



# Camp Akeela<sup>SM</sup> Circular

## News from the Directors

Dear Friends,

As hard as it was to say goodbye to our friends who joined us for the Winter Weekend reunion in Massachusetts, we were encouraged by the fact that February is here, which means that camp is quickly approaching! Here in our camp office, we are all very busy planning for this summer. We have already hired a vast amount of our staff, made plans for new programs and enrolled both returning and new campers. We hope you're as excited as we are for Akeela 2018!

As we look forward to next summer, it's also a milestone year on which we are celebrating our camp's history. Akeela was "born" in the summer of 2008. This June, we will be hosting an alumni reunion to celebrate camp's 10th birthday with many of the former campers and staff members who have been part of our community through the years. When we first envisioned the idea of a reunion, we were unsure how many of our "old-time" staff members and campers would still remember their time on Miller Pond. Well, the response has been overwhelming; we are so touched by the calls and emails we've received about this summer's event. Scores of alumni have shared with us that Akeela was truly a life-changing experience for them. They've also made us incredibly proud of their amazing accomplishments that they've achieved since their camp days.

A few highlights from the RSVPs we've received thus far:

- Former campers living in California and Colorado, as well as staff members from as far as Ireland and Mexico, have expressed interest in attending the reunion.
- Quite a few alumni have been inspired by the upcoming reunion to get in touch with old friends and bunkmates!
- Young men and women that we last saw as teenagers are now studying and employed in fields as varied as architecture, civil engineering, game design, media and communications, child care, entrepreneurship, and so much more.

Happy 10th Birthday, Camp Akeela! And thanks to all of you for being a part of our community!

Fondly,

*Debbie Eric*



## WHAT'S INSIDE

Start Planning for Camp.....	2
Kevin's Korner.....	3
New This Summer.....	3
Camper Feedback.....	4
Winter Weekend.....	5
Wedding Bells.....	5
Head Counselors.....	6-7
Greg's Gab.....	8
Upcoming Birthdays.....	8
Returning Campers.....	9
Returning Staff.....	9
Akeela Alumnus.....	10



## IMPORTANT 2018 DATES

OPEN HOUSE IN VT:  
June 17

VT FIRST SESSION:  
June 27 - July 20

VT SECOND SESSION:  
July 23 - August 15

FAMILY CAMP:  
August 18 - August 24

# It's not too soon to start planning for camp!

We know it's still winter; for those on the East Coast, it's cold and snowy and summer seems very far away. But the next few months will pass quickly and before we know it, we'll be together at camp! As we gear up for the summer here in the office, we thought that it might be helpful for you to start preparing at home, too. Here are some suggestions of things you might do between now and summer to get ready for an amazing experience at Akeela:



**MONTHS  
BEFORE CAMP**

- If you are a returning camper, email or call an Akeela friend. Get in touch and see how he/she's doing. Talk about what you're looking forward to at camp. Maybe set up a time to get together, in person, or online.
- If you are a new camper, explore the Akeela website to see a daily schedule, photos of camp and more details about the community that you'll be joining. Make a list of any questions you'd like to ask us or your pen-pal (whose contact information you'll get in the late spring).
- Talk to other people you know who have been to camp and find out what they loved about their experience.

- Make a list of all of the things you're excited to try at Akeela this summer.
- Review the camp video so you can really try to picture what camp might be like.
- Plan a sleepover outside of your home to get used to sleeping in a different bed.
- Order any Camp Akeela "gear" you want for camp.



**MONTHS  
BEFORE CAMP**



**MONTHS  
BEFORE CAMP**

- Start gathering a list of family and friends you might want to write to while you're at camp.
- Address envelopes to those people with your parents and put stamps on now ... It's one less thing to do when you're busy at camp!
- Practice doing more things on your own like making your bed, picking out your clothes, etc.
- Make sure your parents sent all of your camp forms in!

- Get in touch with your pen-pal. Ask him/her questions about him/herself. Talk about the things you're excited about trying at camp!
- Make sure you and your parents have everything you'll need to pack – look at the list and check things off.
- Practice the camp daily schedule (wake-up, meal times, showering every day, bedtime routines).
- Start limiting your "screen time" (TV, video games, etc.) so that you're feeling ready to jump right into your fun- filled, electronics-free camp life!



