



Welcome to the newsletter!

Fall is definitely here, and so is another edition of AKEELA NEWS - full of all sorts of exciting news - including meeting our new Assistant Director, and an exciting new build on camp...

- 02 **Camper News**
- 03 **Meet Erin Stewart**
Vermont Trivia
- 04 **Staff News**
A Sneak Peek at 2022!
- 05 **Akeela Campers celebrate**
International Camp T-shirt
Day

AKEELA NEWS

November
2021

Bringing you all the Akeela news throughout the year!

Many Thanks to Give!

Dear Akeela Friends,

Thanksgiving is the perfect time to publish this newsletter because when we think about Akeela (which, let's be honest, is ALL the time!), the word that comes to mind most readily is gratitude. Indeed, we have much to be thankful for.

In this newsletter, you'll find news updates from campers and staff. Reading those updates reminded us what an incredible group of people come together each summer at camp. We arrive from a variety of backgrounds and places to a community that embraces and celebrates our diversity, while simultaneously bonding us like a family. Akeela is a special place because of the individuals who bring to it their interests, talents, passions, curiosity, openness, sincerity and kindness. At the same time, camp's most powerful impact on our lives is the relationships it fosters through the shared

experiences we create as one community, throughout the summer.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank Ben Jerez for his many years of service to Akeela. When Ben started with us, as a 19 year old hiking specialist in 2015, he expressed



an avid interest in one day leveraging his educational studies into a career in camping. In 2019, he joined our year-round team and has been instrumental in guiding Akeela through these turbulent times. This fall, we were approached by our colleagues at Lake of the Woods & Greenwoods Camps in Michigan, who had an assistant director position for which they knew Ben would be a great fit. We agreed and have since worked together to transition Ben into his new role. While we are sad to see Ben leave Akeela, we are very proud of him and

are excited to see what else he accomplishes in the camp world!

As always, challenges are also opportunities and so Ben's departure was a chance to hire a new member of our year-round team. We spent a good portion of this fall interviewing camp professionals. There are a lot of very talented people out there who love camp as much as we do! We are delighted to report that our outreach led us to Akeela's new assistant director, Erin Stewart. We already know that Erin is going to have a huge positive impact on Akeela and we can wait for you to meet her! (Please start by reading her introduction later in this newsletter.)

We feel so very lucky to be part of the Akeela community. We hope you feel the same way and that you're also counting down the days until summer 2022!

CAMPER NEWS!

Declan B (1st, Bunk 1) is on his varsity cross country team and they are the Division Champions this year! ... After an exciting first summer at Camp Akeela, **David B** (2nd, Bunk 2) visited family in Switzerland, where he went Alpine hiking, rode in cable cars and ate lots of cheese! He also celebrated his 14th birthday in September ... Last August, after camp, **Sami B** (1st, Bunk 17) enjoyed a fun family driving trip to Glacier National Park in Montana. She is currently working hard to learn her part as a gingerbread dancer for the Christmas Hyde Park School of Dance production of the Nutcracker ... Those of us who know **Yoni B** (1st, Bunk 4 & 2nd, Bunk 6) will not be surprised to hear that he helped start and now manages a room at his



school called the Zoology Department; it raises two species of endangered turtles before releasing them into the wild. They also house a tarantula, a 600+ gallon saltwater fish tank, a corn snake, a ball python, a king snake, a leopard gecko, and Yoni's lizard. This is Yoni's 3rd season on a crew team, which recently competed at the Head of the Fish, one of the largest regattas in the country ...

Jackson B (1st & 2nd, Bunk 7) visited Kansas City, where he cheered the Royals' victory over "the rule-breaking Astros". This fall, he's the bat boy for a Little League team in New York City ... After camp, **Mark D** (1st, Bunk 18) spent time in Colorado and 8 days traveling around the West in an RV, seeing many historic sights (Fort Laramie, Mount Rushmore and Devil's Tower) and animals (deer, elk, Rocky Mountain Big Horn Sheep and American Bison.) He's also perfecting his Camp Akeela archery skills with weekly lessons at home in Massachusetts! ...

