

# Whispering Pines



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



APRIL 2025

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## Musings and Meanderings...

*By John (JC) Carlson, CEO*

### A Summer of Transformation: Help Make a Child's Dream Come True

I truly love our camps! We are incredibly proud of the opportunity we have to make a lasting, positive impact on our youth. One of my absolute favorite moments from last summer was sitting down with the campers after they returned from their trips, sharing a meal, and hearing their stories of adventure. The excitement in their voices, the pride in their eyes, and the shared sense of accomplishment were incredibly inspiring.

After speaking with the girls from Arbutus Lake who had just returned from Isle Royale, I saw their faces light up as they recounted their experiences — spotting a moose or a fox,

and marveling at the breathtaking natural beauty around them. But beyond the sights, they spoke with a profound sense of triumph about completing a 100-mile journey that initially felt impossible. It wasn't just about the distance they traveled; they had conquered something much greater. The pride they all felt, the unwavering support for one another, and the deep satisfaction of overcoming challenges together were undeniable.

I then spoke with the boys who had taken the same journey, and the sense of personal achievement and camaraderie among them was just as powerful. Like the girls, they felt a deep sense of pride in overcoming the challenges they had faced, and through their shared experiences, they built resilience that further strengthened their bonds. They were no longer just a group of boys. As one camper confidently put it, "JC, after the trip, I really think I became a man." Moments like that are the ones that make you smile and remind you why these experiences matter so much.



These are just two of many examples at our camps that reflect our Pathways to Growth. They showcase the true beauty of camp — the transformative power it has to shape young lives in ways that are hard to put into words. And, of course, camp is FUN! But beyond the exciting adventures and the stunning natural surroundings, it's about personal growth and the lifelong friendships that are built along the way.

This spring, you have the opportunity to be part of the transformation that can change lives. The Summer Dreams Campership and Equipment Drive will kick off on April 22 – Earth Day, a symbolic day that celebrates the outdoors and reminds us of the importance of getting kids outside. This initiative is not only about connecting children to nature but also about ensuring that camp remains accessible to kids from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Through the *Cook/Piraino Matching Campership Challenge*, every dollar donated will be matched dollar-for-dollar, doubling the impact. Donations directly fund our campership program, providing scholarships to children who may not otherwise have the chance to experience camp. It also ensures that all campers, regardless of their financial background, have the necessary equipment to fully embrace the camp experience, from wilderness trips to on-site activities.

In 2024, thanks to the generosity of supporters, 137 campers received financial assistance, with over \$245,000 in campership funds distributed. These contributions allowed children to experience adventure, personal growth, and the power of camp, regardless of their financial circumstances.

This year, our goal is to raise \$250,000 to support camperships and gear. While we'll officially kick off the campaign on April 22, you can make a difference today by [clicking here](#) — your donation can help make a child's dream come true.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for being part of this journey. Your involvement helps keep the story of camp's transformative power alive for every child who



walks through our gates. Together, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder in championing values that shape young lives, create lasting memories, and teach the true power of resilience and friendship. Each for All — All for Each.

[Click Here to Show Your Support!](#)



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## Mission *Momentum*

### Camp Friends Reunite:

#### A Memorable Camp Alumni Reunion in Arlington

*By Amanda Macaluso, Director of Alumni and Community Development*

This past January, we had a fantastic camp alumni reunion in Arlington, Virginia, where over 20 alumni gathered to reconnect, reminisce, and share updates — both about camp and their own lives. It was inspiring to see so many alumni who remain deeply connected to HWH Camps — whether through volunteering on committees, giving generously as donors, or staying engaged through newsletters since the event. The evening was filled with lively discussions about strengthening alumni connections and the profound ways in which HWH camp experiences have shaped careers and personal growth for everyone in the room. A huge thank you to all who joined us! We can't wait to see you again — hopefully back at camp soon!



## Torch Talk

*By Adam Delezenne, Director of Camp Hayo-Went-Ha on Torch Lake*

### In Praise of Discomfort

I love that Hayo-Went-Ha Camps is an organization that embraces the value of challenge, both as a philosophy and as an approach to our programs. I am sometimes surprised by the degree to which our campers and staff embrace challenges as well, though it is often harder in the moment.

We can embrace challenges when we push our limits, hiking or paddling further in a day than we thought we could. Our route with campers on Isle Royale covers more than 100 miles by the end. They accomplish something truly outstanding and come back with stories to tell! Always about the beauty of the island, the animals, and the landscapes they saw. Also, stories of when things didn't go according to plan, like wind and rain and water pumps that break, and they figured it out together.