**MONTH  
BEFORE CAMP!**

## WE'LL SEE YOU SOON!

# Kevin's Korner



Dear Akeela Families,

What a fun weekend we recently spent with so many Akeela campers at our annual Winter Weekend Reunion! For some campers, it was their first Winter Weekend experience, while others were returning to a familiar setting. What impressed me most throughout the weekend was the amount of fun Akeela campers created for themselves during the reunion.

As much as we try to re-create the feeling of spending a summer on Miller Pond, there are certain limitations to activities we are able to offer over the weekend. With snow covering the ground and a chill in the air, campers made the most of every single moment they had together. They started snowman building competitions, created a gaga pit out of a mud room, and made sure to share these moments with new and old friends! These are just a few examples of the many instances of campers taking the initiative to make their own fun with fellow campers.

The Akeela community truly picked up right where we left off at the end of the summer and had an amazing weekend. Our campers took the "Fun" pillar to heart over the reunion weekend, and we were so proud of them for creating their own magic!

Love,  
Kevin

## New This Summer for our Older Campers... More Choice, Privileges and Responsibilities!

In 2018, we are introducing an exciting new program for our senior campers finishing grades 9 and 10. More details will be available before the summer, but we can promise a series of fresh activities geared specifically to their age group. Our high schoolers will have a chance to develop their teamwork and collaboration skills, to be leaders in camp, and to give back to the wider community. The program will be choice-based and will be inspired by suggestions made by last summer's senior campers. We're currently developing activities in three primary areas: a STEM Tent (potentially including electrical and structural engineering, science experiments), Outdoor Adventure (perhaps designing and building a wilderness hub), and Community Service (for example, big brother/sister role with younger campers, partnership with local organizations). At the same time, we'll also be incorporating some of the life skills components of our Beyond Akeela program into the regular routine for our oldest camper groups. This will include fun and engaging activities that address topics like health & nutrition, sleep habits, physical wellness and peer leadership. We're looking forward to seeing our most senior campers hone their leadership skills and take on new responsibilities at camp!



# What To Expect From Our Camper Feedback Reports

We value partnering with parents to maximize each of our camper's experience at camp so that they can continue to grow and learn even after the summer ends. This partnership values the expertise of our staff and the parents' unique insights as they work together to establish shared expectations for the camper's social and emotional growth. Our Camper Reports, written by our head counselors, serve to provide a written document for parents to review and share with other individuals who support our campers throughout the year. These reports will be emailed to each family shortly after our campers return home. In order to make these reports more meaningful for each individual family, we lean on our partnership with parents before campers arrive so that we can gain insight into parents' goals and expectations.

As you prepare for your camper's arrival at camp, we hope the following information will be helpful to you and look forward to receiving your feedback as we think about welcoming our campers.

## **Before your camper leaves home, talk to your camper about:**

- Strengths and areas for improvement
- Goals for the summer
- Any concerns your camper would like you to share with our team

## **Talk to your camper's head counselor about:**

- Your goals for your camper
- Any concerns you and your camper have
- Any dietary or medical concerns (you will also speak to the nurse about this)
- Tools/Skills that have helped your camper at home when he/she is struggling

## **What will your camper's report look like?**

The goal of our report is not to surprise you with NEW information! Your weekly calls or written weekly updates from your camper's head counselor will enable us to keep you informed during camp about how your child is doing. The reports are a review of this information in a format that you will be able to share with your camper (if you feel it will be helpful) and any professionals who work with your camper.

Please keep in mind that we aim to do the majority of our communicating with parents during the summer in an effort to partner with you. Our reports are not a report card. We will do our best to help you understand how your child fit into our camp community. When appropriate, we will provide you with any insight and suggestions for how to help your camper continue to move forward with the success he/she had at camp.

