

AKEELA NEWSLETTER

Friendship, Community, Growth, Pride and Fun!

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTORS

As we finish up with the camp forms for our younger daughter, who will be going to her 7-week sleepaway camp for her 5th time this summer, we want to acknowledge that sending your child away to camp is a lot of work. Of course, there are the doctors' appointments, the prescriptions that need to be called in, the shopping, packing and organizing. And, we can't underestimate the emotional work that goes into it!

Preparing your child for camp takes time and energy - a positive energy. Pushing through our own fears and worries about sending our camper away needs to be a priority so we can meet our child with a "clean slate". Our children need to feel our optimism and confidence that going to camp will be a life-changing experience - one that will enable them to become more independent and more confident, and an experience that will lead to meaningful friendships that will last a long time. All of our campers are intuitive and if they sense that we're afraid about this very big transition, they will take on that worry themselves.

Some advice for those of you who are worried about camp this summer:

- Write down your concerns! Take some time during the day (not right before bed or you'll never be able to fall asleep!) to jot down your worries. That act of acknowledgment is important, and then you can revisit each concern and decide to either address it, or let it go!
- Call us. We're here to help and sometimes more information is all we need to minimize our fears.
- Breathe! Go for a walk or take 10 minutes with a cup of tea to just relax.
- Read Homesick and Happy by Michael Thompson. It's a really great book that will help remind you what an amazing gift you're giving your child by giving them a sleepaway camp experience.

By the way, much of this advice will work great for your anxious camper, too.

Your camper's Head Counselor will be emailing you prior to your camper's session to chat about anything that's on your mind so feel free to start a list now that you communicate with them about once our team is all up in VT after June 13th. Enjoy the rest of spring and we'll see you soon!



2026 DATES

FIRST SESSION: June 26 - July 17

SECOND SESSION: July 20 - August 10

VISITING DAYS: July 17 & August 10

FAMILY CAMP: August 13 - 18

IN THIS EDITION

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WELCOME NEW CAMPERS

WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE FIRST DAY OF CAMP

Dear Akeela Camper,

Summer is almost here and we hope you are excited about camp, even if you're also feeling a little nervous about it. Many kids go away for part of the summer. Some visit family, some go on teen travel or community service programs, and some go to sleep-away camps. Almost everybody worries about how they will like a place that's new to them. It's OK to feel that way and we're here to help make your transition to camp as easy and smooth as possible. We think that one way to do that is to help you know what to expect!

If you're taking one of the camp buses to camp, you and your parents will meet some of our counselors at the bus pick-up location. They will be there to welcome you and to introduce you to other campers. They will help you find a seat on the bus with a new friend and will be there to answer any questions you might have. The travel time from NY is approximately 5 hours and the time from Boston is approximately 2.5 hours. If you're traveling on the NY bus, you will bring lunch on the bus and there are bathrooms on both buses!

Those of you flying to Boston on Opening Day will be met at the airport by Akeela staff members. They will be there to greet you and to introduce you to other campers who have also flown in! You and your new friends will be driven by our staff in a camp van directly to camp. It will take approximately 2.5 hours to get to Akeela. If your parents are driving you to camp, you will be dropped off between 2:00 and 2:30. Your counselors will be there to meet you at your car and help you carry any last-minute items you have brought with you that day. You, your parents, and counselors will go to your cabin, where you'll see all of your belongings have been unpacked and organized for you so you can easily find your bed. You'll then say goodbye to your family and begin your camp adventure!

Regardless of how you get to camp, here's what you can expect to happen the rest of that first day:

- You will have a chance to see what camp looks like and enjoy some planned activities with your bunkmates. You might take a tour, play some games, or jump on the jumping pillow.
- Our great Chef, Kendall, will give you a small preview of his culinary expertise and provide a delicious snack for you and your new friends to enjoy.
- There will be some time after everyone arrives for each bunk to start spending some time together before we meet for dinner. This is a great time to get to know your bunkmates and counselors, and talk about "bunk expectations," so you know what to expect from each other.
- We will all have dinner and Evening Meeting together as a community. You'll eat dinner with your cabin, just like you will for all your meals at camp! Evening Meeting will be at the amphitheatre and you'll get to hear from Eric and Debbie, and have a chance to make announcements about the new friends you've already made!
- Then it will be time for our opening campfire and evening snack. We'll sing songs and do skits as a community by the fire. It's one of our favorite parts of camp!
- Before bedtime, you will preview the next day's schedule and then Debbie or Eric or your head counselor will stop by to say good night. Before you know it, your first day will be over and we will all be getting ready for bed!

