



AKEELA NEWS

FEBRUARY 2023

IMPORTANT DATES

OPEN HOUSE: JUNE 11

FIRST SESSION: JUNE 24 - JULY 17

SECOND SESSION: JULY 20 - AUGUST 12

FAMILY CAMP: AUGUST 15 - AUGUST 20

What's Inside?

1. What is CampLauncher?
2. Open House & Pickleball!
3. Planning for Camp
4. Staff & Camper News

A Letter from Debbie & Eric: Girl Power!

Akeela will be celebrating our Sweet 16 this summer! It's hard to believe that so much time has passed since our first summer together on Miller Pond. Here are a few things that have changed over the years. In 2008:

- *We had three sessions with 40 campers in each session.*
- *There was no porch on the Dining Hall!*
- *Bunks 7, 8, 16, 17 & 18 weren't yet built!*
- *The archery range was where the golf range currently is (and there was no golf program)!*
- *Debbie and Eric didn't have any kids yet! (Debbie was pregnant with their daughter, Margo.)*
- *Evening Meeting was held every night at "The Chimney" - a platform that was where the Lodge is now, and where the Amphitheater is now was just woods back then!*

One big change this summer is that we have one more bunk dedicated to our female-identifying campers, getting us closer to having a more balanced gender ratio. We are so thrilled to know that we are getting closer to camp fully representing neurodiversity across all genders. It seems that camp is reflective of the shift in the diagnostics recently as well. More and more girls are getting diagnosed with ASD, ADHD and NVLD and are finally finding the support and community they deserve.

It's hard to believe that it's already (almost) March! We'll be heading to New Jersey in 2 weeks for our annual conference with over 3,000 other camp professionals. It's one of our favorite weeks of the year as we love learning from our colleagues and bringing wonderful new ideas back to Akeela. It also signifies, for us, that camp is JUST around the corner. From all of our years in camping, we know that the next few months will be filled with planning our staff orientation, scheduling a few online camper zooms, and sending parents lots of information and forms!

We know that YOU are also getting ready for camp and this Newsletter is filled with lots of reminders about upcoming dates/deadlines and tips to help you (campers and parents) prepare for a wonderful summer at Akeela. Please make sure you read through the Family Handbook carefully and call or email us if you have any questions.

[FIND THE FAMILY HANDBOOK HERE!](#)



For 12 years, Akeela has been proud to partner with CampLauncher, a nonprofit organization that helps to increase access to specialized camps like ours. Every summer, our campers participate in a fun community service event that raises money for this charitable organization.

As our 2023 season approaches, we thought we'd take this chance to answer some commonly asked questions about CampLauncher.

What Is CampLauncher?

CampLauncher is a 501(c)3 charity that is committed to providing financial aid scholarships ("camperships") for neurodivergent children with autism spectrum and similar profiles to benefit from the power of summer camps that maximize their potential.

What is the Relationship Between CampLauncher and Camp Akeela?

Eric and Debbie helped set up CampLauncher (which was called POISE at the time) in 2010. Eric is still involved, as he is currently serving as a board member and providing administrative support to the organization. However, CampLauncher is an independent nonprofit that operates entirely separately from Camp Akeela.

From its inception, the mission has been to send as many kids with financial need to specialized camps as possible. CampLauncher partners with several ACA accredited camps that specialize in a neurodiverse population. Akeela and Beyond Akeela are two of CampLauncher's partner camps, which means that campership recipients attend our camps.

What Are CampLauncher's Other Partner Camps?

Currently, CampLauncher partners with Camp Akeela, Beyond Akeela, MGH Aspire (a day camp in the Boston area), and Camp Talisman (an overnight camp in North Carolina). It is currently in the exciting process of building partnerships with more camps.

What Is the Launch-A-Thon?

The Launch-A-Thon is a special event that we run each session at Akeela. We talk to campers about how lucky we all are to be able to attend summer camp, and how great it feels to help others have a similar experience. Each camper selects how they want to participate: swimming, running, archery or basketball. The event itself is an uplifting, high-energy celebration of everyone's efforts. Parents and family members are asked to make a pledge that recognizes their camper's participation and ultimately supports CampLauncher with a donation (of any size).

How Can I Support or Get Involved With CampLauncher?

There are many ways to support CampLauncher:

- Spread the word to a family who could benefit from a CampLauncher campership.
- Make financial contributions, including one in connection with your camper's participation in this summer's Launch-A-Thon. (The pledge form will be available with our other camp forms this spring).
- Ask your employer if they have a matching donation program.
- Consider joining our dedicated and passionate volunteer board.
- Reach out to CampLauncher's Director, Marissa Siegman, at marissa@camplauncher.org, to learn more or discuss ways to get involved in this impactful nonprofit organization!
- You can also learn more or make an online donation on their website, camplauncher.org



OPEN HOUSE AT CAMP: JUNE 11TH

Open House is an opportunity for enrolled campers - and their families - to visit Akeela before they start their camp session. Attendees will get a tour of camp, so they can see their cabin and start to get comfortable with where things are at Akeela. We also host a Q & A with Debbie and Eric and enjoy a big BBQ lunch together on the Main Lawn.

