

# Whispering Pines



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



DECEMBER 2024

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## Musings and Meanderings...

*By John (JC) Carlson, CEO*

### Campfire Chat and State of the Camp address - please join us!

**Join Us for the "State of the Flame" Virtual Event**

We're thrilled to invite all staff, board members, alumni, and supporters to the **State of the Flame** virtual event on **Tuesday, December 3rd, at 7:00 PM** via Zoom.

#### What to Expect:

**Camp Updates:** CEO John "JC" Carlson will share an overview of 2024, celebrate our achievements, and reveal exciting initiatives shaping the future of YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha

Camps.

**Annual Appeal:** Staff will discuss how you can support the **Keepers of the Flame** campaign and why camp is more essential than ever for today's youth.

**Inspiring Messages:** Board Members will continue the conversation about moving the flame forward.

**Q&A:** We'll stay on for 15 minutes after the presentation to answer your questions.

**About Keepers of the Flame:**

Rooted in tradition, the **Keepers of the Flame** program began in the early 1990s, inspiring campers and staff to embrace the values that define our community. As a Keeper of the Flame, you carry the responsibility of preserving camp's legacy, ensuring it continues to inspire for generations to come.

**Save the Date and Join Us!**

This is a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with the camp community and celebrate the spirit of Hayo-Went-Ha. Mark your calendar and don't miss this chance to ignite your passion for camp!

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85111214101> Meeting ID: 851 1121 4101

We look forward to seeing you there!

**How You Can Help:**

**Make a donation today** to support these essential projects and the continued success of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps. [Click here](#) to support a team as we reach camp alumni near and far.

Join us in ensuring that both of our amazing Camps thrive—where growth, connection, and adventure will flourish for years to come. Together, we are shaping the future of our camp community.

# CAMP FIRE CHAT



YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR AND  
JOIN US ONLINE!**

**Tuesday, December 3  
at 7pm (EST)**



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## **Arbutus *Angle***

### **Introducing Mackenzie Morison - Our new Camp Arbutus Hayo-Went-Ha Camp Director**

We are thrilled to announce the hiring of Mackenzie "MackMo" Morison as the new Girls Camp Director at YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps - Arbutus Lake!

MackMo has a deep and personal connection to Hayo-Went-Ha, starting as a camper in 2007 at Camp AWHW and progressing through various staff leadership roles. Most recently, she served as Wilderness Camp Director at YMCA Camp Hi-Rock in Massachusetts, where she managed the BOLD & GOLD wilderness program and led exciting outdoor adventure such as hiking and canoeing.

A graduate of Central Michigan University with a degree in Therapeutic Recreation, MackMo brings expertise in program development, innovation, and strategic planning, all while honoring camp traditions and fostering a collaborative community. She is passionate about staff training and believes in the transformative power of outdoor experiences.

In her own words: "In the outdoors, I discovered a confidence I didn't know was possible for myself. The outdoors changed everything for me, and helping others find that for themselves is the impact I want to make in the world."

MackMo is also a certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, Wilderness First Responder, and Level II Ropes Course Practitioner. She has contributed to the leadership of the Northeast YMCA Camping Conference, and her dedication to outdoor adventure and camp traditions makes her an ideal fit for this role.

Amanda Macaluso shared, *"I am thrilled to pass the reins to MackMo, who has demonstrated incredible passion and drive—not only in pursuing a career in the camping profession but also in returning to the camp she loves. I am confident she will help lead us forward into the future as an integral part of our year-round team."* Welcome, MackMo!

Please join us in welcoming Mackenzie "MackMo" Morison to the team! You can reach her by email at [mmorison@hayowentha.org](mailto:mmorison@hayowentha.org).



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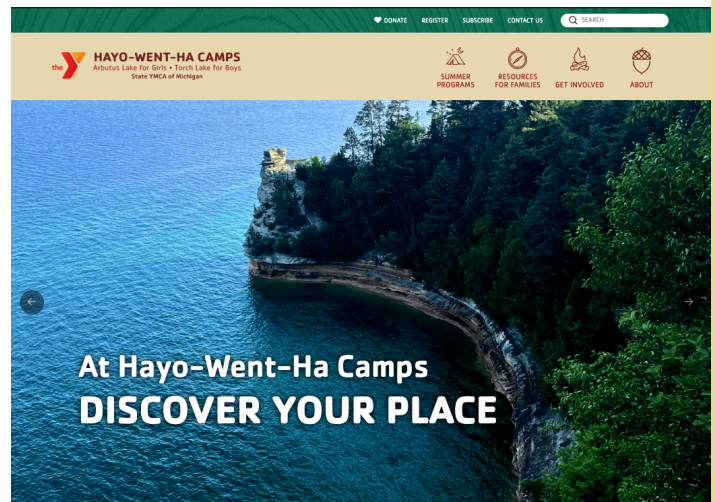
## Torch Talk