## **After you receive the report:**

- If appropriate, feel free to share the report with your camper and use it as a springboard to discuss areas that you'd like him/her to continue to work on and celebrate his/her successes.
- Share the report with individuals who work with your camper, such as teachers, therapists, social skills leaders, etc.
- Call us at the camp office to discuss any questions or concerns

# WINTER WEEKEND 2018

Our third annual Winter Weekend was a huge success! 53 campers and 18 staff members gathered together for a fun filled weekend at Camp Winadu in Pittsfield, MA. We're so proud of how our campers represented Akeela throughout the weekend by reconnecting with each other and welcoming new faces to the community.



## *Another Akeela Wedding...*

The Akeela wedding bells are ringing once more! On January 20, 2018, David Leach and Amanda Perry tied the knot in Manchester, England. They were surrounded by their closest friends and family on this very special day. David spent five summers at Akeela (2012 - 2016), the last two as our aquatics director. Amanda came to Akeela in 2014 and led our ropes course program the past three summers. Both had an indelible impact on camp's program, people and community. We are so happy for this wonderful couple! For those of you keeping track, Dave and Amanda are the 7th Akeela staff couple to fall in love at camp and get married.



# Meet Your 2018 Head Counselors

Lots of people get confused about the actual role of these important leaders in our community. Perhaps it's the title that's misleading ... **Head counselors** are not the wonderful staff members who live in your child's bunk. Those are **cabin counselors** and **specialists**. Our head counselors are adults who live in our community and who supervise 4 cabins. They oversee the well-being of the campers and staff in those bunks and are the primary "point person" for you to call when you have a question about your child's success at camp.

Our head counselors spend all day out in camp with their campers and staff, providing ongoing support and feedback. They check messages a few times a day and return parent calls - usually in the evening. They are a wonderful resource to us, serving as our eyes and ears, because we cannot be everywhere at once! While we oversee the entire community (120 campers and close to 100 staff members), the head counselors can expertly focus on their smaller group of campers. Please let us know if you have any questions about your child's head counselor this summer.

And now we would like to introduce you to our wonderful group of head counselors who will be integral parts of your child's success at camp this summer!



## Dave Baker (2<sup>nd</sup> Session)

Dave Baker has spent over 15 summers at camp, both as a camper and a staff member. Since 2010 he has spent his summers on staff at Camp Akeela as a cabin counselor, golf specialist, assistant head counselor and head counselor. He met his wife Katie at Akeela in 2011 and the two had their rehearsal dinner on the porch of our dining hall in Vermont! Dave and Katie spend the first part of their summer as the on-site directors for our Wisconsin camp before returning to Vermont for second session.

Before he started his career in camp, Dave became a teacher, residential instructor and basketball coach at Middlebridge School, a residential boarding school in Rhode Island for students with various learning differences. He lives in Philadelphia with Katie, their daughter, Adelaide, and their dog, Luna. In his free time, Dave loves visiting with his huge family, watching his beloved New England sports teams, and visiting friends all around the country.

**Favorite Book:** Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

**Place I'd like to Visit:** Santorini, Greece

**Favorite Camp Food:** Fajitas



## Luke Cylke

Luke Cylke currently lives in Wichita, Kansas where he is pursuing his doctorate in Clinical-Community Psychology (and plans to defend his dissertation in May). He went to the University of Oregon for his undergraduate degree and is a huge Oregon Ducks fan. He is originally from Reno, Nevada and in his free time he loves to ski, rock climb, and play tennis and ping-pong. Luke started at Camp Akeela in the summer of 2013 as the tennis specialist. Camp Akeela was life changing for him and he couldn't wait to get back to Miller Pond. This summer, he will return to Akeela as a head counselor and is looking forward

to implementing his teaching and therapeutic skills to help campers and counselors learn and grow over the summer. He is also excited to make and wear tie-dye t-shirts!

**Favorite Book:** The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien

**Place I'd like to Visit:** New Zealand

**Favorite Camp Food:** Grilled Cheese



# Meet Your 2018 Head Counselors *continued from previous page*



## Nicole Frederick

Nicole was a cabin counselor at Akeela in 2014 and returned last summer as a head counselor. In May, she will complete her Masters degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a Specialization in Music Therapy from Lesley University. In her spare time, she teaches violin to students in the Boston area. She loves staying connected to the Akeela community and had a blast reconnecting with campers at the Winter Weekend. To camp, she brings her teaching and therapeutic background, along with a passion for helping people try new things and connect to one another. Nicole is looking forward to getting to know her campers, sharing music at the campfires, and working with an incredible and dedicated staff!

