



Camp AkeelaSM Circular

News from the Directors

Dear Friends,

This newsletter represents an exciting "first" for Camp Akeela because it's the first to be distributed to members of our TWO camp communities: Akeela in Vermont and Akeela in Wisconsin. In many ways, we will be two separate camps this summer. As you look through this newsletter, you'll find some distinctions between our Vermont and Wisconsin locations. The dates differ; some of the facilities and program news apply to one site or the other; the camper and staff updates now include the abbreviations VT or WI. Most importantly, both Akeela locations (and in fact each session at both sites) will be its own rich, vibrant community. Regardless of where or when campers attend, they will feel a deep sense of belonging and kinship with their fellow campers and our amazing staff.



As excited as we are about replicating the magic of Akeela in an entirely new part of the country, we're equally aware of the ways in which we're all part of the same camp family. This phenomenon was evident last month at our third annual Winter Weekend Reunion. Because the weekend combined campers from the two different Akeela Vermont sessions, not everyone knew one another before the reunion. We could imagine a weekend that felt like two separate groups sharing the same space. In reality, however, it was amazing how quickly they came together into one unit. With a baseline shared experience of knowing what it's like to have spent time at Camp Akeela, new friendships were forged almost instantly. A year from now, when we have campers and families who have experienced Akeela both at different times and in different states, we are confident that we will all feel equally connected.

On the topic of connection, we will be hosting "Virtual Evening Meetings" this winter for returning campers. These are a chance to catch up with camp friends in a comfortable and facilitated setting. We'll send out more detailed invitations and Skype instructions, but in the meantime, save these dates:

Vermont 2016 1st Session Campers - Wednesday, March 1, 7:30 - 8:00pm

Vermont 2016 2nd Session Campers - Thursday, March 2, 7:30 - 8:00pm

Fondly,

Debbie Eric

IMPORTANT 2017 DATES

VT OPEN HOUSE:
June 4

VT FIRST SESSION:
June 28 - July 21

VT SECOND SESSION:
July 24 - August 16

WI FIRST SESSION:
July 26 - July 8

WI SECOND SESSION:
July 10 - July 22

BEYOND AKEELA:
July 10 - August 2

FAMILY CAMP (VT):
August 19 - 25



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. (Also, plan to attend a "Virtual Evening Meeting" on March 1st or 2nd!)
- 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,

After our recent Winter Weekend camper reunion, the pillar of Akeela that has been on my mind most is Friendship. Many campers found their past bunkmates or other friends from their session, and it was as if camp never ended. On top of that, Akeela campers found friends they hadn't met before at camp and formed new bonds with other members of the Akeela community.

When we speak to prospective parents thinking about Akeela for their child, one common question we hear is "How do new campers do in bunks of mostly returning campers?" Akeela campers have always proven to welcome new campers with open arms, and this past weekend confirmed even more so their welcoming nature. In fact, for the first time at Winter Weekend, we had a camper who had not previously attended Akeela at all (because she is the daughter of our Winter Weekend nurse.) We were so proud to see campers welcome her into the Akeela family as if she had been in their cabin for years!

I was so impressed by how our campers represented the Friendship pillar over Winter Weekend, and hope that the reunion serves as a great reminder to keep in touch with each other even when not at camp!

Love,
Kevin

Welcome Chef Catarina!

We're so excited to introduce everyone to our wonderful new Akeela Vermont Head Chef, Catarina Triacca. Catarina is from Orlando and currently lives in Gainesville, Florida. She is a graduate of the prestigious culinary arts program at Johnson & Wales and has been working in food service for over 15 years. She has explored her love for food and people in a variety of settings, including catering and food specialty stores. She has even owned, managed and cooked in her own food truck! Currently, during the school year, Catarina works at College Chefs, where she is the head chef of a fraternity house at the University of Florida. (Her experience feeding a hundred hungry college students will be great preparation for her role at Akeela!) In addition to her talent, her contagious laugh and her unwavering positivity, one of the things that most drew us to Catarina is her passion for making people happy through food. She is sure to wow us with a great menu, and a sharply tuned attention to all of our various preferences and special diets.

When Catarina isn't in the kitchen she enjoys spending time with her family and her twelve year old dog, Bender. She loves trying new restaurants and traveling. Her travels have taken her to much of the United States, Mexico, the Caribbean and all over Europe. She has a quirky love of 80s movies, especially anything starring Bill Murray. She also loves painting and crafting. Having attended summer camp all through her childhood she is truly excited to have the opportunity to provide a wonderful camp experience for every at Akeela in Vermont!