By Adam Delezenne, Torch Lake Director

**New Website launched**

As of November 19th, Hayo-Went-Ha Camps officially has a [new website!](#) Designed by our marketing firm, Olmstead Associates, and built by our team internally, this new site will be a great vehicle to bring even more people into the work of the State YMCA of Michigan. Be sure to check out the new [camp programs page!](#)

Created in record time (about two months), we felt it was the right time for the new (and still forming with the addition of a new Arbutus Camp Director) leadership to make our mark on how we communicate the work of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps and invite people into that work. We're proud of our new look and hope it helps you find what you want from our programs!



## Alumni Spotlight

By Hadley Robinson

PHIL PICKARD

CAMP ERA: 2005-2018 (Counselor, Program Director, Voyageur Division Leader, Bush Division Leader, Trip Shack Director)

*Phil Pickard first came to Hayo-Went-Ha as a counselor, and his enthusiasm and energy were a natural fit for the job. He was on ad staff for many years and spent several off seasons with camp's environmental education program too. Like many alumni, Phil works in education and speaks to camp's inspiring role in his career. But little did he know back then that all those Polar Bear jumps in Torch Lake would also potentially influence his career.*

**Question: Phil, what do you do with your days?**

Answer: I am a special education teacher at Grand Blanc High School and coordinate the Special Olympics Unified program.

**Q: How did you get involved with the Special Olympics?**

A: When I was teaching at Brendel Elementary in Grand Blanc, we began fundraising and did a "polar plunge" where we jumped in the lake in the winter as an entire staff. Then after 3-4 years of plunging and getting donations I was honored by Grand Blanc schools and I got to meet the Special Olympic high school students. I immediately loved the program and what it stood for. Then when the teacher retired, boom, I took over the position and became a high school teacher, which was something I never thought I would do.

**Q: I know you've done many polar plunges for the Special Olympics. How much have you raised?**

A: I have done 8 polar plunges. One year I even jumped in twice! Over these 8 years, I have raised about \$40,000!! The consistent generosity of people blows my mind!

**Q: Did Torch Lake prepare you at all for the cold water jumps?**

A: Torch absolutely prepped me! Those Polar Bears on a rainy morning on Torch may be worse than a frozen Lake Fenton!

**Q: How has your career or life been inspired by camp?**

A: Camp has inspired me in all aspects of life! I try to be a better friend to all because of the "Each for All, All for Each" mentality! I'm not always good at it, but I try to think of the common good and for a way to be my brother's keeper. I try to pass the ladle to the next person who may need that drink of water even more than I do!

Camp has also made me a better teacher! At camp we work with campers from all walks of life, and working with a variety of campers prepared me to also work with students from all walks of life. Everyone comes to camp and school with things in their past that make them who they are. We have to find empathy and understand to give people a chance to reach their full potential.

**Q: What is something you've been most proud of lately?**

A: I am so proud watching the Special Olympics Unified Program in action at the high school level. The Unified program unites students with intellectual and physical disabilities with general education peers. These pure interactions and friendships happen so naturally, that it inspires me every day. There are so many good teenagers in the world!

**Q: What's your favorite camp memory?**

A: I have too many favorite camp memories to pick one!

Leading a song at Stand-Up Sit-Down campfires while hearing the laughs and taking in the views; Closing campfires in Bonbright Lodge; The hugs from returning campers on Opening Days; Reaching the summit of the Golden Staircase in Alaska; Completing the final day on Isle Royale; And greeting returning trips at the trip shack and hearing campers' stories of lifelong memories made on trips.