**Favorite Book:** Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech

**Place I'd like to Visit:** Iceland

**Favorite Camp Food:** Anything gluten free!



## Celia O'Flaherty

Celia O'Flaherty lives in Nashville, TN where she is earning her Master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education and is working toward becoming a BCBA (and will graduate in May). Celia started her journey at Akeela in 2013 as the camp photographer and nanny for Margo and Julia Sasson. She moved to a cabin counselor role from 2014 - 2016 and last summer she joined the head counseling team.

Celia grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, but has been drawn to the mountains since she attended Gonzaga University in Washington state, where she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Special Education. Celia loves everything outdoors, from hiking to swimming, rock climbing to cross country skiing and is looking forward to spending her sixth year at the greenest, happiest place on the planet!

**Favorite Book:** The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

**Place I'd like to Visit:** Switzerland

**Favorite Camp Food:** Pigs in a Blanket



## Barb Wolfson (1<sup>st</sup> Session)

Barb Wolfson has been a child advocate and professional educator for over 30 years. She is a graduate of UMass Amherst and has a Masters in Education from Lesley University. Barb was the director for 10 years at Camp Wingate\* Kirkland on Cape Cod (where Debbie and Eric met!). Barb lives in Wayland, MA with her husband Jim and their two black labs Moses and Nellie. She has two grown children, Elizabeth and Sam. Barb loves to read, cook, exercise, go to the movies with Jim, hang out with her family, spend time with friends, and take Moses and Nellie for walks.

**Favorite Book:** Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger

**Place I'd like to Visit:** Alaska

**Favorite Camp Food:** S'Mores



# GREG'S GAB

This summer will be my seventh at Camp Akeela. Working at camp has definitely helped me grow into the person I am today. Over the years, it became increasingly hard to return to the UK and find a temporary job which would enable me to return to camp each summer. However, in Fall 2017, I was lucky enough to start my full-time career as a camp professional. My wife, Julia (Akeela Art Director) and I moved to Philadelphia this fall and are loving our new adopted city. It has been a dream come true! I have been able to fully immerse myself in Akeela - hiring our incredible seasonal staff, assisting with camper recruitment and developing the program so that Akeela can continue to evolve.

## BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS...

### CAMPER BIRTHDAYS

Cole D.....February 1  
Jared B.....February 2  
Spencer M.....February 2  
Noah D.....February 3  
Eitan J.....February 10  
Wesley C.....February 12  
Ian G.....February 16  
Spencer B.....February 16  
Jessica S.....February 19  
John M.....February 22  
Zachary A.....February 23  
Lincoln B.....February 23  
Bella M.....February 24  
Jordan G.....February 24  
Nina P.....February 24  
Timothy J.....February 25  
Lily W.....March 1  
Ross V.....March 1  
Ben S.....March 2  
Matthew L.....March 3  
Blake B.....March 6  
Christopher G.....March 6  
Sam S.....March 7  
Margaret R.....March 10  
Celina TK.....March 13



Jacob P.....March 16  
David F.....March 18  
Cameron S.....March 19  
Rohan P.....March 22  
Leo E.....March 24  
Mary Clare G....March 25  
Sean R.....March 25  
Ryan D.....March 26  
Steven H.....March 26  
Wilem T.....March 29  
Henry T.....March 29  
Charlotte P.....April 2  
Nicholas M.....April 2  
Christopher J.....April 3  
Lauren M.....April 4  
Jonathan S.....April 4  
Aidan S.....April 6  
Tyler J.....April 6  
Noah O.....April 8  
Harish A.....April 10  
Ian M.....April 10  
Owen H.....April 10  
Ben N.....April 14  
Sophie S.....April 15  
Aerin K.....April 18



Justin R.....April 20  
Yonatan FN.....April 23  
Maddie M.....April 27  
Charlie N.....April 29  
Christopher A.....April 29  
Otis F.....April 29  
Vince R.....April 29  
Elliot T.....April 30