Favorite Book: The Shawshank Redemption by Stephen King

Place I'd like to Visit: Australia

Favorite Camp Food: Tacos!





From Dave's Desk

Wisconsin Update

Dear Friends,

In late January, we braved the elements and took a trip to the snowy, brisk Midwest. We gave a presentation to some potential camp families, and spent time at Lawrence University, our site for Camp Akeela in Wisconsin. On the way to Appleton, we made a pit-stop in Milwaukee to eat at Steny's, a restaurant owned and operated by Akeela staff members Kayla and Miranda Stenstrup's family! Although none of the Stenstrups were working that night, the food was delicious – it's a must try for anyone in the Milwaukee area. After that, we made our way to Appleton where we spent a significant amount of time on campus, preparing for Akeela's inaugural summer there. We also met with multiple local businesses and community members, including some exciting options for camp trip destinations. It was a great way to further familiarize ourselves with our new summer home!

We are thrilled to announce that our Wisconsin site will be partnering with the Appleton Area School District's Director of Adventure Education to provide an optional day of high and low ropes course adventure during each of our camp sessions. AASD has an extensive high and low ropes course just ten minutes from campus that includes a zip line, multivine, rock wall, vertical playpen and many other exciting and challenging elements! While having a TON of fun, ropes course participants will simultaneously work on their skills in the areas of problem solving, communication, decision making, and trust, as well as develop a strong sense of self-worth and accomplishment.

Also going to be offered in Wisconsin - along with our wide array of traditional camp activities like arts, swimming, cooking, LARPing, gaga, etc – will be optional trips to local nature centers where campers will have the opportunity to explore the grounds on hikes and nature walks, learn about different insects, and even do pond and tree studies with the trained nature center staff members. All of these options and more will be part of our trip day programming!

Our Midwestern trip ended with a presentation for some prospective camp families in Chicago's North Shore, and it definitely left us wishing camp were sooner! We are so excited to meet all of the new faces coming to Akeela in Appleton this summer, along with the familiar faces who are making the move out to Wisconsin with us.

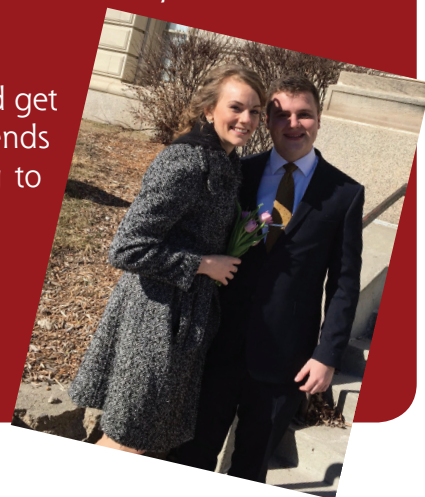
See you soon!

Dave & Katie

Congratulations Greg & Julia!

The Akeela wedding bells are ringing once more! On February 3rd, 2017, Greg Walker and Julia Schettler tied the knot in Des Moines, Iowa with their families by their side. Greg and Julia met at Akeela in 2013, when Greg was a Drama Specialist and Julia an Arts Specialist. They've spent every summer together at camp since, and Greg has now officially moved from the UK so they can start their lives together here in the States.

This is the SIXTH Akeela staff couple to fall in love at camp and get married. Greg and Julia will celebrate with their family and friends at the end of next summer - an event that we're planning to host at Camp Akeela! We're so happy for this wonderful couple!



WINTER WEEKEND 2017

Our third annual Winter Weekend was a huge success! 45 campers and 15 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. Check out some pictures from the weekend below!



Communication at Camp

We greatly value the honest and thoughtful feedback parents and campers give us at the end of each summer. It truly helps make camp better! One area several families thought we could improve on in future summers is our communication and partnership with parents during camp sessions. We heard you, and we're taking action to make our communication with you even better this coming summer.

The wonderfully talented Rob Glyn-Jones, who is returning for his 8th summer at Akeela in Vermont, will take on the new role of communications director. In this role, Rob will assist head counselors with parent communication, manage camp news and photos, act as a liaison between the health center and families, and manage our social media pages throughout the summer. On top of this, you can still expect the excellent communication from your camper's head counselor throughout their session.