This experience of facing adversity and overcoming it together does more for personal and group development than all the wildlife sightings combined. The adversity that campers overcome inspired a Torch camper this summer who came back from a challenging trip to Isle Royale to say, "I left a boy but came back a man."





His heartfelt (and somewhat cheesy) statement points to a foundation of our program: controlled stress creates uniquely powerful learning opportunities. This is something that I first learned about in my time with Outward Bound. A unique transformation occurs when participants step just a bit beyond their comfort zones into experiences they've never had before. For some, sleeping in rustic bunks or meeting new people can feel a bit stressful. Campers remain safe, yet they may feel uncomfortable. In this state of being nudged just beyond where we are comfortable, we become open to new ways of learning. This is where campers discover not just who they are today but also who they are becoming. If we do our jobs well at camp, our campers will find themselves just a little uncomfortable.

However, stress must be controlled and limited; there is an essential difference between discomfort and danger. That's actually an excellent description for most of what we do in staff training. That open place of learning will close quickly if we become overwhelmed. Hayo-Went-Ha Camps, while challenging, is not a scared straight program. In part, this is where the supportive community created in cabins and divisions is an important counterpoint to challenge. Going through challenging experiences together means that we become a close community, able to practice empathy and show each other care. At camp, no one goes alone.

## Arbutus *Angle*

*By Mackenzie "MackMo" Morison, Director of Girls Camp on Arbutus Lake*

### Summer Reunions – Introducing Liz Clark

One of the most important puzzle pieces of our summer is the staffing, because from our staff comes the ability to run these trips and give our campers the experiences and memories to last a lifetime! With that in mind and with the transformation of seasonal leadership in recent years, we've been casting around for a seasonal Assistant Director for the Arbutus Lake site and are so excited to announce that Liz Clark will be joining us in that position for her 9th summer at camp this year! She was a camper, LCs, and later staff back from the mid 2000's to 2010's and has been involved in a variety of things since then.



Liz went on to do more after camp with wilderness adventure and has been involved with the development of our new WILDER program as well! When chatting with Liz it's exciting to hear her talk about sustainability in the summer – she's seen what it's like and knows the

reality of camp and wants to make it better! The search for the new camp director piqued Liz's interest in returning to camp and in our talk, she mentioned the realities of someone new coming in while keeping our traditions and everything that makes us who we are live on. We think she's going to work incredibly well with the rest of the seasonal leadership staff that we have on board and fit seamlessly into this team that we've been developing.

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## Grounds for Discussion

*By Scott Swanson, Director of Building, Grounds, and Hospitality*

### Introducing Ryan Lautner, Maintenance Director at the Arbutus Lake site

We are excited to introduce Ryan Lautner, the new Maintenance Director at the Arbutus Lake site. A proud Michigander with nearly 15 years of experience in Northern Michigan, Ryan brings forth a diverse background including four years of military service, along with roles in construction, trades, electrical work, and landscaping.



Beyond his professional experiences, Ryan is a dedicated family man who shares life's adventures with his wife and three wonderful children. An avid outdoor enthusiast, Ryan loves exploring nature and is a passionate nature hobbyist.

Ryan is looking forward to working alongside our team. In his new role, he is eager to help create lasting, memorable experiences for both campers and staff. He shared, "Jules Renard once said, 'On Earth there is no heaven, but there are pieces of it!' I'm thrilled to help provide a safe and welcoming space for kids to experience their own little piece of heaven."

I'm really looking forward to having a partner on the path to premier. I think having two sets of hands with one goal in mind makes for a better camp experience for our kids.

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## Hayo-Went-Ha Camps *Happenings*

*By Amanda Macaluso, Director of Alumni and Community Development  
& John Kelley, Chairman of the Building & Grounds Committee*

### Join Us for Spring Spruce Up Weekends – A Chance to Give Back, Reconnect, and Have Fun!

Spring is just around the corner, and that means it's time for our annual **Spring Spruce Up Work Weekends** at YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps! These weekends are more than just an opportunity to lend a hand — they're a chance to **reconnect with old friends, make new ones, and give back to the place that has given so much to us all.**

**Mark Your Calendars:**  
**May 3rd – Torch Lake Site**  
**May 17th – Arbutus Lake Site**

Volunteers are welcome to **arrive Friday evening and stay through Sunday morning**, with a light breakfast provided before departure on Sunday. Saturday is the day that the work will take place.

