laura Jo via email. (laurajo@kingsleypines.com) or to a committee member you know personally.

Maine Camp History

Camp Uncommon: Otisfield, Maine

By Henry Paul Johnson, Maine Summer Camp Historian

On the edge of Pleasant Lake in Otisfield, Maine on property which was the home of Camp Powhatan from 1921 to 1996 and following that, Seeds of Peace, we welcome, **Camp Uncommon**.

According to the Camp Uncommon website:

“The campgrounds include sports fields for soccer, football, and baseball, multiple courts for basketball, volleyball, and tennis, as well as a Gaga Ball pit, street hockey court, and a zip line with group challenge elements to promote teamwork and confidence.”

The Camp Uncommon waterfront enjoys some eighteen cabins with direct lakefront access. Pleasant Lake provides the venue for a host of waterfront activities including swimming, canoeing, and kayaking.

Camp Uncommon provides an environment that encourages both safety and health and “reinforces the positive self

image of the individual campers.” Campers are provided the opportunities for emotional and physical growth, encouraging their natural abilities while at the same time benefiting from group living.

The Camp Uncommon website further provides:

“Our ultimate goal is to provide an enjoyable, exciting summer experience that motivates our campers to approach the future with courage, confidence, and a feeling of self-worth, which we believe will ultimately build upon the greater mission of Uncommon Schools—to prepare scholars for college and beyond.”

Camp Uncommon is under the directorship of Mike Callahan. Mr. Callahan’s resume includes a Bachelors Degree in Social Work from Rutgers University, a Masters Degree in Social Work from New York University as well as camper and counselor experiences at Maine Camp Kinglsey Pines and various camps both in New Jersey and Massachusetts.

The camp is open to families of Uncommon School students (grades 3 through 9). Campers who attend Camp Uncommon are selected from Uncommon elementary and middle schools in Boston, Camden, Newark, New York City, and Rochester. The camp serves campers from under-resourced communities.

Camp Uncommon continues from page 14

to do list:

- order uniforms
- design new tee
- research new items
- decide on staff gift
- ecommerce?!
- call Brio
- Relax

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Campers from Camp Uncommon are students from the Uncommon Charter Schools located in New York and New Jersey.

Camp Uncommon is staffed by Uncommon teachers and alumni in addition to “dedicated individuals” looking to make certain campers are safe and are having the time of their lives.

Camp Uncommon’s website specifically emphasizes that the camp respects and values diverse life experiences and heritages and strives to ensure that all voices are appreciated and heard.

I had the opportunity to have a Zoom interview with Director Mike Callahan on March 2, 2026 who emphasized during our interview the following:

Camp Uncommon grew from a recognized need from the Uncommon Charter School programs throughout the Northeast including Brooklyn, New York, and Newark, New Jersey.

Initially, Camp Uncommon, which started with some 115 campers, was hosted at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. Over time, Camp Uncommon grew to its present home at Camp Powhatan.

The Camp, as explained by Camp Director Mike Callahan, is divided into three two-week sessions and provides the opportunity of a camp experience for nearly 560 campers. Camp Uncommon provides the opportunity for “students” specifically to experience time away from home that does not “typically exist” during a traditional school year.

Camp Uncommon, among many of its unique qualities, has a social-emotional program which begins with a “Morning Summit” and ends with an “Evening Summit”. Summit topics have included examinations of gratitude, bravery, and other value-related issues.

The motto of the camp includes curiosity/responsibility/self-confidence/independence. Camp Uncommon is co-educational and in addition to its campers, has had a staff between 80-85 persons which includes but is not limited to Camp Uncommon school teachers and camp alumni.

Mr. Callahan emphasized that his directorship of Camp Uncommon is a “dream job” and the enthusiasm which he shared with this Historian through my recent interview was reflective of his love of Maine camps and the Maine camp experience. ■



Camp Uncommon is now located at the former Camp Powhatan and Seeds of Peace site in Otisfield.



This article is written by noted author and Maine Summer Camp Historian, Henry Johnson, who attended Camp Powhatan in Otisfield, Maine from 1966 through 1979 as a camper, counselor, and, ultimately, program director. Mr. Johnson is the author of numerous articles and publications relating to the history of Maine summer camps. If you wish to submit information to

Mr. Johnson relating to the history of any Maine summer camp, you may do so at the following email: hjohnson@henryjohnsonlaw.com.