MEET THE PROGRAM HEADS

Program area heads are responsible for designing the engaging activities our campers participate in each summer. They create curricula and support the staff who deliver those lesson plans to campers on a daily basis! We're so fortunate to have a great mix of homegrown talent and new members of the Akeela community heading up our program areas in both Vermont and Wisconsin. Here are some of our great leaders your campers will meet this summer!



Kyle Bennett

Aquatics Director, VT

Kyle Bennett is happy to be returning to Akeela for his fifth summer. He grew up in Iowa where he worked at New Hope Village, a living facility for adults with intellectual and physical disabilities. Kyle attended Millikin University in Illinois and earned his degree in theatre, after which he started spending his summers working at Akeela!

Once he discovered Akeela, Kyle moved to Vermont and spent a year working as a behavior interventionist and helping troubled children in the classroom. Kyle now lives in New York City and is pursuing a career on the stage. In his free time he enjoys reading, taking his dog to the park, and trying new restaurants in the city. At Akeela, Kyle has always worked in aquatics but enjoys dabbling in other aspects of camp and using creativity to have as much fun as possible.

Favorite Book: His Dark Materials Trilogy by Philip Pullman

Place I'd like to Visit: Mykonos, Greece

Favorite Camp Food: Eggs McKeela



Isabel "Izzy" Freedman

Co-Program Director, VT

Isabel Freedman lives in St. Louis, MO where she will be graduating from Washington University in St. Louis this May with a degree in Anthropology. Izzy first joined the Akeela team as a nanny for Margo and Julia in 2014 and 2015. Last summer, she worked in the Health Center as the nurse intern. Having been a camper for 15 years, Izzy is excited to use her camp experience to create an exciting program for Akeela campers!

Izzy completed a part of her studies in Geneva, Switzerland where she researched experimental educational approaches for children in refugee camps and fell in love with all things hiking and exploring the outdoors! Izzy grew up in the Philadelphia area and is looking forward to moving back home to pursue a career in education policy after another incredible summer in Vermont!

Favorite Book: The 13 Story Tree House by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton

Place I'd like to Visit: Iceland

Favorite Camp Food: Fajitas



Michael "Woody" Forrestal

Co-Program Director, VT

Michael Forrestal (or as we call him at camp, "Woody") was born in Dublin, raised in picturesque Connemara, and now is a teacher back in Dublin. He started working at Akeela as a Woodshop Specialist in 2012, and will be returning for his fourth summer. Since taking a two year hiatus from Akeela, Woody has graduated top of his class in Furniture Design and Wood Technology and was awarded 'The Teaching Excellence Award'. He now works in a brand new school teaching Woodwork, Technology and Technical Graphics. Woody's favorite thing about camp is the creativity the campers

bring to all areas of camp. His second favorite thing about camp has to be chicken patties. Woody is really looking forward to summer 2017 and can't wait to get back to the Akeela community.

Favorite Book: The Big Book of Weekend Woodworking by John A. & Joyce C. Nelson

Place I'd like to Visit: New Zealand (for the Rugby!)

Favorite Camp Food: Chicken Patties with Frank's Hot Sauce

MEET THE PROGRAM HEADS *continued from previous page*



Ben Jerez

Lead Hiking Specialist, VT

Ben Jerez is from a town called Bunbury in Western Australia, and moved to Perth, the state capital, to pursue a career in Education at Curtin University. Ben is currently studying abroad here in the States at St. Thomas University in Minnesota, and is really enjoying the opportunity to study and travel! Ben spent the summer of 2015 at Akeela as a Hiking Specialist, and after missing one year of camp the call to return to Akeela was too strong to resist. He's excited to return in a leadership role and head up the trip program. When Ben isn't at camp or studying, he loves all things outdoors, from playing rugby and surfing to hiking and camping!

Favorite Book: The Revenant by Michael Punke

Place I'd like to Visit: Hawaii

Favorite Camp Food: PB&J Sandwiches on Hike Days!



Caroline McFadden

Lead Art Specialist, WI

Caroline McFadden is from Evanston, IL but currently lives in Poughkeepsie, NY where she is in her final year at Vassar College. She is a Studio Art major (and Math and Education minor) and is getting certified to teach elementary school. She's looking forward to student teaching in the fall.

Caroline spends her free time drawing (of course), tap dancing, tutoring at the local middle school, drinking tea, and spending time outdoors. For the last two summers she was an Art Specialist at Camp Akeela in Vermont, and now she's excited to help combine two things she loves: Akeela and the Midwest!