### STAFF BIRTHDAYS

Chris G.....February 8  
Cheyanne S.....February 12  
Sascha K.....February 16  
Annie F.....February 24  
Naomi D.....March 2  
Chef Trina.....March 4  
Jeffrey A.....March 4  
Giovanni G.....March 8  
Robert B.....March 19  
Uduak W.....March 22  
Wyatt S.....March 30  
Cassidy R-S.....April 4  
Riley H.....April 4  
Adriana B.....April 4  
Rhys O.....April 8  
Mei Li S.....April 13  
Chef Grant.....April 30





# RETURNING CAMPERS

*We love having a great mix of returning and new campers at Akeela. First-time campers bring so much to our community: new friendships, fresh ideas, and a contagious enthusiasm for all things Akeela. They also benefit from the guidance and wisdom of Akeela "veterans". These returning campers are the keepers of camp traditions and understand in their souls how magical Akeela is. Here is a list of campers already re-enrolled for next summer...*

## IN FIRST SESSION

Abigail A • Adam L • Aerin K • Alexander K • Amanda C • Amelia W • Aviva S • Bella M • Ben W • Brayden T • Charlotte W • Christopher A • Christopher J • Cole M • Cooper I • Dolan M • Drew W • Elliot K • Elliot S • Ethan K • Henry G • Henry T • Ian G • Ian M • India GJ • Isabelle S • Jack C • Jacob L • Jabob O • Jaden T • Jamie G • Jamie O • Jeremy G • Joseph H • Kali T • Kira L • Kolin H • Lena R • Lily W • Luke B • Mariette P • Mary Clare G • Matthew T • Nate L • Nina P • Noah D • Noah JT • Noah J • Noah O • Olivia S • Oscar F • Otelia S • Owen H • Peter G • Ryan BA • Ryan D • Ryan O • Shannon R • Sophie A • Spencer K • Spencer M • Spencer W • Steven H • Talia M • Thomas C • Thomas H • Thomas L • Tyler R • Vince R • Yoni B

## IN SECOND SESSION

Aidan S • Alex K • Alexander B • Alexander M • Alice L • Aviva S • Ben N • Ben R • Ben S • Benjamin G • Benjamin W • Christopher A • Dani S • Declan T • Elizabeth L • Elliot K • Elliot T • Ethan K • Evan F • Felix A • Harish A • Ian G • Ian M • Isabelle L • Jackson B • Jamie O • Jared B • Jared T • Jason N • Jeremy G • Joe S • Jonah L • Jonah V • Jude H • Justin R • Kyle S • Kyra A • Lily W • Lucas M • Lukas S • Lydia D • Maddie M • Manny D • Marshall G • Matty A • Michael KF • Owen H • Reese K • Sadie K • Sam S • Sarah B • Sophie S • Spencer B • Spencer K • Spencer W • Xavier K • Yonatan FN • Yoni B

# RETURNING STAFF

We're excited to have a healthy dose of returning staff members in camp this coming summer! They carry on traditions and bring extraordinary leadership to the community. Here's a list of who is returning this summer:

**Rodrigo Aramburo – Kitchen Staff**

Cullen Baker – Cabin Counselor

**Dave Baker – Head Counselor**

Lily Baker – Campus Coordinator

**Kyle Bennett – Aquatics Director**

Callum Boucher – Sports Specialist

**Paul Carreto – Kitchen Staff**

Angie Casiano – Cook

**Luke Cylke – Head Counselor (from 2013)**

Alexa Driscoll – Arts Specialist

**Nicole Frederick – Head Counselor**

Izzy Freedman – Health Center Administrator

**Dara Gray – Cabin Counselor (from 2016)**

Rob Glyn-Jones – Communications Director

**Jose Giovanni Gutierrez Flores – Prep Cook**

Ben Jerez – Trip Director

**Darwin Garcia Juarez – Cook**

Ale Garcia Velazquez – Kitchen Staff / Baker

**Danielle Logan – Lead Swim Specialist**

Lev Marcus – Hiking & Camping Specialist

**Carolina Mendoza Rios – Housekeeper / Kitchen**

Thomas Meredith – Hiking & Camping Specialist

**Celia O'Flaherty – Head Counselor**

Darragh O'Keefe – Woodshop Specialist

**Jose Ignacio Oneca Morales – Prep Cook**

Rhys Owen – Swim Specialist

**Yareli Ramos – Housekeeper / Kitchen**

Julia Schettler – Art Director (from 2016)

