



Camp AkeelaSM Circular

A Letter from Debbie and Eric

When we established Akeela in 2008, we always imagined that our community would stretch beyond the summer months. We envisioned programs for campers and families during the year so that everyone would continue to feel supported and connected. In 2012, we had our first Family Camp and were astounded by how life-changing it was for everyone who was there – children, parents & staff alike. It has become one of our favorite weeks of the year.



Well, last week, we saw another part of our vision come to life as 38 campers reunited in Massachusetts for a Winter Weekend! It was so special to see how quickly the campers reconnected and fell right back into their camp routines! They thrived together as they played, explored and "hung out" for two days. Although it was very sad to say goodbye, we're thrilled that we will get to see many of those campers this summer. We felt honored to be a part of this experience and hope that this is the first of many more programs during future "off seasons".

Wishing you warm friendship in this cold winter season!

Love,

Debbie Eric

IMPORTANT 2015 DATES

CAMPER FORMS & PARENT
HANDBOOK MAILING:
March 15 (Approx)

FINAL TUITION PAYMENT
DUE:
April 30

CAMPER FORMS DUE TO
PA OFFICE:
May 1

OPEN HOUSE AT CAMP:
June 7

FIRST SESSION:
June 27 - July 20

SECOND SESSION:
July 23 - August 15

VISITING DAYS:
July 20 & August 15

FAMILY CAMP:
August 17 - 23



BLAYNE'S BULLETIN



Blayne and his crew have worked hard throughout the fall and early winter to construct our new 2800 square foot building, which we're calling The Lodge. This beautiful new facility is perched at the top of the hill behind Bunk 6, with large windows overlooking Miller Pond. The open floor plan will allow us to use the Lodge for a variety of camp activities. It will provide a great space to gather on rainy days and for evening activities. We also expect to use it for programs such as martial arts, dance, fencing and much more! It's a really exciting addition that will have a positive impact on our camp community for years to come.



HORSEBACK PROGRAM

We're thrilled to announce that we will be offering horseback riding this summer! We are working with High Horses therapeutic riding program which is located in Wilder, VT (just 30 minutes away from camp) and has been in operation for over 20 years. This very well regarded center uses PATH International Registered instructors to deliver their amazing program to their riders. Learn more about their program on their website:
www.highhorses.org



What can you expect from the riding program?

Over the course of one session, campers who enroll in the program will participate in six classes at the High Horses riding center. The cost (including all lessons and transportation to and from camp) will be \$550 per camper. The classes will be led by High Horses' instructors, and Akeela staff members will join each group at the facility. Through this fun and engaging program, campers will improve balance and coordination, gain confidence, and improve upon expressive communication.

Who can register?

Anyone! No previous experience is necessary, and experienced riders will find new challenges through the program. Please give us a call to see if the program is right for your camper!

High Horses
THERAPEUTIC RIDING PROGRAM

WELCOME BACK, KEITH YOUNG!



After a two-year hiatus to work on his PhD, we are thrilled to announce that Keith Young will be returning to camp this summer as a Head Counselor! We are so honored and excited to have him back in our community. Here is a note from Keith:

Hello everyone! My name is Keith. Some of you may remember me as the "leprechaun" from Ireland at Camp Akeela! For those of you who haven't yet met me, I worked at camp during the summers of 2009-2012. I am delighted to be coming back to Akeela as a Head Counselor this year. During the two summers I was away from camp, I spent a great deal of time thinking about how much I missed our community. Every summer I was at camp, I know that I grew a great deal personally. Little did I know when I first started working at Akeela in 2009 that it would have had such a profound impact on my life.

In 2011, I graduated with a degree in education, with my final year thesis focusing on Asperger's Syndrome. I am now completing my PhD research in the same area, focusing on helping teachers to work with students with ASD. Needless to say, my life would not have taken this direction without Akeela. Outside of all this, I love the outdoors and go hiking and climbing whenever I can. Last summer I proudly carried an Akeela t-shirt to the top of Africa's highest mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro. I cannot wait to work with our amazing campers, parents, and counselors to make this summer an incredible experience!



Favorite Book – The Black Magician Trilogy by Trudi Canavan

Favorite Camp Food – Pigs in a blanket

Place I'd like to Visit – Nepal

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS...

