



AKEELA NEWS: SPRING 2025

REMINDER: MANDATORY CAMPER AND PARENT/GUARDIAN ZOOM MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 20TH:

CAMPERS IN GRADES 3-7: 7:30PM EST

CAMPERS IN GRADES 8-10: 8:15PM EST

ATTENDING LIVE IS PREFERRED, BUT WE WILL DISTRIBUTE A RECORDING OF THE MEETING FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T MAKE IT!

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

We have to be honest with you: We were a little late getting our daughter's camp forms off to her sleepaway camp this year! It seems like May snuck up on us this year, and you may feel that way, too. If so, we certainly understand that life gets busy ... AND now it's time to think about camp!

In order for us to keep our campers safe and happy at Akeela, it's imperative that we have all of the information that your camp forms provide. Hopefully, you've read our [Family Handbook](#), watched some of the videos we've sent out and/or you were on our Zoom call about how to prepare your child for camp. Don't forget to read the Family Handbook closely - most of what you need to know is there! We also look forward to seeing you and your child on our all-camp Zoom on May 20th, which will help you and your child feel even more familiar with our expectations at Akeela.

Speaking of getting ready, families (and campers) often ask us what it takes to get camp ready each year. Starting in just a couple of weeks, a big part of our attention goes towards welcoming and preparing our staff for the upcoming camp season. More specifically, here's what the remainder of spring looks like for us and our team:

- Eric and Erin head up to camp at the end of May to welcome our "Pre-Camp" crew. This is a group of approximately 20 counselors and support staff members who help us get our physical space ready. This team will be painting, cleaning, landscaping, and moving lots of equipment to set up our cabins, community spaces and program areas. We're very grateful for this pre-camp team!
- Debbie will follow about a week later (after answering calls in our Philly office and spending a few more days with our kids) to help prepare for Open House and finalize plans for Staff Training. Around the same time, our aquatics, hiking and ropes course teams will arrive for their training and certification courses. Our senior staff - who lead us in both residential life and program areas - also arrives at this time, along with the rest of our support staff (kitchen, maintenance, office, etc.)
- Finally - our remaining members of our staff will join us at camp on June 17th! We'll then spend 10 days building our staff family, instilling in them our values of community, and preparing emotionally and physically for the summer ahead. If you're curious about the topics we cover in our staff training, here's a small sampling of the curriculum: Building Relationships with Akeela Campers, Child Development, Social Skills in a Camp Setting, Program Philosophy, Waterfront Safety, Emergency Preparedness, Wellness (physical and emotional) and much, much more!

This is a busy and exciting time of year and we can't wait to see your children in-person soon. As always, please call or email us with any questions or concerns.

Debbie Eric Erin

Who are Akeela's Head Counselors?

Barb Wolfson



Barb comes to us from Wayland, MA, and is a retired Special Educator. She has been a part of the camp community for a long time, both directing her own camp and working as a Head Counselor for Camp Akeela for several summers in the past. (Barb was the owner/director of the camp where Debbie and Eric met, 25 years ago!) She enjoys spending her days with her family, her dogs Nellie and Moose, and staying active by doing yoga, pilates, gardening and being outdoors. When relaxing, she loves to knit, read, cook, and listen to Bruce Springsteen.

Favorite Book: *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett **I'd Like to Visit:** Greece **Favorite Camp Food:** S'mores

Courtney Smith



Courtney first came to Akeela in 2019 and couldn't be more excited to return for her 7th summer! She has a BA in Communication Media and her Masters in Special Education from NC State University in Raleigh, North Carolina – where she calls home. Courtney has been teaching for 7 years and works at a charter school where she recently made the transition to a Middle School EC Resource Teacher. Along with teaching at the school, Courtney is the Assistant Girls' Basketball Coach. When Courtney isn't at camp, working, or coaching, you can find her loudly cheering on the NC State Wolfpack in all sports and playing kickball and volleyball in an adult sports league in Raleigh.