Many campers worry that they might be sad or homesick on the first night of camp. That is very normal. All of your counselors will be right in your bunk with you to help you. In addition to talking to them, you might want to look at photos from home, write a letter to your family or read a book. We know that after a short time, you will be having such a great time at Akeela, it will feel like your second home.

We can't wait to see you at camp. We're so excited for an amazing summer at Camp Akeela. See you soon!

INTRODUCING: DAVID BAKER

We are very excited to announce the return to Akeela of a long-time friend and colleague, David Baker.

Dave first came to camp as a 19 year old cabin counselor, in the summer of 2010. He spent 6 summers working at Akeela seasonally, as a counselor, golf specialist, assistant head counselor, and head counselor. Along the way, he met his wife, Katie, at camp. They were married in 2015 (including a rehearsal dinner on the porch of the Akeela dining hall!) In 2016, he joined our year-round team, as he and Katie pioneered the roles of directors of Camp Akeela in Wisconsin.



In 2018, Dave left to pursue other opportunities, and has since worked as a teacher, coach, dorm parent, and enrollment professional at several New England independent schools. As they say, “Akeela is a Circle” and we are thrilled that the circle has brought Dave back into our professional lives, as camp’s new Associate Director. This summer, he will be working closely with all of our head counselors as our director of residential life.

Dave and Katie have three children – Adelaide, Deek, and Juniper – along with their sweet rescue dog, Luna, all of whom are excited to spend their summers back in the Akeela community!

FROM THE BLOG: D&D...AN EXECUTIVE FUNCTION WORKOUT?

Parents of kids with ADHD or ASD are very familiar with the phrase executive function. It refers to a cluster of cognitive skills – working memory, impulse control, planning, organization, cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation – that some neurodivergent brains find more challenging. These are also, not coincidentally, skills that - when still developing - can make school and social life hard.

Here’s what most people don’t know: playing D&D is an intensive exercise in exactly these skills. And because it doesn’t feel like a skill-building exercise – because it feels like an adventure – kids practice without resistance. Keeping track of hit points, planning strategies in combat, and resolving conflicts require players to exercise cognitive functions such as working memory and impulse control. The failures and setbacks kids experience in the course of a D&D game can be valuable practice for real life. D&D provides a low-stakes, high-engagement arena for exactly that practice.

[Continue reading here...](#)

HOW WE ASSIGN COUNSELORS TO BUNKS



Parents and campers often ask us who their counselors will be for the upcoming summer. Something you may not know about is how we decide which staff members will work with which campers. We actually don't determine counselor placement until 4 or 5 days before campers arrive. We first take time to get to know each staff member, see how they work with others, get a sense of their strengths and actually take the time to ask THEM with which age group they feel most passionately about working. Only then does our Senior Staff put together co-counselor groupings and assign them their bunks. It is probably the day the staff look forward to the most during their training. We will post an online news item with photos of the staff members who will be working most closely with your camper(s). Campers will also have a chance to meet their counselors (and bunkmates) on a "virtual bunk meeting" two nights prior to their camp session. Schedule & Zoom links for those meetings will be sent closer to the date.

GEOGRAPHY UPDATE

For the past 18 years, we've published articles listing all of our campers' home states. Each summer, we found that our campers represented more than half of the US states and several other countries as well. We're proud of Akeela's diversity so we counted again this year ... and we got an incredible result: 30 states and 2 other countries!

Here's the entire list, as of early May:

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, DC, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. We also have campers coming from the UK and Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, this summer's staff comes to us from 27 states:

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin!

And we can't forget our international staff: Australia, Brazil, Columbia, India, Ireland, Mexico, Pakistan, and the UK.

SPECIAL EVENTS AT CAMP

At Akeela, there are opportunities to be silly, show off something cool about ourselves, and connect over shared interests!

One way we do this is by dressing up on Special Event Days, and Theme Days.

Participation in dressing up is optional, and we don't recommend purchasing new items, but feel free to pack items that might "fit" a theme or special event!



2026 SPECIAL EVENTS & THEME DAYS

BEYOND THE PAGES



Get ready for our book-themed Special Event Day! Campers will journey through worlds of fantasy, mythology, science fiction, and real-life adventure with hands-on activities, creative challenges, and team games inspired by their favorite stories and genres.

We invite campers to join the fun by packing a costume, accessory, or piece of clothing that represents their favorite book, character, or genre of literature!