**Ellie Turner – Cabin Counselor**

Tasha Troxell – Cabin Counselor

**Greg Walker – Program Director**

Barb Wolfson – Head Counselor

# AKEELA ALUMNUS: NOLAN DOST

Without a doubt, my favorite memories from camp are cool summer nights, singing songs around the campfire as a whole community. I wish I could share that sort of bonding experience with my new friends here at college. Those sort of memories can only really be found at summer camps, so I'm really thankful to have them to look back on.

Since leaving Akeela, life has been a series of ups and downs. Akeela gave me a head-start on dealing with my Asperger's, while continued support from my family and schools has helped me deal with my differences in a healthy, constructive manner. Many people today don't even know that I have Asperger's unless I tell them.

In my final year of high school, I got my first time job as a busser at a fine dining restaurant. It was there that I learned about how to apply social skills towards the service industry that I still work in today almost 4 years later. Also in my final year of high school is when I was accepted into the college I am still attending, DigiPen Institute of Technology in Redmond, Washington.

I moved up to Washington state from California almost 3 years ago. Going away to Akeela was great practice for leaving my parents and home, which made the transition to college seem like a cake walk. I currently live in my own apartment with 3 roommates and two cats named Sophie and Juno.

At DigiPen, I am pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Game Design. My goal is to turn an intimate and detailed knowledge of a player's desires from a game or system into a quantifiable and actionable set of data and improvements to existing products. I often think that my Asperger's gives me a unique level of separation and perspective on what players want and need. Thinking about how people feel in a moment or how they might perceive certain actions comes quite naturally to me, thanks to the social skills I learned at Akeela and during high school. Self-awareness and social awareness were once weaknesses and are now strengths!

Outside of DigiPen, I've started working as a bartender at a local restaurant. This job requires more social skills such as guiding and influencing others. I'm still not perfect at these things, as learning new ways of interacting with specific goals in mind can be quite tricky for me, but I feel like since Akeela, my outlook on life is much more outgoing and adventurous. I like to try new things and I tend to have pretty experimental methods for tasks at work, school, or in life. Breaking boundaries for myself comes naturally now!

I plan to continue working with my high school and with other communities that supported me during my development as a youth. The young really are the future and I cannot begin to explain how influential great camp counselors can be. A strong, encouraging role model can shape a kid's perspective in life in major ways. In many respects, teaching a player about a video game that I've made is similar to teaching a child how to use a bow and arrow or swim across a lake. It takes patience, understanding, and compassion -- all attributes that I remember feeling from Akeela camp counselors.

In the future, I plan to focus on entering the video game industry. For many millennials, being a game developer or designer can be similar to how baby boomers wanted to be astronauts. It's a pipe dream that many abandon early. DigiPen is really the place where those dreams become reality and I'm happy to be receiving the highest quality video game design education in the United States. I have well over a dozen different connections to workers in the industry and in March, I am attending the Alt-Ctrl-GDC industry event with a project team that I do design work for. The future is bright and even if things slip up, I know I have my incredible, loving parents behind me. I have the skills to maneuver the professional worlds that I am already entering and I have fond memories to look back on.

Realizing that flaws are part of what makes the human experience so challenging has been a long process. It's hard to say that each person knows what they're doing 100% of the time and when I was a kid, it was really frustrating seeing other kids instantly becoming friends with each other like it was natural. It took a lot of practice to realize that those skills which were hard for me can be learned and honed over years. Homeschooling was isolating for me, but Akeela was enlightening. Akeela taught me to put myself out there and to this day, I feel the impact that my time at camp has had.



*Nolan was an Akeela camper in 2010 and 2011, when he was 13 and 14 years old. Originally from Northern California, Nolan now attends DigiPen Institute of Technology in Redmond, Washington. He is hoping to make the cross-country trek to attend Akeela's 10th anniversary reunion in June.*