This year's Open House on Sunday, June 11th. You can arrive any time between 10:00am and 11:30am. The day typically comes to a close at around 1:30pm. Please note that Open House is the same weekend as Dartmouth College's graduation. The Upper Valley area will be very busy and it's likely that local hotels are already booked. If you'd like to stay over the night before Open House, we recommend looking for a hotel en route, e.g. Brattleboro VT or the Berkshires.



COMING TO CAMP THIS SUMMER: PICKLEBALL!



We are so excited to announce that we're bringing pickleball to Akeela this summer! We are having pickleball lines painted on the basketball court, with a portable net that can be set up in just a couple of minutes.

As you may know, pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America right now -- and for good reason! It's similar to tennis but is played on a smaller court, with a ball that resembles a heavy Wiffle ball and solid paddles. It's almost always played with four people (doubles) and while it certainly can be played at a very high, competitive level, it's also relatively easy to learn the basic skills and enjoy a casual game with friends. All in all, we think it's a great fit for Akeela and we can't wait to enjoy it with our campers!



WE'RE STILL HIRING!

We have a few positions left, including Ropes Course Facilitators, a Trips & Hiking Director, and Waterfront staff! Akeela staff are typically college juniors, seniors, or grad students, and usually studying education, psychology, or similar subjects. They are excellent communicators able to thrive under pressure, extremely patient, and have the stamina to live communally with children for 9 weeks! If this sounds like someone you know, please direct them to our website!

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

We know it's still winter; for those on the East Coast, it may still feel cold, and summer may seem 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 they're 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 videos 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 them questions about themselves. 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!

Parent Planner

A few reminder to keep on your radar as summer comes:

MEDICATION

We will be working with PackMyRx this year and require full participation from Akeela families to help make medication administration run smoothly. More information about PackMyRx will come in the early spring, and please put this toward the top of the to-do list to ensure timely delivery of your child's medication.



PHYSICAL EXAMS AND OTHER CAMP FORMS

Every camper is required to have a physical within 12 months of their arrival at camp. Going to the doctor soon? You can access the Physician's Exam and all other camp forms through the Family Log In link at campaakeela.com. Please remember that a doctor's signature is required on the Physician's Exam form.

FAMILY HANDBOOK

The Family Handbook is now available in the Current Families section of our website.



AKEELA GEAR

Instructions for how to purchase Akeela gear are in the Family Handbook. Akeela's official outfitter is the Camp Spot. We recommend ordering early, and you're welcome to get started whenever you're ready! As a reminder, the only required item is the one grey or white Akeela t-shirt.

TRAVEL PLANS

Will your camper be flying into Boston Logan Airport on opening day? Camp families are starting make their travel plans, so please give us a call when you are ready to start booking your camper's trip to New England! For families in the Northeast, we offer round trip transportation from the New York and Boston areas.



TUITION

Invoices will be coming via mail and email before each planned payment date. The first half installment was due on January 31, and the second half is due on April 30. Please let us know if you have any questions at all about payment or would like to speak with us about setting up a payment plan.

BAGGAGE SHIPPING

Unpacking and setting up our cabins before campers' arrival is a vital part of how we welcome them to Akeela. Regardless of how your camper is getting to camp, all trunks/duffels must arrive at least 3 days prior to the start of your child's session (i.e. June 21 or July 17). We recommend two services: R&B Camp Baggage (for those in the Northeast) and Ship Camps (for everyone else).



2023 STAFF UPDATES

Owen (Cabin Counselor) has been rock-climbing with friends recently, and is excited to tackle Akeela's rock wall! (below)



Nick (Cabin Counselor) has been enduring the snowy Winter and is ready for a beautiful Vermont summer!

Luke (Cabin Counselor) has been playing lots of Dungeons and Dragons and is excited to DM this summer!

Melissa (Swim Instructor) visited Columbus Museum of Art for a class project and checked out their "Where the Wild Things Are" exhibit!

Ella (Swim Instructor) is finishing her collegiate swim season, and she is excited to teach campers exciting things about swimming!

Ella (Cabin Counselor) went hiking a bunch over winter break and is excited to be outdoors all summer with new friends!

Nurse Pam and her husband Greg are very excited to join our community and spend the summer in Vermont!

Cain (Boating Specialist) has been kayaking and paddleboarding a bunch in preparation for summer! Pic >



D'Shawn (Sports Specialist) has been practicing his Spanish and hopes to share his language skills with campers!

Nurse Chuck recently visited Mexico and saw hundreds of baby sea turtles make their way to the ocean!

Amy (Boating Specialist) has been working at a Rock Climbing Instructor and can't wait to challenge herself on Akeela's wall!

Addie (Hiking Specialist) has been trekking lots in the Colorado Mountains getting ready for adventures with Akeela campers!

Gerardo (Maintenance Assistant) recently began swimming and is loving it! He can't wait to swim in Miller Pond.

Josh (Swimming Specialist) is so excited to spend the summer on our picturesque lake, making new friends.

Jack (Cabin Counselor) spent last summer in Maine, and he can't wait to continue his New England adventures!