CAMPER BIRTHDAYS

Elizabeth L.....January 1	Jack P.....February 16
John R.....January 1	Johannes S.....February 16
Julius R.....January 3	Harrison L.....February 17
Ella H.....January 4	Emily B.....February 19
Griffin K.....January 5	Jack R.....February 19
Charlie W.....January 6	Lukas M.....February 23
Spencer K.....January 7	Zachary A.....February 23
Andrew K.....January 10	Jordan G.....February 24
Jackson J.....January 12	Jacob C.....February 25
Robert T.....January 12	Tatum U.....February 27
Gavin C.....January 15	Daniel W.....February 28
Sammy L.....January 15	Allegra C.....March 1
Drew B.....January 16	Ross V.....March 1
Sarah H.....January 16	Ben S.....March 2
Ava E.....January 18	Matthew B.....March 3
Gabby S.....January 22	Matthew L.....March 3
Hannah S.....January 22	Mia M.....March 4
David S.....January 28	Alena M.....March 6
Robert O.....January 29	Jenny K.....March 9
Spencer M.....February 2	Morgan T.....March 13
Ezra P.....February 9	Celina T-K.....March 13
Michael L.....February 9	Jacob P.....March 16
Daniel S.....February 10	Ethan L.....March 17
Baila G.....February 15	David F.....March 18

Cameron S.....March 19
Alex W.....March 20
Isabel M.....March 20
Matthew S.....March 20
Tochukwu U.....March 22
Helene L.....March 23
Lucas R.....March 23
Leo E.....March 24
Nick C.....March 27
Jesse W.....March 29
Ezra S-F.....March 30
Max L.....March 30
Reese S.....March 30

STAFF BIRTHDAYS

Gillian G.....January 8
Isabel F.....January 10
David C.....January 15
Mark Y.....January 17
Katie F.....January 23
Harry M.....January 24
Michael H.....January 27
Susanne P.....February 6
Danielle H.....February 11



Jack B.....February 22
Moses M.....February 28
Naomi D.....March 2
Ed F.....March 4
Liam D.....March 5
Laura H.....March 11
Tessa K.....March 19
Jose C.....March 21



WINTER WEEKEND RECAP

Earlier this month, thirty-eight campers braved a very cold weekend at Camp Winadu in the Berkshires to join us for the first Akeela Winter Weekend. We had such a wonderful time; it was a weekend none of us will ever forget. We loved seeing our campers reunite with old friends, and form new friendships with campers they had not met before. The Weekenders enjoyed their time sledding, doing some of their favorite camp activities, ice skating and bowling, and catching up with friends. We even did a closing campfire (albeit indoors!)

We're excited to continue the tradition for many years to come!



STAFF UPDATES

Celia O spent her fall semester of school abroad in Florence, Italy, studying Italian and art! She also took time to travel to over 30 cities in 6 different countries, and her favorite part of her travels was all the hiking and exploring she was able to do. While abroad, she was able to meet up with many international members of the Akeela family! She met with David L in England, Barry B (2013) and Woody in Ireland, and Nancy C in Italy.



Dom C took time to travel down the east coast, visiting Boston, New York, and Miami! When he returned home to the UK, he volunteered for the "Discover" program in his hometown, Cardiff, which helps prepare teenagers for college life, and is a member of the armed forces as a T.A. parachute combat medic. He also has joined the triathlon club at his school!

Sean G returned to his native Minnesota and spent the last few months student teaching at a suburban high school. He was awarded his teaching license and has just begun a new adventure teaching math at John F. Kennedy High School in Bloomington, MN, just south of the Twin Cities • Sam K started his first semester at the University of Connecticut getting his Masters in Fine Arts – Acting, and will be performing in professional shows at the Connecticut Repertory Theater • David L spent some time in the US after camp before heading home to England to start his new job as a travelling ski instructor. He's gotten to travel all over Europe to provide ski lessons to both children and young adults.

Christine B began a new job as a 4th grade classroom teacher at a small school near Montpelier, VT, and she's loving her students! She's gotten to travel to England to see her camp friend David L, and enjoyed seeing all the Akeela campers who attended the Winter Weekend! • Dave B is working as an algebra teacher and residential instructor at Middlebridge School in Rhode Island. He and Mike D are coaching the school's first ever varsity basketball team. He's also putting the finishing touches on his wedding plans in May with Katie O, who recently took a new job as a behavior technician at the Pathways Strategic Teaching Center working with 8 and 9 year olds. She'll be going to India in July as with the Global Autism Project to spread awareness about the benefits of Applied Behavior Analysis.