Join us for a weekend of giving back, where you can help set up camp for another incredible summer. With childcare available on Saturday, a well-earned special thank-you dinner

prepared by Chef Scott, and a classic campfire with music and s'mores on Saturday Evening, it's the perfect blend of meaningful work and great fun!

Bring your kids to share the camp experience and show them the value of giving back, while tackling hands-on projects like painting, repairing, landscaping, or organizing. This work day is also a great way to earn community service hours for your high schooler.

[Please RSVP here](#)

See you soon and thank you for your support!

## Camper Competitions

Hayo-Went-Ha Camps families, this is your moment to shine, we've got not just one but TWO contests for you to think about. The first is our very own HWH story competition, where we are asking families to tell us about "A Day in the Life" at Hayo-Went-Ha Camps; now, this is for current campers and alumni! We want to hear about what your most (un)usual day on camp is like, and photos are always welcome! We're loving the entries we've gotten so far and can't wait to see what the rest of you come up with! You can send all entries to [mmorison@hayowentha.org](mailto:mmorison@hayowentha.org).

The second is a Michigan YMCA Camp competition amongst a group of the Ys here where we're challenging current campers to tell us who their BEST CAMP COUNSELOR is and why! Campers can send their nominations straight to their camp directors and the Michigan Y Network will be announcing the winner on April 27th and we hope to see a ton of HWH counselors there (because we know we have the best!).

We can't believe we're under 100 days away from the start of summer camp, we'll see you all SO SOON, the team here can't wait for the snow to melt and the summer fun to begin!

## From Trails to Peaks

*By Gina Georgiou, Director of Wilderness Experience*

### Join Us on the Trail — From Afar!

Hey! Hey! It's your friendly Director of Wilderness Experience here!

Camp is buzzing with excitement as we see registrations from eager campers and staff — both familiar faces and first-timers coming in fast. The energy is contagious, and summer 2025 is already feeling like it will be amazing!

This month, our focus is set on Isle Royale — a treasured adventure at Hayo-Went-Ha Camps since the 1930s. With its breathtaking ridge views, rich history, and unmatched preservation, it offers an experience like no other. We're incredibly fortunate to continue exploring this incredible island! Did you know we started an annual fundraising initiative that has staff and/or alumni hiking 50 miles in 5 days to raise \$10,000.

As part of our "50 Miles in 5 Days" fundraiser, we'd love to bring our Alumni along for the journey through your stories and photos! If Isle Royale left a lasting impact on you, we invite you to share:

- A photo from your trip
- A short story or lesson you took away from your experience

Your memories will travel with us as we embark on this unforgettable adventure. We will also feature your story during these 5 days on our social media during this hike in August. Let's celebrate the generations of campers who have made Isle Royale a Hayo-Went-Ha Camps tradition!





## Did You Know?

### Fascinating Facts & Stats About Isle Royale National Park

#### 1. Remote Wilderness Adventure

- Isle Royale is one of the least-visited national parks in the U.S., with only 25,000 visitors per year — compared to over 12 million at Great Smoky Mountains National Park!
- Despite low visitation, it has one of the highest return rates, meaning visitors fall in love with its solitude and come back again and again.

#### 2. Incredible Hiking Trails

- Isle Royale boasts 165 miles of hiking trails, with the Greenstone Ridge Trail stretching 40 miles across the island.
- Only 1% of visitors bring a vehicle, meaning most explore on foot or by boat!

#### 3. Unique Moose-Wolf Ecosystem

- The island has been home to a famous predator-prey study for over 60 years, tracking the relationship between moose (around 1,000 individuals) and wolves (fewer than 20 individuals in recent years).
- Wolves were nearly wiped out due to disease but are now being restored through a repopulation program.

#### 4. Spectacular Northern Lights

- With almost zero light pollution, Isle Royale is one of the best national parks for stargazing and viewing the Northern Lights.
- The Aurora Borealis is most commonly seen from September to April, but summer visitors still have a chance on clear nights.



## 5. Historic Lighthouses & Fishing Villages

- The island has four historic lighthouses that once guided ships through the dangerous waters of Lake Superior.
- In the 1800s, commercial fishermen used the island's sheltered coves, and today you can still see their abandoned fishing cabins and docks.

## 6. Abundant Wildlife & Birdwatching

- Isle Royale is home to over 200 species of birds, including bald eagles, loons, and peregrine falcons.
- The island has zero bears and no deer, making moose the dominant large herbivore.
- Fun Fact: The longest-surviving moose on record lived to be 17 years old!

## 7. Secluded Backcountry Camping

- The park has 36 designated campgrounds, and over 75% of visitors choose to camp overnight rather than stay in lodges.
- Some campgrounds are accessible only by canoe or kayak, adding to the remote experience.

