

Whispering Pines



HAYO-WENT-HA CAMPS
Arbutus Lake for Girls • Torch Lake for Boys
State YMCA of Michigan



MAY 2024

Musings and Meanderings...

By John (JC) Carlson, CEO

With the days growing warmer and summer just around the corner, there's a magical sense of anticipation that comes with the start of summer camp. It's a time when summer dreams come true; a time of laughter echoing through the trees and along our shores; a time when lifelong friendships are forged around crackling campfires; and a time when each and every day is filled with boundless possibilities and challenges — shaping character and fostering profound growth in every camper's journey.



In preparation for my inaugural summer at Hayo-Went-Ha (HWH) Camps, I've connected with our alumni and donors who have shared their cherished memories of summer dreams fulfilled. These stories feel like a journey of discovery, revealing the magic of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps.

Moreover, I've been deeply touched by the generosity of those ensuring that all children, regardless of their means, can experience the joys of summer camp. Witnessing this firsthand, I'm so grateful for their unwavering support and generosity.

As one esteemed Hayo-Went-Ha alum put it, "Kindness in our community spreads like confetti." I am deeply inspired by this ripple effect of kindness. It not only enriches both giver and receiver but also strengthens our bonds, creating a brighter and more harmonious HWH Camps community — and world.

In the spirit of spreading kindness, I am thrilled to reach out and humbly ask for your support of our Summer Dreams Campership & Equipment Drive. Embodying the "spreading kindness" concept, through the Cook/Piraino Matching Campership

Challenge, your donation will have double the impact, as each dollar given will be matched 1:1. We're also urging our community to ensure that 'all' children have the necessary supplies and equipment to thrive. If you're interested in helping make a child's summer dreams come true, please click the button below. Your generosity is truly appreciated.

[GIVE TODAY!](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

Let's continue to sprinkle kindness freely, for in its gentle descent, we find the true essence of humanity's capacity to heal, unite, and uplift.

Each for All – All for Each.



Torch Talk

By Adam Delezenne, Boys Camp Director

What makes Camp Hayo-Went-Ha what it is?

This is a question I have asked of every returning summer staffer in our interviews. Presented as a "help the new guy out" matter of curiosity, there is much more going on here for me. I use this question as a way beneath the surface of summer fun and adventure to get at a deeper level of what is going on at Hayo-Went-Ha.

It is the start of understanding the strength that supports us and where real growth is possible. The answer is never as obvious as it seems. For instance, one thing that undoubtedly makes Hayo-Went-Ha on Torch Lake what it is, is our long shoreline and, by extension, all of the summer fun we create on the lake. But, with no disrespect to Torch Lake, there are many camps on big, beautiful lakes with great waterfront programs. While it is something that forms us, it does not make us unique.

In my brief three months here, I've probably heard a dozen answers to this question, and some patterns have emerged. Two things, so far, stand out:

"Camp made me who I am today."

Many have repeated this in various ways; the common thread is that those involved with camp have been profoundly and positively impacted by the experience. What I hear in this is not that camp is stamping the same imprint on every camper or staff, but that what we do here helps everyone to discover more of who they truly are. Camp does not shape you as much as it helps to reveal your actual shape. For campers, this may mean that they discover who they are becoming. For staff (especially those of us who are older), camp helps us discover the true self that hides under the layers of presentation we've built over the top of it.

I believe that the mechanism behind this has something to do with the nature of the challenge that Hayo-Went-Ha presents to our campers and staff. Our expeditions can be tough. Our most popular trip, based on the waitlist length, is Isle Royale. Isle Royale is a beautiful, rugged, and very challenging place. Campers take all their supplies and gear for two weeks and over 100 miles of strenuous hiking. There is a genuine sense in which this trip is a rite of passage, and we can't seem to get enough of it.

“It’s the community; because of camp, I have a band of brothers.”