Lenni F (2nd, Bunk 11) had a great time at **Annabelle L's** (2nd, Bunk 11) birthday party. She also joined a D&D group at a game shop near her home and plays there every Saturday evening ... **Nate F** (1st, Bunk 16) started high school and is enjoying his music technology class, in which he gets to create music with a keyboard and computer. He also recently

joined the animation club and is taking tennis lessons. He's really looking forward to coming back to Akeela this summer! ... **Sam H** (2nd, Bunk 16) has gotten together several times with bunkmate **Max L** (2nd, Bunk 16). ...

Owen H (2nd, Bunk 1) loves being a 9th grader (even though there's more homework). He is taking a cooking class this fall and in September, he went to a food truck festival with **Jude H** (1st & 2nd, Bunk 7) ... **Christian J** (1st, Bunk 14) finished up his Cross Country season with many Top 5 finishes and a 1st place win with his last race of the season - 3 seconds from tying the school record! ...

Merik M (2nd, Bunk 4) writes, "I have been having a lot of fun this year, back in school, just had my birthday, and I got a job at Publix. Things are good here in Florida. I can't wait to hang out with you all again this summer!" ... **Nolan M** (1st, Bunk 11) has enjoyed making his favorite recipes from the Akeela cookbook, including fancy grilled cheese, smoothies and, of course, Brookies! ... **Patrick M** (2nd, Bunk 7) got his driver's license and now drives himself to and from high school! ... **Sawyer M** (2nd, Bunk 16) reports that he's gone to a



DeSoto State Park-Fort Payne, Alabama
1st Place: Gabriel Redman Huntsville, AL
'Smiling or Frowning'



Formula One race and a UT football game. Also, his fall baseball team is doing great! ... **Gabe R** (1st, Bunk 15) has had a great start to the school year, and is very much looking forward to returning to Akeela next summer. He has been focusing a lot of time on his art, including pumpkin carving, for which he recently won a few contests! ... **Dimitri R** (2nd, Bunk 2) recently connected with **Asher L** (1st, Bunk 16). They shared Akeela memories and Roblox usernames! ... **Seth R** (2nd, Bunk 18) says, "I joined my high school jazz band. At the annual Halloween lunch, we performed two pieces, the pieces were Watermelon Man, by Herbie Hancock, and an original piece by our band's lead singer. I am really enjoying being a member of the band." ... **Paul W** (1st, Bunk 16) just celebrated his 14th birthday with origami, gundam models,

and lots of books to read. He's looking forward to going back to camp this summer! ... **Kevin W** (1st, Bunk 7) says he started a Minecraft server with Akeela friends and is also playing D&D with local friends, using the D&D skills he developed at camp last summer ... **Holden W** (1st, Bunk 1) and **Henry G** (1st, Bunk 1) have gotten together in Cincinnati several times since camp.

Meet Erin Stewart, Akeela's Assistant Director



Hi Camp Akeela!

My name is Erin and I am so happy to be introducing myself as the new Assistant Director at Camp Akeela! I can't wait to join the team, become a part of the community, and – of course – have my first summer at camp. I want to share a little about myself to help you get to know me, and I can't wait to hear all about you soon!

I am a fairly recent transplant to the USA; I grew up in Northern Ireland and first connected with camping at around 5 years old when I became a member of Scouting Ireland. My family is lower working class, and being part of an organization that provided outdoor experiences to marginalized children is something that has helped formed who I am as a person. I am so grateful to have had this exposure to the outdoors, and to a community, that I would not otherwise have had the privilege to experience. Now, as an adult, it is extremely important to me to be a part of something that is serving children in a similar way, and I feel so lucky to have found Akeela!

In college, I took part in an international exchange program that placed me at a residential camp in New Hampshire for the summer. This was my first experience with overnight camping, and my first time in the States! I immediately fell in love with New England, with the immersive community that sleepaway camp provides, and waking up in the woods with my best friends every day! Sleeping, eating, playing, and learning together is the most amazing part of camp.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature in 2013 and then a Masters in Marketing and Communications in 2015. All told, I have now been working in American camping for 10 summers. I started as a counselor, then became a program director, before making the move into full-time camp directing in 2016. At camp, my favorite things to do are adventure (so look for me at the high ropes course) and campfires.