[www.nps.gov/isro/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/isro/index.htm)

# Alumni Spotlight

(If you have an idea for somebody to feature in the next Alumni Spotlight, email Amanda Macaluso [amacaluso@hayowentha.org](mailto:amacaluso@hayowentha.org))

## Alumni Joe Stewart: A Musician and Artist

*Interview by Guest Writer, Bill Doyle*

It seems as if there's always been an express pipeline from Cincinnati to Torch Lake and the three summer camps which have graced those shores. Drove of kids have arrived by train, car and the infamous bus which disgorged some 25 campers onto the Hayo-Went-Ha A-field as a 5 am wake-up call to the slumbering counselors and staff.

Among the legions of Cincinnatians in the summer of 1957 was Joe Stewart, who — along with his twin brother Paul — would spend the final 6 summers of "Cap" Drury's tenure as camp director at Hayo-Went-Ha. Joe felt he had been growing up in the shadow of his fraternal twin brother. He described Paul as "good-looking, good at sports, popular with girls, the first one chosen for teams, while I'd take up my place in right field."

Joe took up the guitar at age 12, and fondly recalls playing along with Phil Vanderweg, his counselor as a CIT. Joe already knew he liked creating things and loved the HWH craft shop where he produced boomerangs, lanyards and polished rocks. Camp provided "a big confidence-booster," as he learned that crafting and music "were things I could do that others seemed to appreciate." The other common denominator between these two pursuits is that "Music is a craft. Anyone can learn it. It just takes practice."

While playing Peter, Paul, and Mary music in a regionally heralded high school talent show (Withrow Minstrels, cast of 500), Joe met Larry Goshorn, who would later write music, sing, and play guitar with Pure Prairie League. When they attended the Newport Folk Festival the year after Dylan had "gone electric" there, they attracted a crowd as they were busking, playing Beatles music. The size and appreciation of that crowd was the impetus for starting their own band.

As Sacred Mushroom, they recorded a single in Nashville, and an eponymous album of original psychedelic rock music in Cincinnati. Joe's band opened for Big Brother and the Holding Company when they came to Cincinnati and "got to hang out" with their lead singer, Janis Joplin. The band also performed with other West coast bands: Vanilla Fudge, Canned Heat, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Joe Walsh and the James Gang.

Joe self-effacingly recounts playing at a Dayton, Ohio country dive bar, where they opened for wildman Jerry Lee Lewis; "Here we were, a group of long-haired, bell-bottomed, probably

unwashed hippies," having to endure "the Killer" making fun of them throughout his own performance. After three years with the band Joe decided this was not what he wanted for his future. Like a character from James Michener's novel *The Drifters*, Joe took off to see the world.



In the leather souk in Marrakech, Morocco, Joe admired the Berber craftsmen he observed. While carving bone and doing leatherwork in the Canary Islands, Joe decided he wanted to be a crafter. He has typically maintained some kind of workshop, and I can attest to the fine quality of Mission-style furniture he creates for himself and family. A Cincinnati institution, the Rookwood Pottery, has commissioned him to make museum-quality oak picture frames for the tiles they sell. But a stint as a leatherworker in Vermont convinced him that it was not an easy way to support a family.

So, Joe and his brother started a custom home building company. When Paul died, Joe continued to spearhead the business, finally closing it, to retire, after nearly 50 years. "It's wonderfully fulfilling to give somebody their dream home....but it's nice to be able to create without a budget and a deadline."

Joe met Gilda Horn, a highly-regarded artist in 1991, while building an addition for her home. They did not reconnect until about 2003. With Joe's marriage to Gilda, his role model and inspiration, Joe developed a passion for plein air (painting in the open air) oil painting. He relishes being outside where he finds beauty wherever he looks. He usually begins with out-of-doors sketches and photographs to paint from in the studio. He works from some 3,000 pictures he has taken during travel all over the world. Favorite settings are the Adirondacks and northern Michigan. He has captured scenes from Pictured Rocks, the Au Sable River, Sleeping Bear Dunes, and his beloved Leelanau Peninsula. One of my prized possessions is a scene I requested of our HWH landmark--"Boathouse With Sail Drying." Joe added the sail to the picture as a reflection of his enjoyment of sailing at camp.