Elizabeth M began working in a Spanish immersion preschool in Chapel Hill, NC. She'll be starting her master's in education later this year! • Albert R will be studying in Australia this year, and has seen some of his camp friends at home, and visited a few as well! He's kept in touch with Blayne, too! • Nicole F moved to Boston after camp and started a new job! • Calum E spent a few weeks in Stowe, VT after camp to visit camp friends from past summers, and is currently in his final year of university finishing his studies for a mathematics degree.

Gillian G got married! She'll be graduating in May from Yale with as a psychiatric Nurse Practitioner • Scotty B is in his second year at university studying film, he's been playing a lot of tennis this year and is looking forward to returning to camp next summer! • Troy N has been working as a substitute teacher in several classrooms, and is working toward his education degree! • Henry B is in his final year of university studying economics, and hopes to travel to Australia this summer to work for a media company.



Amanda R and Owen G got married after camp in England! Our third Akeela wedding! • Woody saw many of his Akeela friends all over Ireland and England, has been teaching woodshop in school, and has continued to referee rugby matches, including several professional matches! • Alyssa H got engaged! She's finishing her pre-nursing studies in California and preparing to move to Kansas in the fall for nursing school • Adam W went back to school to get his teaching degree in physical education in Maine • Hannah A moved to South Carolina where she teaches environmental education and facilitating high ropes!

CAMPER UPDATES!

Eleanor S (Bunk 13, 1st) joined a dance team this year. On top of many other performances, her team will also be performing at Disney World in February! She competed in the Special Olympics in long jump and sprinting

- **James F** (Beyond Akeela, 2nd) is continuing to volunteer at the New England Air Museum as a tour guide, and has begun

volunteering with Habitat for Humanity ReStore and a local historical society. He still keeps in touch with his friends from Beyond Akeela this summer

- **Harry P** (Bunk 18, 1st) will be playing Tony Stark in his middle school's SuperShow later this month
- **Jacob C** (Bunk 1, 2nd) met with his cabin mate **Yonatan F-N** and went to the Norwalk Aquarium over winter break. He also went to a Dr. Who convention in Long Island and snagged a photo with the 8th Dr. Who!
- **Grant R** (Bunk 8, 1st) had a visit from former camper **Sarah L** and they had a chance to go snow tubing at Cranmore Mountain Resort. He also happened to get his first job there over the winter. This April, he'll be taking a metal-smithing class which he is very excited for
- **Kevin M** (Bunk 8, 2nd) and a camp friend participated in a Nerf war that he helped organize in November, and he's looking forward to joining Beyond Akeela this summer!
- **Ava E** (Bunk 11, 2nd) had a great vacation over the holidays to Kauai and has been

interviewing at middle schools recently. She's excited to go to a new school this

fall and to see her friends back at Akeela this summer!

- **Harrison S** (Bunk 3, 1st) recently became a pet owner! He has a leopard gecko named Geronimo
- **Kate G** (Bunk 15, 2nd) enjoyed a sleep-over in Chatham with two camp friends, and performed in a music production with her high school chorus
- **Sean T** (Bunk 16, 1st) has two new Australian Shepherd puppies named Apollo & Gemini, he visited the USS Alabama Memorial in Mobile, AL, and has started a collection of military planes, tanks & boats. He performed in his talent show, singing Bastille's Pompeii, and will perform in his local theater program's play called School House Rock Jr.
- **Oliver G** (Bunk 16, 1st) says, "Happy New Year!" to all his friends from Cabin 16
- **Lisa G** (Family Camp) is starting to take vocal lessons at the Real School of Music, and continues to learn and sing her favorite Japanese anime songs
- **Austin G** (Bunk 6, 1st) is excited to visit Long Island, NY in May to see his old friends from his hometown, and is really looking forward to camp this summer!
- **John Erik** (Bunk 6, 1st) has started building computers from scratch! He has built computers for friends and himself, and looks forward to building more for his family
- **Eitan R** (Bunk 7, 1st) has been keeping busy with lots of different activities! He's attended basketball clinics, worked at grocery stores and food companies, joined an archery club, and visited his family in Montreal, CA over winter break. He's excited to return to camp this summer!
- **Jared L** (Beyond Akeela, 2nd) is hearing back from colleges and so far has gotten into three of the schools he applied to! He's working on getting his first degree black belt in karate
- **Mia J** (Bunk 14, 2nd) went on a family vacation to Grand Cayman, where she kissed a sting ray, held a star fish and a blue iguana. She's enjoying high school and is in the Girl Scouts. She's looking forward to this summer at Akeela!