Or sisters, as this applies just as much at Arbutus as for the Torch staff I am interviewing! In finishing a program at our camps, campers leave with memories, maybe some bruises, maybe shoes full of sand, and they go out as part of a unique community. It starts with the relationships they build at camp and goes much further. That first summer links them to a chain of relationships stretching back over 120 years of playing and learning on the same lakes, pushing their limits, and growing on expeditions. These bonds, forged in common adversity, connect everyone who has been through Hayo-Went-Ha Camps. Joining this community is no small thing; I love that part of my job as director is welcoming campers into it!

What makes Hayo-Went-Ha what it is to you?

Intuition tells me that these are not the complete answers to my question. I’m sure I’ll learn more this summer as I find my own answers through experience. Maybe you have your own answer to share or a camp story that would help me understand what makes our site and programs unique for you. I would love to hear anything you would like to share! Reach out to me at adam@hayowentha.org with thoughts or stories.

Arbutus *Angle*

By Amanda Macaluso, Girls Camp Director

The *magic* of HWH Camps: Where Adventure and Growth Intersect.

Nestled in the heart of nature, Hayo-Went-Ha (HWH) Camps offer a unique blend of wilderness adventure and personal development that has been shaping young lives for generations. At HWH Camps, the experience is not just about camping but about building character, fostering independence, and creating lifelong memories.



The camps’ distinctive features — a focus on wilderness adventures, technology-free environments, single-gender settings, and extended session lengths — all combine to create a transformative experience for every camper.

The *value* of being unplugged and immersed in wilderness adventures.

At the core of the HWH Camps experience is the wilderness adventure program. Campers have the opportunity to explore the great outdoors through activities such as hiking, kayaking, canoeing, and biking. These adventures are not just thrilling; they are designed to teach practical skills, environmental ethics, and personal resilience. The challenges of the wilderness encourage campers to step out of their comfort zones, work as a team, and develop leadership skills.

The *benefits* of being unplugged

In today's digital age, HWH Camps provide a rare and valuable opportunity: a chance to unplug completely from electronic devices. This disconnection from smartphones, tablets, and other screens helps campers to engage more deeply with their surroundings and their peers. Freed from the constant distractions of notifications and social media, campers can focus on real-world interactions, fostering deeper connections and enhancing their social skills.

The *advantage* of the single-gender summer camp experience

HWH Camps' commitment to single-gender sessions is another cornerstone of their philosophy. This environment allows campers to explore their interests and abilities without the social pressures that often come with co-ed settings. For girls, it can be particularly empowering to participate in physically challenging and adventurous activities in a supportive, all-female environment. Boys, on the other hand, can benefit from an atmosphere that encourages emotional expression and cooperation, traits that are sometimes stifled in mixed-gender settings.

The *friendships* develop with extended sessions fostering lasting impact

Unlike many other camps that offer shorter stays, HWH Camps provide two- to four-week sessions. This extended period allows campers not only to develop skills but also to form lasting friendships and become part of a close-knit community. The length of the sessions ensures that the personal growth and connections made at camp have a lasting impact, often influencing campers well into adulthood.

The *lasting legacy* of positive change

For over a century, HWH Camps have been more than just a summer getaway; they have been a place of transformation. The combination of being immersed in nature, disconnected from digital devices, participating in single-gender groups, and staying for extended periods helps shape the campers into confident, independent, and thoughtful individuals. Many alumni look back on their time at HWH Camps as a defining period of their youth, filled with joyous adventures and the discovery of new strengths.

HWH Camps stand out not just for the beauty of their natural settings or the variety of their programs, but for how they integrate these elements into a coherent experience that promotes both personal growth and environmental stewardship. As we look to the future, the timeless appeal of HWH Camps remains a beacon for young people seeking adventure, camaraderie, and the opportunity to grow in ways they never imagined.



Summer Dreams Staff Auction

By Emma Macaluso & Lily Coughlin, Summer Dreams Staff Auction Chairs

Each year, our staff auction proves to be a fantastic success, bringing together team members from both sites for a fun-filled evening. They bid on a variety of enticing items, ranging from retro camp shirts to mystery boxes. All proceeds go directly to our annual campership drive. Last summer, we raised over \$8,500 — enough to sponsor nearly four campers for two-week sessions!