In my spare time I love hiking, trying new restaurants, and playing with my Dalmatian(ish) dog, Koda. It's my 20-year goal to visit all States, and all the National Parks in the USA – so far I have visited 26 states and 5 parks, so I have a long way to go!

I'm so excited to spend summers with all the special people I know make up the Camp Akeela Community – I will see you all soon!

Favorite Book: The Harry Potter series by JK Rowling (She reads it once per year!)

Place I'd like to Visit: Belize

Favorite Camp Food: Spaghetti and meatballs

VERMONT TRIVIA

Did you know?

Vermont's capital city, Montpelier, is the smallest state capital in the United States. Fewer than 8,000 people live there. It's also the only US capital without a McDonalds!

Can you answer this question?

One U.S. president was from Vermont. He is the only president who was born on the 4th of July. Can you name this president? (Answer in our next newsletter.)



STAFF NEWS!



Amy B (Bunks 2 & 18) is almost done with her masters degree in special education and is currently co-teaching 10th grade biology. She has been doing a lot of outdoor rock climbing all over the mid-Atlantic. She's also been hanging out with **Joanna Z** (Bunks 5 & 14), including the apple picking trip shown in the photo below ... **Jackson C** (Bunks 18 & 17) reports that he has been taking some really fun psychology and philosophy classes. At school, he has seen a lot of **Milk H** (Bunks 14 & 18) and also had a short visit with **Will E** (Bunk 8) earlier this fall. Jackson recently got a new job as a Student Behavioral Associate on the dual-diagnosis floor at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's psych ward ... **Chiru G** (Bunks 16 & 1) writes, "I met up with **Alexis W-V** (nanny & Bunk 13) in Ann Arbor to see the Wolverines beat Northwestern. As a native of Columbus, Ohio, it pained me to wear the Michigan jersey. In honor of Camp Akeela we ate Nature Valley granola bars at the game" ... **Maddie H** (Bunks 6 & 3) and **Kat K** (Bunks 17 & 3) send everyone a virtual hello from opposite coasts! ... Speaking of **Kat K** (Bunks 17 & 3), she recently moved into a new apartment and has been keeping in touch with lots of Akeela friends. She's in the process of applying to graduate school, working towards her goal of becoming a teacher! ... **David "Ziggy" R** (Bunks 18 & 16) had a collage of his accepted in an art gallery that will travel all over Vermont over the next year.



A SNEAK PEEK AT 2022... A MAJOR UPGRADE TO THE ADVENTURE PROGRAM!

Every summer at Akeela, one of our most popular program offerings is the optional overnight camping trip. There's just something so special about sitting around a campfire, making s'mores, and sleeping under the stars. The camp memories and friendships that are forged while overnight camping are so often the strongest and longest lasting.

We believe that every camper should have the opportunity to enjoy this quintessential camp experience. At the same time, we know that not everyone is equally enthusiastic about going to a remote state park and camping in the wilderness. That's understandable ... so we've decided to bring the campsite to them!

This spring, our site manager, Keefe, will be building a full campsite in a beautiful spot up behind our amphitheater. It will include lean-to shelters for sleeping, tent sites, and a fire pit for cooking dinner and making campfires. The finished product will look something like the photo to the right, which is borrowed from our friends at Camps Kenwood & Evergreen. Indeed, our new program area will be modeled after theirs, because we absolutely love how it turned out.

Now, every cabin group will have a chance to participate in what we're calling an ICON, which stands for In Camp Overnight. ICONs will offer all of the fun, camaraderie and magic (not to mention s'mores!) of the overnight camp trip, only right in your bunk's backyard! We're excited to offer ICONs as part of our enhanced nature and outdoors adventure programming at Akeela.



Akeela Campers Celebrate International Camp T-Shirt Day!