• **Ben N** (Bunk 1, 2nd) has been rocking out, performing at the Count Basie Theater in Red Bank with the RockIt program. He plays the bass and drums, and has a few more shows lined up the rest of the month. He went to Boca Raton, FL for winter break and saw his cabin mate **Ezra S-F** while he was there • **Justin R** (Bunk 18, 2nd) is joining the basketball team at his new school, got together with his friend **Spencer K** (Bunk 17, 2nd) from camp this fall, and recently went on a ski trip to Black Mountain • **Robert T** (Bunk 5, 2nd) is attending a brand new technical high school and loves it, and he's hoping to get into the school's information technology program. He traveled to Naples, FL for winter break.



He has really enjoyed keeping in touch with friends from camp, including Skyping with **Evan G** (Bunk 4, 2nd) • **Gideon L** (Bunk 18, 2nd) moved from New York to Brookline, MA and really likes his new home. He's made some great friends at his new school! He made a trip to Malibu, CA to see family and New York, NY to see old friends over winter break. He's looking forward to camp this summer! • **Evan B** (Bunk 8, 2nd) got together with his cabin mate **Spencer F** recently and they had a great time. He taught Spencer Magic, and Spencer taught him Minecraft • **Michael K-F** (Bunk 17, 1st / Bunk 16, 2nd) started at a new school, has gone a few vacations, watched lots of movies, kept in touch with his awesome camp friends, and met lots of new friends. He's excited to come back to Akeela this summer! • **Claire H** (Bunk 12, 2nd) started high school, joined the Freshman Robotics Team, and is enjoying her art and biology classes. She attended a Sci-Fi & anime convention this fall, and her family got together with two other Family Camp families this fall. She's very excited to return to camp next summer! • **Otis F** (Bunk 2, 2nd) recently earned his green belt status at T Kang Taekwondo studio, recently joined a rock band, and is taking piano and guitar lessons • **Brandon P** (Bunk 7, 1st) got four new kittens, named Boris, Peanut, Natasha, and Titan. He received his class ring this year, and has been keeping in touch with his cabin mate **John R** - they play games online together! • **Baila G** (Bunk 13, 1st) participated in a Fashion Boot Camp, where she got to design and sew her own clothes. She also was inducted into her school's chapter of the National Honor Society • **Max T** (Bunk 4, 2nd) had his Bar Mitzvah in November and did an amazing job! His camp friends **Evan G** and **Claire H** traveled to celebrate the event with him • **Grace T** (Bunk 14, 1st / Bunk 12, 2nd) performed with the National Children's Chorus in New York and Washington D.C. as part of the holiday concert series. She also took the stage as a soloist at the Gateway Middle School holiday recital. Lastly, she made a trip to Brookline, MA to visit her old neighbor and camp friend, **Gideon L** • **Max B** (Bunk 2, 2nd) became a pet owner to two new cats name Moxi and Mordecai. He also received a Certificate of Awesomeness from his afterschool program for creating his own dubstep music utilizing various softwares, and he's working on mastering his DJ equipment • **Andrew S** (Beyond Akeela, 2nd) completed his first semester at the University of Cincinnati in a program called TAP. He's living on campus and doing well in all his classes • **Emerson K** (Beyond Akeela, 2nd) is enjoying his "Gap Year" between school and university by travelling to India and will return to the UK at the end of January •



Daniel S (Bunk 18, 1st) starred in a community theater production of The Magic Dreidel • **Spencer K** (Bunk 17, 1st / Bunk 16, 2nd) is taking karate and has gotten his yellow belt, has really improved his tennis game (especially his serves!) and is excited to ski this winter. He's looking forward to another great summer at camp! • **Dan H** (Bunk 6, 2nd) is enjoying his new high school, where he plays center for the JV basketball team, and mans the light board for the schools drama productions.