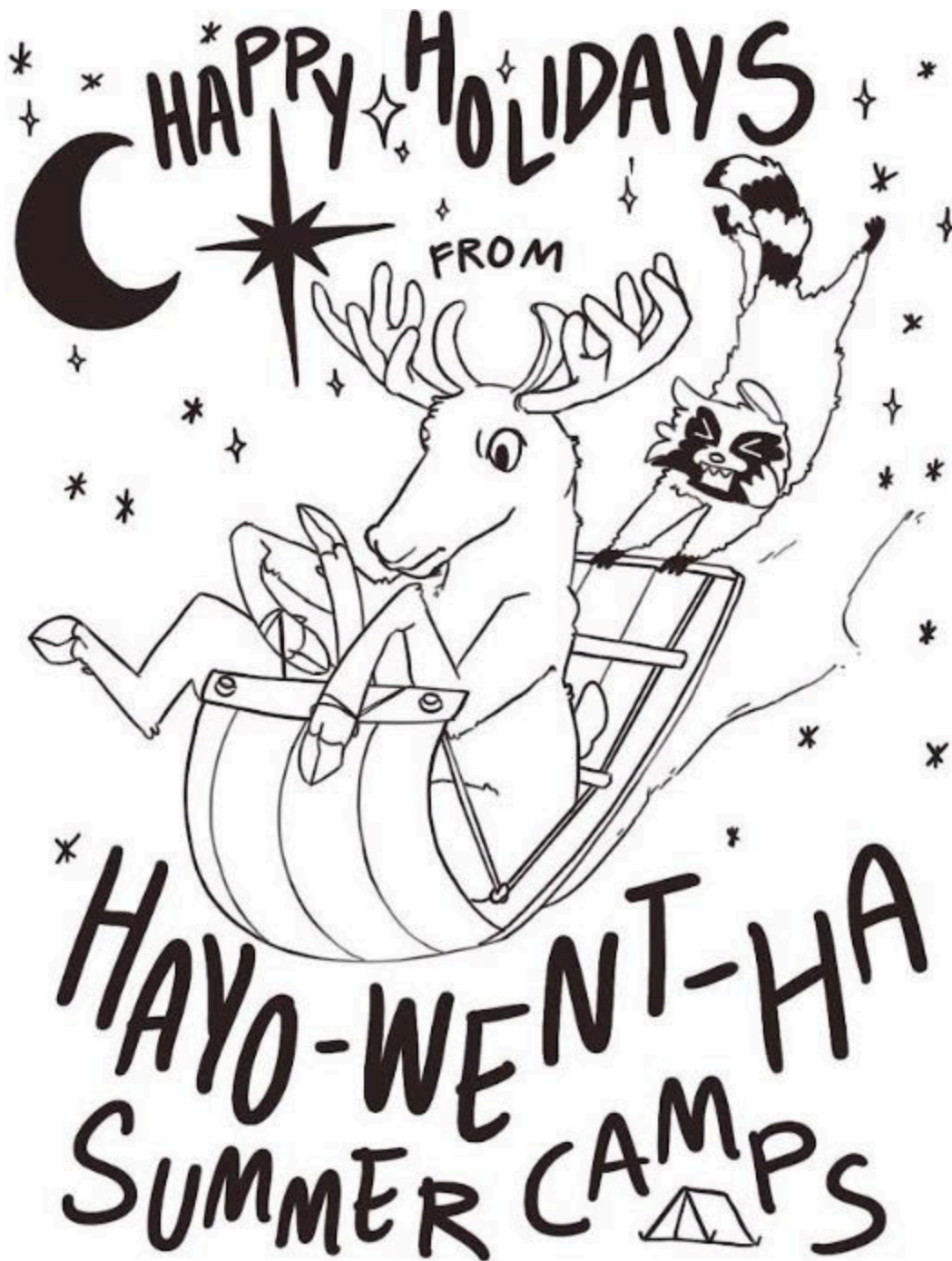
## Christmas Shirt

At Hayo-Went-Ha Camps, we LOVE our t-shirts! Trip shirts, staff shirts, polar bear shirts – we've got them all. One of the most coveted of them all is the limited quantity Christmas shirt. Many camp families (including grandparents) use the HWH Camps Christmas shirt as a way of giving the

gift of camp at the holidays. Could there be a better surprise to find under the tree on December 25th?

The 2024 Christmas shirt is a one of a kind Alex Fogel design. A true collector's item! The cost is \$35.00 per shirt with free shipping.

You may order your HWH Camps Christmas Shirt using [this link](#). The order deadline is December 9th.



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**Calendar of Events**



## DECEMBER

- 3 - State of the Union / Camp Update
- 4 - HWH Camps Board Meeting
- 9 - Christmas shirt order deadline
- 14 - Trivia Night in Ann Arbor - Everyone is Welcome!

## JANUARY

- 1 - January Moments Mailed
- 23 - Arlington / DC Area Camper Rally
- 24 - Arlington / DC Area Alumni Gathering

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## Future Newsletter Sections

We want to hear from you! Whether you recently got married, welcomed a future camper into the world, or traveled somewhere amazing while proudly sporting your camp gear, we'd love to share your news with our alumni community. Complete this form to share your updates and photos and we'll be thrilled to share your milestones with camp friends across the U.S. and around the globe!

[Click here](#) for all past editions of the Whispering Pines and some news from alumni. Weddings, Babies, and reunions...

*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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State YMCA of Michigan



120 Years



110 Years

### Our Contact Information

State YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps • 919 Northeast Torch Lake Drive  
Central Lake, MI 49622  
2315445915 • <http://www.hayowentha.org>

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