We are currently seeking donations for our upcoming staff auction. The team has a fondness for vintage camp merchandise and memorabilia, as well as gift certificates and themed baskets full of camp supplies. You are also welcome to contribute cash donations, which will be used to purchase exciting items for the staff to bid on during the auction. If you have items you'd like to contribute, please send them to: Auction Planning Committee, **1380 East Arbutus Lake Road, Traverse City, MI 49696**. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!



a youth mental
health charity

Heroes Among Us — Eli's Project Collaboration to Serve Foster Kids

By Amanda Macaluso, Girls Camp Director

YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps is entering into a collaboration with [Eli's Project](#), a Lansing-area non-profit organization, to provide a camp experience to children within the Michigan foster care system. Eli's Project will also assist the camps in identifying mental health resources and trainings that will better support our staff in their work with campers.

Created by HWH alumnus Dr. Zach Goldstein, the mission of Eli's Project is to support the mental health needs of children and teens — with a specific goal of preventing suicide within this population. It hopes to accomplish this through advocacy, education, and action.

Zach's adopted son Eli, a product of foster care, attended Camp Hayo-Went-Ha and participated in the Isle Royale program in 2021. Eli passed away unexpectedly in June 2022.

Funding is currently in place to send two foster kids to our camps this summer. We also hope to secure funding to properly outfit these campers for their camp experience. In the words of Zach Goldstein, "After years of working with HWH as the Health Officer, I was able to see firsthand what positive impacts HWH Camps has on kids when I sent my son Eli for the first time. The camp experience is important for ALL kids to have. When Eli's Project was formed, we made it our mission to advocate for kids from different backgrounds or those with different life experiences. We're all excited for the potential of this joint fundraiser to represent kids who would otherwise never have the opportunity to go to camp."

Those wishing to support this collaboration can visit the Eli's Project [website](#). We are very pleased to collaborate with Zach Goldstein and Eli's Project to serve more kids and staff at camp. If you would like to learn more about Eli's Project, please feel free to reach out to Zach.

Alumni Corner

By Hadley Robinson, Alumni Task Force Chair

After writing last month about fun run-ins when you wear your camp gear, Kurt Donovan (camper '84 and '85) sent along this picture with David Leach, another former camper and LC who went to camp before Kurt. They met several years ago when Kurt's son Nolan was wearing a HWH hoodie at a band camp concert at Interlochen and made the connection. David is the band director at Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor and is retiring this year. Kurt was on a band trip in Europe this year with his HWH hat and snapped this pic. Thanks for sending along Kurt!



We would love to hear about any alumni meet ups, either impromptu ones or planned gatherings. We know these unofficial gatherings happen all the time for weddings or birthdays or just to catch up. If you have a good pic or a story, we'd love to feature them here. Send emails to alumnitaskforce@gmail.com. We're just starting out, so

we're also open to any ideas or feedback about what you'd like to see the alumni committee do to reconnect with old friends and rekindle your passion for camp!

Alumni Spotlight

By Hadley Robinson, Alumni Task Force Chair

JAKE ARENS

Camp Era: 2008-2012 Camper, 2016 & 2018 Staff

If you've ever hiked Isle Royale, or gone on another camp trip, you know these things can be some of the toughest things you ever do, but also somehow the best thing you ever do. Often these experiences can inspire your life for years after. Hayo-Went-Ha alum Jake Arens embodies this and has propelled his love of outdoors and physical challenges to raise money for people, like himself, with disabilities. We talked about the value of camp allowing us all to be a "little bit feral" and free.

Q: Jake, you've undertaken some major adventures lately. Tell us a bit about how you got into it.

A: I have a deep appreciation for the outdoors; something I owe to my summers at Hayo-Went-Ha. I first fell in love with hiking on a camp trip to Isle Royale. My counselors would probably be surprised to know that I really enjoyed it.

