



# AKEELA NEWS

OCTOBER 2023

**Summer 2024  
Enrollment is Open!**

*Session 1: June 22 - July 15*

*Session 2: July 18- August 10*

**ENROLL TODAY**

## **A Note from Debbie & Eric:**

*This summer felt like a “return to normalcy”. It was wonderful. Despite a very rainy first session, 2023 was one of our best summers yet! As we speak with our friends and colleagues in the camp world, we feel even more proud of our incredible staff. This summer, we had a large group of first-time Akeela counselors and as we follow up with post-camp conversations, we are thrilled to hear how much Akeela now means to them. They think about camp as they resume their college coursework or get back to their jobs, and many are planning to return for another summer in 2024. It always amazes us how quickly new members of our community become attached and passionate about Akeela!*

*We, along with Erin, are already busy in our Philadelphia office preparing for next summer! We are re-enrolling our campers that we can't wait to welcome back, and we have a record number of new families inquiring about camp and we're excited to share the Akeela experience with them!*

*We want to extend a huge “thank you” for completing our survey. We're always learning and growing, and are so grateful for your partnership in continuing to expand Akeela's horizons! Below are some snippets of feedback that we loved and will give us enough warm feelings to make it through the winter!*

*“We expected him to have some hard moments and feelings which of course he did, but we completely trusted the staff to support him from a place of understanding. We really appreciate the way they do many different things with the bunk, but also get to go deep with specials each week. He really liked his bunkmates and we greatly appreciate the thoughtfulness put into pairing kids up to help foster deeper connections.”*

*“It has been life changing for my camper. She made friendships she never thought she could make. She came back so mature and better equipped to deal with life. She finally found her people and her place.”*

*“Our camper was so nervous about his first year at Akeela- and it couldn't have gone better for him! The counselors/staff made sure to boost his confidence and helped him explore new activities. He made friends with many other campers who he's still in touch with online, and he wore his Akeela shirt to school on the first day so he could talk about it!”*

*“Our camper loved camp and is looking forward to returning next summer. It was a wonderful opportunity for her to feel like she could be herself and was accepted and loved for who she is. She was able to connect with like-minded peers and participate in activities that were just right for her, while also being supported and surrounded with people that care for her. The routine, structure and counselors/directors made it a magical place for her.”*

*“He loved it! We think the experiences and people he meets/met at Akeela have and will help him foster independence, deep connections, and help him reach his potential in life. We think Akeela could potentially give him a wonderful community for his whole life.”*

*“The camp experience was everything I hoped it would be for them: a growth opportunity through independence and new experiences as well as a chance to develop authentic relationships.”*

*“Camp is his happy place. He has grown so much in his years with you, and you have taken such good care of him. It's a necessary part of his year: to be in a place where he is accepted and celebrated for who he is, rather than having to contort himself into what people think is “normal.””*

*“He had such a wonderful experience! According to him, he had “the time of my life!” We are thrilled that he came home more confident, independent and with new interests he learned from new friends.”*

# Chef T's Favorite Fall Recipe

## Chicken Jambalaya

**Prep Time :** 15 mins    **Cook Time :** 35 mins    **Serves:** 6 servings



### Ingredients :

- 1.5 Tbsp canola oil
- 1/2 onion, diced
- 1/2 bell pepper, diced
- 1 celery stalks, diced
- 1.5 cups rice
- 1/2 Tbsp garlic
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 Tbsp Cajun seasoning blend
- 1 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning blend
- 1/2 tsp hot sauce (or to taste)
- 2 1/4 cups low sodium chicken stock
- 1/2-14oz can diced tomatoes w/ liquid
- 1 lb Chicken (breast or thighs) cooked & diced
- 1/2 lb Chicken Sausage, cooked & diced

### Procedure :

- Place a large Dutch oven on the stove and turn on medium heat. Add oil.
- Once oil is hot add diced onions, bell peppers & celery, sauté for 3-5 minutes.
- Add rice, and all seasonings, coat rice with oil/veggie mixture and toast rice for 1-3 minutes.
- Add chicken stock and diced tomatoes; stir and bring to a boil; once at a boil place lid on Dutch oven and reduce heat to simmer for 15-20 minutes or until the rice is tender and the liquid has been absorbed.
- Taste rice mixture and adjust seasonings to your preference (more salt, more heat).
- Fluff rice with a fork and then add chicken and chicken sausage. Allow to heat through.
- Serve hot and enjoy :)



### Cute News!

Ivy Lorraine Walker is the 14th baby born to staff members who met at camp Akeela! Parents Julia and Greg met when they both worked at camp in 2013, and even got married at camp! (Joe Crowley - Ropes Director - is Ivy's uncle!)

Ivy was born September 26, 2023 at 3:11a.m., was 7lbs 13oz, 20" Long and we can't wait to meet her!



Do these steps look familiar to you??

# Our Favorite 2023 Pictures!

Picture this: 2023's summer was so incredible, we're lost for words.  
You know what they say, though - a picture's worth a thousand words...



Hazel, (Bunks 11 & 16),  
looking majestic playing  
with bubbles



Campers taking on the new  
Power Tower on our lake



Izzy (Bunk 14) and  
counselor Ashley enjoying  
the fire at ICON



2023's record-breaking weather  
gave us some extra bunk time,  
and Bunk 18 took full advantage  
with counselor Andrew



Will (Bunk 8), Seth (1), and Gael  
(4) hanging out at the soccer field



Counselor Jordan and Tim (Bunk  
2) practice a secret handshake  
before boating



Zach (Bunk 17) and his little  
brother reuniting on Visiting Day



Campers & counselors getting their  
exercise in during water aerobics



We're not condoning graffiti, but  
maybe we'll let it slide just once

# STAFF UPDATES

**Mo** (Bunks 13 & 14) has a new job as a tutor for a local “Homework House” that provides support for underprivileged children in her community. She loves it and working with the kids is helping her not miss her campers too much!

**Dan** (Bunk 3), has started his job as a para educator at a special needs school in Fairfield, NJ. He is working with 1st and 2nd graders - even though at camp Dan usually works with Seniors!

**Kwame, Grant** (17, 13), and **Camila** (6, 7) have been hanging out together back in Texas - this lazy river looks like fun!



**The entire kitchen & maintenance staff** traveled to New York City after camp, and several of them went to Disney Orlando and visited with **Chef Trina** and **Angie** while in sunny Florida!



(left) **Dara** (2, 18), **Roisin** (3, 16), **Cian** (5, 2), **Antoinette** (18, 11), **Amy**, (4, 3) **Emily** (6, 18) and other counselors traveled around the USA after camp, visiting New York, Nashville (where they saw **Miranda** (2, 6) and **Nathan** (7)), Maine and so much more! They even hung out with 2022 staff member **Caoimhe**.



**Amy** (4, 3) **Joe, Brian** (1), **Gracey** (14, 4), **Emily** (6, 18), **Jake** and **Maggie** visited Acadia National Park in Maine after camp. This is a few of them at the top of the Precipice Trail (left).

**Maria** (Bunk 8) is back home in Cyprus and has a new job facilitating art workshops for neurodivergent kids. She can't wait for Summer 2024!



Do you know someone who would make an amazing camp counselor? We're hiring for Summer 2024! Our counselors are typically college Jrs & Srs, interested in education or psychology, patient, fun, and excellent communicators! Send them to [our website](#) to apply.