Favorite Book: The Painted Man by Ray Bradbury

Place I'd like to Visit: Antarctica

Favorite Camp Food: Grilled Cheese & Tomato Soup



Meg Phillips

Lead Swim Specialist, WI

Meg Phillips is originally from Grosse Pointe, Michigan, but moved down south to study Special Education at Vanderbilt University, where she is pursuing a career in speech-language pathology. Although she is spending this semester studying in Edinburgh, Scotland, she will be a rising senior at Vanderbilt this fall. This will be her first summer at Camp Akeela and she is looking forward to an amazing summer!

Meg spent most of her summers growing up around the water, swimming competitively for a local team at her public park. She continued swimming competitively through club teams until the end of high school, and eventually began teaching swim lessons at these same public parks that she first learned to swim! Other than swimming, she also enjoys traveling, yoga, reading, and spending time with friends.

Favorite Book: The Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling

Place I'd like to Visit: Santorini, Greece

Favorite Camp Food: S'mores

BLAYNE'S BULLETIN



Keeping Camp Akeela safe over the Vermont winter is always a challenge, and Blayne and his crew always work hard during the off season to protect and update the facility. This year one of the main projects has been the construction of our new office building which is certainly taking shape! During the summer, the office is always a hive of activity, and often the first place that visitors to camp will see... they'll be thrilled this summer!



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS...

CAMPER BIRTHDAYS

Kendall B.....February 1	Ben S.....March 2
Matthew K.....February 1	Michael L.....March 3
Jared B.....February 2	Matthew L.....March 3
Spencer M.....February 2	Alena M.....March 6
Noah D.....February 3	Blake B.....March 6
Jacob H.....February 3	Christopher G.....March 6
Eitan J.....February 10	Sam S.....March 7
Clare M.....February 12	Jack G.....March 8
Chris C.....February 14	Flannery M.....March 10
Jonathan P.....February 16	Celina T.....March 13
Spencer B.....February 16	Morgan T.....March 13
Harrison L.....February 17	Jacob P.....March 16
Jessica S.....February 19	David F.....March 18
Aditi S.....February 19	Cameron S.....March 19
Charlotte K.....February 22	Connor L.....March 20
Lukas M.....February 23	Maya B.....March 22
Zachary A.....February 23	Eamon K.....March 23
Jordan G.....February 24	Leo E.....March 24
Bella M.....February 24	Sean R.....March 25
Nina P.....February 24	Ryan D.....March 26
Jacob C.....February 25	Steven H.....March 26
Tatum U.....February 27	Zander L.....March 31
Daniel W.....February 28	Charlotte P.....April 2
Jared S.....March 1	Chris J.....April 4
Ross V.....March 1	Max S.....April 7
Jeffrey J.....March 2	Louis H.....April 9

STAFF BIRTHDAYS

Emma W.....February 22
Ricardo S.....February 25
Nurse Sacha.....March 1
Naomi D.....March 2
Nacho D.....March 2
Chef Catarina.....March 4
Jeff A.....March 4
Ed F.....March 4
Giovanni F.....March 8
Jody J.....March 11
Matthew M.....March 16
Alana T.....March 18
Rob B.....March 19
Elie P.....March 23
Bridget S.....March 26
Luke S.....March 26
Andy R.....March 29
Wyatt S.....March 30
Cassidy R-S.....April 4
Karina D.....April 6
Kevin S.....April 9
Mei-Li S.....April 13
Carolyn D.....April 17
Mike D.....April 22
Jess D.....April 26
Roger T.....April 27



RETURNING CAMPERS

One of our favorite parts of camp is having so many campers return summer after summer. We love what that tells us about how they feel about each other, our staff and the Akeela community!

IN BEYOND AKEELA

Aidan F • Allison O • Cara W • Claire H • Connor S • Daniel W • Darian B • Lydia K •
Mia J • Michael L • Nicholas L • Ross P • Travis R