I have Cerebral Palsy which makes the muscles in my legs very tight, and walking is often painful. Having that love for the outdoors, and for hiking, I decided to push the boundaries of what my body could do. In 2022, I hiked all 2,200 miles of the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine.

On March 1, 2024, I set out to hike across Europe to raise money for Cerebral Palsy research. The intended 4,000-mile journey was cut short at around 850 miles. I hiked the Camino de Santiago in Spain and half of the Kom-Emine across Bulgaria, raising just under \$10,000 at the time of writing.



Q: What inspired these hikes?

A: As someone with Cerebral Palsy, the fact that I can be so active, and that I can hike at all, is miraculous. I wanted to prove first to myself and then to others what is possible for people with disabilities. I love hiking. I've been given the ability, despite all odds, to do what I love. Not hiking would be an act of ingratitude.

My Appalachian Trail hike was originally intended to be a fundraiser to support early intervention therapies for kids with CP, but those plans fell apart in the chaos of the pandemic. My attempt at the Trans European Alpine Route was about blending my love of travel with my passion for hiking. It was also a second chance to help others with Cerebral Palsy.

Q: What recent accomplishment are you most proud of?

A: Oddly enough, I'm most proud of failing my most recent long distance hike attempt. It's not the failure itself that I'm proud of, but the way I've responded to it. I wasn't as physically prepared as I had been for the Appalachian Trail, and I was struggling with severe joint pain and constant fatigue. I grappled with the decision to end the hike for a while, but I decided I'd done enough. Normally, I would have beat myself up over it or been disappointed in myself. I made a conscious decision to be kind to myself.

It sounds like a small thing to be proud of, but it's the internal changes that can be the hardest.

Q: How has camp inspired your life?

A: I discovered my love for the outdoors on the sloping pine hills of HWH. My first backpacking trip was my camp trip to Isle Royale. It's where I learned to value community in nature. It's where I learned that doing scary things can pay off. It's also a place where a young boy can go a little feral. Where he can feel wild and untamed.

Q: Do you have a favorite camp memory you could share?

A: I distinctly remember several events from my summer as a Viking Sailor. We were probably the least seaworthy sailing cabin in Camp HWH history.

We somehow managed to completely turtle the E-Scow, which was the biggest non-keeled boat in camp. During the sailing test I wasn't able to get my Crew rating because one of the pins to my rudder suddenly snapped and the entire steering apparatus sunk in about 20 feet of crystal clear water. In Torch, on a calm sunny day, that's shallow enough to see it, but too deep to dive for it. It sat there taunting me as the people in the patrol boat let me know that I wouldn't be getting my rating.

During our trip to the North Channel, one of our boats was sent with a Spinnaker sail instead of a jib, so we couldn't go upwind. That boat ran aground two days into the trip because the anchor wasn't secure. We had been exploring a nearby island when it

happened, so we made a fire there and prepared mentally for the possibility of surviving long-term.

Then, a bad case of poison ivy left us at the docks for two days, where we received several noise complaints. We got caught between a shoal and a shipping lane in a dense fog. That wasn't the first time in my life a cargo ship's horn didn't sound awesome.

It was one of my favorite trips. I had more fun that summer than on any other tip. We laughed longer and louder than any other cabin that year. That's the magic of camp to me. Even the bad times were so good.

Does anybody care to offer a challenge to Jake's claim to the "least seaworthy cabin?" Follow Jake's adventures on Instagram @Sidetrackhiker. And if you have somebody you think we should feature in our next alumni spotlight, please send your nomination to alumnitaskforce@gmail.com

Please consider forwarding this issue of Whispering Pines to friends, family members and others in your network that might consider making an investment in our camps!



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120 Years



110 Years

Our Contact Information

State YMCA of Michigan • 919 East Torch Lake Dr.
Central Lake, MI 49622
231-544-5915 • <https://www.hayowentha.org>

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