THEME DAYS

- Hometown Spirit Day
- Wacky Wednesday
- Superhero Day
- Halloween in July
- Tie-Dye Tuesday
- Twin Day
- Backwards Day
- Decades Day (70s/80s/90s etc)



WELCOME NEW 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. At the same time, nothing excites us more than being able to share the Akeela experience with first-time campers. Soon, there will be no distinction between “old-timers” and “first-timers”, as we all become one community. In the meantime, we wanted to welcome the following campers to the Akeela family:

First Session:

Amelia A (8th grade, Fort Lauderdale FL)
Edgar A (6th grade, Fort Myers FL)
Maya B-H (7th grade, Hoboken NJ)
Lily C-T (8th grade, Woodside NY)
Leon C (8th grade, Austin TX)
Anna C (9th grade, New Orleans LA)
Alice C (5th grade, Westwood MA)
Marcel C (6th grade, Bethesda MD)
Harrison D (4th grade, Louisville CO)
Penelope D (6th grade, Louisville CO)
Gabriel E-C (8th grade, Essex Junction VT)
Felix E (5th grade, Boca Raton FL)
Ava F (8th grade, Weston CT)
Evan G (9th grade, Davis CA)
Ethan G (5th grade, Glastonbury CT)
Alexandra H (5th grade, Blue Hill ME)
Elise H (7th grade, Lewisville TX)
Eli H (9th grade, Ware MA)
Abby J (8th grade, Denver CO)
Billy K (9th grade, Ludlow VT)
Maya K (7th grade, Chicago IL)
Wyatt K (9th grade, Gilbert AZ)
Alice M (6th grade, Denville NJ)
Matthew M (5th grade, Baltimore MD)
Declan O (9th grade, Denver CO)
Andrew O (5th grade, Croton On Hudson NY)
Deven P (8th grade, Edison NJ)
Fisher P (3rd grade, New York NY)
Hudson R (3rd grade, Philadelphia PA)
Tyler R (5th grade, Philadelphia PA)
Ruby R (4th grade, New York NY)
Roman S (9th grade, Wellington FL)
Jacob S (6th grade, Irvington NY)
Ada T (8th grade, Frisco TX)
Samantha T (8th grade, East Middlebury VT)

Jack V (10th grade, Fairfield CT)
Emma W (7th grade, Brooklyn NY)
David Y (6th grade, Bloomfield Hills MI)
Emilia Z (5th grade, Summit NJ)

Second Session:

Evelyn B (9th grade, Henrico VA)
Samuel B (5th grade, New Canaan CT)
Jack B (9th grade, Charlestown MA)
Winfield B (4th grade, Brandon VT)
Charlotte B (8th grade, Bondville VT)
Flora B (6th grade, Pittsburgh PA)
Elise C (5th grade, Concord MA)
Adeline C (8th grade, Bel Air MD)
George D (8th grade, Evanston IL)
Danielle E (9th grade, Arlington MA)
Benjamin E (8th grade, Putney VT)
Mae F (8th grade, New Canaan CT)
Caroline F (7th grade, Winnetka IL)
James G (9th grade, Darien CT)
Lukas G (5th grade, New York NY)
Alana H (8th grade, Arlington MA)
Charles H (4th grade, New York NY)
Daniel J (8th grade, Waterbury VT)
Lara J (9th grade, Scaldwell UK)
Annie K (7th grade, Washington DC)
Casey M (9th grade, San Rafael CA)
William M (9th grade, The Dalles OR)
George M (8th grade, New York NY)
Grace M (6th grade, Cohasset MA)
Evan N (9th grade, Brooklyn NY)

Juliana O (9th grade, Los Angeles CA)
Olivia P (8th grade, Santa Rosa CA)
Rory P (6th grade, Newburyport MA)
Daniel P (7th grade, Colts Neck NJ)
Adam R (7th grade, Stow MA)
Robert S (10th grade, Walpole MA)
Dylan T (5th grade, Washington DC)
William V (6th grade, New York NY)
Logan V (10th grade, Winnetka IL)
Sylvie W (9th grade, Anchorage AK)
Henry W (7th grade, Waunakee WI)
Jordan W (10th grade, Hummelstown PA)
Hector W (7th grade, Irving TX)
Avery Y (9th grade, Ponte Vedra Beach FL)
Thorin Y (8th grade, Sebastopol CA)
Georgia Y (5th grade, Newton MA)
Yves R (8th grade, Southborough MA)
Quincy R (6th grade, San Francisco CA)
Roman R-J (4th grade, Ithaca NY)
Ian S (7th grade, New York NY)
Colton S (4th grade, Ridgefield CT)