Favorite Book: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* **I'd Like to Visit:** New Zealand **Favorite Camp Food:** Brookies

Noelle Van Camp



Noelle is a sixth-generation Californian, mom of two, MD, and summer camp enthusiast who is joining us for her 2nd summer! She grew up in San Diego, CA., attended college and medical school at Harvard, and has worked as a pediatrician at Stanford since 2004. She loves history, literature and science, and speaks English and Spanish. She contacted us after Camp Akeela caught her attention online, and knew right away that she would love to spend her summer with us! Her kids attend 7-week summer camps in New Hampshire every year and have gained measurable, happy confidence and innumerable life skills in the process. She brings experience as a child health advocate, faculty mentor in undergraduate and graduate medical education, and is a creative thinker. Her passions include nature and gardening, intellectual conversations with kids, and learning about the amazing world we live in!

Favorite Book: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez **I'd Like to Visit:** Greece **Favorite Camp Food:** Spaghetti

Rob Brennan



Rob was born and raised outside Dundalk, a town in the Republic of Ireland. After graduating in 2017, he spent six years working as a primary school teacher in Dublin in both mainstream and special education settings. He recently moved to New Zealand where he has spent the past year working, travelling and adventuring! Rob first came to Akeela as a cabin counselor in 2016 and he instantly fell in love with camp. He returned the following year as a ropes course specialist and then became the ropes director in 2019. After a couple of years away from camp, Rob is delighted to be returning as a head counselor! In his free time, Rob enjoys playing piano, camping and spending time with friends and family.

Favorite Book: *Jacinda Arden- The Full Story of an Extraordinary Prime Minister*, Michelle Duff
I'd Like to Visit: Paris **Favorite Camp Food:** S'mores

Nick Mansfield



Nick was born and raised outside of Detroit, Michigan and is returning to Akeela for his fourth summer! He is currently finishing his first year teaching as a special educator serving third and fourth graders. Nick earned his BA in Special Education & Learning Disabilities from Michigan State University, and he is finishing his Masters in Special Education Leadership: MTSS this summer (also from MSU!). He thoroughly enjoys running, reading, collecting onesies, and having some good old clean fun! After having the summer of a lifetime last summer as an Assistant Head Counselor with Junior Camp, he can't wait to bring a whole lot of excitement to Upper Camp this year!

Favorite Book: *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho **I'd Like to Visit:** Alaska **Favorite Camp Food:** Cookout



Igniting Neurodiversity Through Camp

For 14 years, Akeela has been proud to partner with CampLauncher, a nonprofit charitable 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 CampLauncher!

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 YOU CAN HELP:

1. Complete the CampLauncher Pledge Form in your forms dashboard
2. Make a corresponding donation at <https://givebutter.com/launch-a-thon2025>
3. Set up a personalized team page, using that same Give Butter link to involve friends and family in supporting your camper's efforts!

REMINDERS



We're thrilled to be working with CampMeds, a pharmacy service that prepackages medication to ensure a high level of safety and efficiency for distribution at camp. CampMeds registration is required for all campers who take daily medication. **Please register now!**



Our Family Portal, CampMinder, now has an app! Downloadable on both Apple and Android devices, you'll be able to complete your camp forms, send emails to your camper, and receive a personalized feed of photos and news from camp! Please download CAMPANION now.

PHYSICAL EXAMS AND OTHER CAMP FORMS

Please remember to submit all of your camp forms **ASAP!** They can be found after you've logged in using the Staff & Family Login link on our website, or via the CAMPANION app. **The app is easiest for uploading completed forms.** Please note that the Physician's Exam Form must be completed by your camper's doctor.



AKEELA GEAR

CampSpot is our official camp supplier. To see our page on CampSpot, simply type Akeela where it asks for Camp Name on their home page. There is lots of great Akeela gear in our camp store, but **only the basic logo'd lightweight cotton t-shirt is required.**

BAGGAGE SHIPPING

Unpacking our campers is a vital part of how we welcome them to Akeela. Except for our overseas campers, we require that all trunks/duffels arrive at camp at least 3 days prior to the start of your child's session. A few options for getting your camper's bags to camp:

- Sign up for ShipCamps - recommended for excellent rates and ease of use.
- Drop them off at camp during Open House in June, if you're attending
- Arrange shipment through UPS, FedEx or USPS



OPEN HOUSE

We look forward to seeing many of our first-time camper families at camp on Sunday, June 15. If you haven't already sent your RSVP, which is available in your forms dashboard, please do so.