Sydney (left) has been traveling all over the world this year meeting new friends and trying new things! The pic is from London!

Andrés (Kitchen Assistant) has been practicing his English lots so that he can get to know everyone at camp!

Abby (Swim Instructor) can't wait to return to her 2nd home, and go for a swim in Miller Pond! >>



Dan (Cabin Counselor) really wants to try sailing this summer!

Christopher (Kitchen Assistant) is excited to experience Vermont nature, and visit the farm as he loves animals!

Desmond (Counselor & Fencing Specialist) has recently participated in a fencing tournament, and he is excited to teach fencing at Camp Akeela!

Athena (Cabin Counselor) is starting her last season of college rugby and can't wait for summer!

Tianne (Cabin Counselor) has been doing lots of self-care and has been having face-mask nights - she can't wait to have bunk spa nights!

Maria (Art Specialist) orchestrated an art painting workshop so people can express themselves and create an artwork together!

Kwame (Counselor-At-Large) has been going on 10-mile hikes to prepare for Mt. Cardigan!

Christopher (Kitchen Assistant) is excited to experience Vermont nature, and visit the farm as he loves animals!

2023 STAFF UPDATES

Karime (Kitchen Assistant) is counting down the days until she meets everyone!

Nathan (Hiking Specialist) is preparing for summer by going on hikes once a week - he is super excited!

Maggie (Nurse Intern) can't wait for summer days under the cotton candy skies at Akeela!

Rosin (Ceramics Specialist) is enjoying her Spring months in Ireland before hopping on a long flights to Camp Akeela - she can't wait to meet everyone!

Aoileann (Cabin Counselor) is excited to meet the campers and see what creative things we can all make together!

2023 CAMPER UPDATES

Max S. went scuba diving for the first time in December and spotted a hammerhead shark! A first dive to remember forever!

Henry Y. played Snug the Joiner in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and brought the house down as Gil in a new play called *Swamped*.

Milo S. went to Universal Studios over winter break, and got a new baby guinea pig!

Ryan S. recently passed 3 levels of swim classes and was asked to join the swim team when he finished the last 2 pro levels! >>



Nico B. went on a ski trip to a resort in Pennsylvania and had a lot of fun on the slopes, even though it was cold! >>



Loie K. visited NYC to see *Wicked* on Broadway, and she will play Mrs. Brill in her school's production of *Mary Poppins Jr.!*

Sami B. is excited for a school trip to Israel in May, and just had a sleepover with her Akeela friend, Gemma F.!

Tommy H. went skiing with his family in Park City. He had a great first day but unfortunately fractured his knee! It will be healed before camp!



Nola J. (left) went to the Azores, a region of Portugal where she dipped in hot springs and visited a Botanical Garden!

Henry G. is competing as a member of the chess team at school, and recently joined the Ultimate Frisbee team!

Devan L. performed in his local theatre's *Matilda*, and vacationed in Europe where he saw the Eiffel Tower & Harry Potter studios!

Harper F. has starting writing the second draft of her book!

Jack M. and Sam D. got together for a Boston Celtics game on their shared birthday. They even got to go onto the court and give high fives to the players!



Noah B. attended a ski trip, it was thrilling on the slopes despite some awkward equipment! He is also playing in a D&D campaign on weekends!

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 camp! 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:

FIRST SESSION

Adam B	Landon B
Aiden B	Leah S
Amelie T	Lena R
Andrew K	Leonard M
Audrey S	Lily M
Beatriz de O	Loie K
Beckett P	Margalit K
Bethany W	Mateo B
Brianna H	Max S
Charles S	Nate F
Christian L	Nikhil T
Clementine N	Noah J
Corinne F	Noah K
Daniel K	Nolan M
Danny T	Oliver N
Declan B	Omri K
Eleanor J	Oscar B
Emmett H	Parker E
Finn N	Patrick M
Gael P	Patrick W
Harper F	Phoebe R
Hazel G	Ryan S
Henry G	Rye D
Holden W	Sam D
Ilana K	Samantha B
India D	Sawyer B
Isobel L	Sawyer M
Jack G	Sofia M
James F	Susanna F
James M	Talia W
John S	Timothy K
Julia P	Van D P
Katherine B	William G
Landon B	Zachary K

SECOND SESSION

Adam B	Leah S
Aidan R	Leni F
Ajay G	Lilly M
Anna J	Luca R
Atom S	Mateo B
Ava T	Maximilian L
Ben P	Milo S
Danny T	Mira T
Daryn A	Noah L
David B	Nola J
David H	Nola X
Devan L	Olivia F
Duffy W	Oscar M
Ethan L	Owen H
Evan T	Parker E
Felix R	Ruby G
Gabriel P	Sabrina E
Glenn H	Sam D
Hazel G	Samantha B
Henry H	Samuel H
Henry Y	Samuel L
Holden W	Sasha L
Ilana K	Sebastian S
Isabel M	Seth R
Jack C	Tabitha A
Jack G	Tessa B
Jack M	Thomas H
Jonah V	Thomas Y
Joshua C	Timothy D
Kaden T	William G
Kaylia D	Yash N
Krishiv K	