An artist and crafter are fortunate to have tangible, visual evidence of the stages of his life, the places that grew and shaped him, the beauty he absorbed and his memories. In retirement, Joe is ensconced at Essex Studios, where he shares space with some 200 other creators. He is surrounded by his paintings, his collection of oriental rugs, playing one of the instruments from his guitar collection, lending time and energy to the all-volunteer Cincinnati Art Club, teaching himself to play mandolin, and creating without a budget or deadline.

*Joe no longer maintains a website, so if you would like to view his art, you can contact him directly at [joestewartbuilders@gmail.com](mailto:joestewartbuilders@gmail.com).*





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## Building Success for Life: Lessons Learned at Camp

*By Guest writer Abby Huffman, Alaska camper 2024*

"I've been attending YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha camps for as long as I can remember, from the first year I could go to Day Camp to the incredible Alaska trip last summer. Because of camp, I've filled my out-of-school months with learning, meeting friends from across the world, and building my confidence. Spending weeks away from my family and undertaking challenging wilderness trips have been some of the most rewarding experiences of my life — giving me skills I will apply in every aspect of my future. Recently, I was one of twenty students nationwide awarded a fellowship focusing on civics and leadership. While that may seem unrelated to camp, camp is what has given me the courage, self-assuredness, and social skills to achieve the honor. Of course, I've also been able to write some unique application essays about backpacking through Isle Royale, or portaging through Killarney, and all the unexpected aspects that come along with trips of that magnitude."



Camp is more than just an adventure — it's a place where lifelong skills are built. From leadership and teamwork to problem-solving and resilience, campers develop the confidence to navigate challenges, adapt to new situations, and work collaboratively. Whether it's as a group on a hike, overcoming obstacles on a ropes course, or learning to paddle through rough waters, every experience fosters independence, communication, and perseverance.

These essential skills go beyond camp — they shape future leaders, problem-solvers, and changemakers, setting the foundation for lifelong success.

2024 Alaska Camper Abby Huffman has been selected for a prestigious six-month leadership development fellowship in Washington, D.C.! Read more about her journey and success [here](#)! Congratulations to Abby and this is how she contributes her years at camp to help her be selected for such an opportunity.

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## Generational Gems

*An interview with Mike Ericksen, 4th generation family member*

### Four Generations Under the HWH Spell

#### The History of the Ericksen Family

The legacy of Camp Hayo-Went-Ha runs deep in the Ericksen family, spanning four generations and nearly a century of tradition. It all began in 1927 when the family's patriarch, Stanford C. Ericksen first attended camp, unknowingly setting the foundation for a lifelong connection. Decades later, in 1964, his son Eric Ericksen followed in his footsteps, carrying the tradition forward.

By 1986, the next generation arrived, Mike started his camp experience under the leadership of Pat Rode. Over the summers of 1986, 1987, and 1988, camp became more than just a summer destination — it became a transformative experience, one that left an undeniable mark.

After graduating from Eastern Michigan University, the pull of camp remained strong. On a whim, Mike made a call to Pat Rode one evening, and to great surprise, Pat remembered him instantly. That simple act of recognition was all the encouragement needed to return as a cabin leader for the summers of 1997 and 1998, reigniting a deep love for camp.

The connection didn't stop there. A decade later, another opportunity presented itself during a work weekend with Dave Martin. With encouragement and a renewed sense of purpose, Mike returned to the shores of Torch Lake once again taking on the role of cabin leader in 2008 and 2009, proving that the call of camp never truly fades.

By 2021, the cycle had come full circle. This time, it was Mike's son Mile's's turn to experience the magic of Hayo-Went-Ha. Dropping him off for his first summer was expected to be difficult, but fate had other plans. That same summer, camp needed a waterfront director, and without hesitation, Mike answered the call once more.

Now, in 2025, the family tradition continues as his daughter Maya who is returning for her fourth summer at Camp Arbutus Hayo-Went-Ha as a Biker. What started nearly a century ago with a single camper has grown into a lasting family legacy —one rooted in adventure, leadership, and an unwavering love for camp.

Mike has been teaching for 27 years and is currently a 4th grade teacher in the Ann Arbor area. He frequently volunteers his time at work weekends and as of this month, is a new member of the alumni committee.

\* Is your family a 3rd, 4th, or even 5th Generation at HWH Camps? If your family has passed down the Hayo-Went-Ha Camps experience through the generations and you'd like to be featured in a future edition of Whispering Pines, please reach out. Contact Amanda Macaluso at [amacaluso@hayowentha.org](mailto:amacaluso@hayowentha.org) to share your story!





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## Calendar of Events

### APRIL

22 – Summer Dreams Campership & Equipment Drive Kick Off

25 – Wear Your Camp Shirt Day