IN FIRST SESSION, WI

Ava C • Ross B • William H

IN SECOND SESSION, WI

Alec T • Ben U • William H

IN FIRST SESSION, VT

Alexander K • Amelia D • Andrew P • Ava E • Avery A • Blake B • Brayden T • Cal M •
Cameron S • Charlie N • Charlotte P • Cian R • Cole M • David F • Dawson C • Dolan M • Ethan G •
Ethan K • Grace T • Hali B • Henry G • Ian M • Ian F • Isabelle M • Jack C • Jacob O • Jacob P •
Jamie O • Joey V • John D • Jordan G • Jordan J • Julius R • Kolin H • Kyle B • Lily W • Linn H • Luke B •
Mariette P • Michael K • Michelle P • Nathaniel L • Nina P • Noah J • Noah JT • Olivia S •
Otelia S • Riley D • Ross V • Ryan BA • Ryan D • Sara P • Sienna V • Spencer K • Spencer M •
Steven H • Talia M • Thomas C • Thomas H • Thomas L • TJ C • Vince R • William R • Xany P • Yoni B

IN SECOND SESSION, VT

Alex K • Alexander M • Aviva S • Ben N • Ben R • Ben S • Bianca S • Carter L • Charlie N •
Christopher G • Eitan J • Elizabeth L • Ethan K • Evan F • Evan G • Ezra H • Grace T • Hali B •
Harish A • Henry V • Ian R • Jackson B • Jacob G • Jamie O • Jared B • Jared T • Jessica S •
Joe S • Joey V • Jordan G • Justin R • Leo E • Liam T • Lucas M • Lukas S • Lydia D •
Madelyn M • Mariah C • Marshall G • Matthew L • Max T • Michael K • Michelle P • Reese K •
Robert O • Rory S • Ryan M • Sam S • Samantha R • Sean M • Sean R • Spencer B • Spencer K •
Tomas L • William W • Xany P • Yonatan FN • Yoni B • Zachary A

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:

VERMONT

Cullen Baker – Cabin Counselor
Lily Baker – Cabin Counselor
Kyle Bennett – Aquatics Director
Jenai Bilimoria (from '14) – Cabin Counselor
Rob Brennan – Ropes Course Specialist
Nicky Burdett – Swim Specialist
Jordan Byrne – Boating Specialist
Angie Casiano – Cook
Stefan Lopez Castro – Sous Chef
Chelsea Chapman – Cabin Counselor
Alexa Driscoll – Camp Nanny
Michael Forrestal, aka Woody ('12-'14) – Co-Program Director
Isabel Freedman – Co-Program Director
Rob Glyn-Jones – Communications Director
Jesus Hernandez – Maintenance Assistant
Ben Jerez – Lead Hiking Specialist

Darwin Garcia Juarez – Prep Cook
Brianna Lemire – Cabin Counselor
Danielle Logan – Boating Specialist
Celia O'Flaherty – Head Counselor
Darragh O'Keefe – Woodshop Specialist
Gabe Quinones – Cabin Counselor
Cassidy Reves-Sohn – Cabin Counselor
Luke Scuitto – Cooking Specialist
Wyatt Shinaver – Hiking & Camping Specialist
Will Teague – Fishing Specialist
Greg Walker – Head Counselor
Taylor Whitchurch – Swim Specialist

WISCONSIN

Hugh McCloskey – Cabin Counselor
Caroline McFadden – Lead Art Specialist
Catricia Morris – Cabin Counselor
Lauren O'Brien – Head Counselor

AKEELA ALUMNUS:

Alex Papitto



Alex was a camper at Akeela from 2009-2013, completing our Beyond Akeela program in 2013. She went from cold New England winters as a student at Middlebridge School in Rhode Island, to warm weather year-round as a student at Ave Maria University in south-west Florida.

She is now a junior at AMU majoring in Biology and she credits Camp Akeela for helping her to learn how to advocate for herself and be confident getting the support that she needs to be successful at college. During her time in Beyond Akeela, she became more comfortable with the idea of college by learning about and touring

schools, while practicing what questions to ask when exploring options for the "right" plan after high school.

As someone who has been through the process of figuring out what to do after high school, Alex has some keen advice for anyone thinking about that now.

"Don't be afraid to ask for help," Alex says. "For high schoolers, there are resources available to help you figure out the best options for you after you graduate. If you decide to go to college, find a school that can help provide the tools you need to succeed. Using the resources available can help you go farther in life."

Throughout her five years as part of the Akeela family, Alex had so much fun that it was hard for her to narrow down her favorite memory. "I have so many great memories from camp!" Alex says. "One of my favorite activities was going to Burlington, VT, and going to the Ben & Jerry's Factory."

In retrospect, Alex has been able to better appreciate her time at Akeela, and has sound advice for all current and potential campers: "Don't forget to enjoy camp! There are few places where you have so many fun activities and great people so close!"