

# Whispering Pines



STATE YMCA OF MICHIGAN  
**HAYO-WENT-HA CAMPS**  
Torch Lake ♦ Arbutus Lake



JUNE 2025

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## Musings and Meanderings...

*By John (JC) Carlson, CEO*

## Empowering the Next Generation: The Future of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps

At Hayo-Went-Ha Camps, we believe every child deserves the chance to grow into their best self — with dirt on their hands, a paddle in the water, and a community that believes in their potential. Along the way, we've learned that fun isn't just part of the experience — it's a powerful catalyst for growth.

That's why this edition of *Whispering Pines* is dedicated to celebrating one of the most essential elements on the pathway to growth: **FUN**. Whether it's in the challenge of a high ropes course, the joy of a campfire song, or the laughter shared on a backpacking trip, fun fuels confidence, connection, and discovery.

For over a century, our camps have delivered life-shaping experiences rooted in nature, challenge, and community. But continuing this legacy takes more than tradition — it requires vision, facilities that support that vision, a clear plan of action, and the collective commitment of those who believe in the future of youth.



**Our Dreams Are Rooted in a Vision of Becoming the Premier Wilderness Camp**  
We are deeply committed to our vision: to be the nation's premier wilderness-based overnight camp, unlocking transformative pathways to growth and shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

To bring this vision to life, our Board has challenged and supported our staff in moving

several “Big Rocks” forward — major projects that will shape the future of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps for generations to come.

At both Arbutus Lake and Torch Lake, we are planning new, purpose-built Wilderness Trip Centers — launch points for transformative outdoor adventures where courage is tested, teamwork is built, and self-reliance begins to take root. These experiences are central to our vision and the kind of growth we believe every child deserves.

At Arbutus Lake, we also envision a new Beach House, inspired by the charm and functionality of our beloved boathouse at Torch Lake. It will not only support a dynamic waterfront program, but also serve as a central gathering space for natural connection and summertime joy.

I’ve long believed that great camps are built around great people — and that great people thrive when facilities are aligned with the mission. That’s why the most important camp spaces — waterfronts and dining halls — are where community is formed and strengthened. At Torch Lake, we’ve designed plans to renovate and expand Kresge Lodge, creating a more welcoming and functional space where campers and staff gather daily to eat, laugh, and share meaningful moments.



To support continued growth at Arbutus Lake, we are also planning the addition of new cabins in the Nejee Division — ensuring campers thrive in safe, welcoming, and well-designed spaces that support lasting friendships and immersive camp experiences.

These projects mark just the beginning. Our master site plan outlines further enhancements designed to elevate the camper experience and keep our programs thriving for decades to come. This is only the first chapter — a glimpse of the future we're building together.

We know these are bold goals — but we believe they're within reach. With your support, we can make them a reality. Explore our Dreambook for a closer look at Phase One of this exciting growth journey, and join us in shaping what comes next.

[Click Here to View Our Dreambook!](#)



## You Can Help Send a Child to Camp This Summer

Right now, the need is real — and the opportunity is immediate. This summer, we're working to provide over 150 youth with life-changing camp experiences through \$250,000 in scholarship assistance. We are nearly half way there and need your help.

If you believe in the power of camp to change a life, **now is the time** to act. [Click here](#) to give and send a child to camp this summer.

And if you're inspired by our mission and want to get involved — whether through your time, ideas, or support — I'd love to connect. You can reach me directly at [jcarlson@hayowentha.org](mailto:jcarlson@hayowentha.org).

Together, we can make this summer unforgettable for kids who need it most.

**Let's give them the summer of a lifetime — together.**

## Mission Momentum

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

## Where the Strength to Succeed Begins

As we watch high school students graduate and college seniors prepare for their next adventures, we're reminded that these are not just milestones — they are incredible accomplishments shaped by years of growth, learning, and resilience. For many of our campers and staff, that journey began right here at Hayo-Went-Ha Camps.

I truly believe that camp is where the strength to succeed starts to form. My own two daughters spent their formative years on the shores of Arbutus Lake, growing through challenge, leadership, and connection. Today, both are thriving at universities they love — and I know that their time at camp helped shape the confidence and independence they carry into the world.

At Hayo-Went-Ha Camps, we believe camp is more than just a break from the routine. It's a place where kids find a true sense of belonging — where they can unplug from screens, immerse themselves in nature, and build confidence through real experiences. Every hike, every canoe trip, every campfire moment helps young people discover how strong, capable, and resilient they truly are. These aren't just summer memories — they're lessons that last a lifetime.

As we often say: "Camp isn't an escape from the real world; it's preparation for thriving in it."

That's why we must continue to support every camper — this summer and every summer for the next 100 years. Kids need camp more than ever. We are deeply grateful to all who support our mission and help ensure that a Hayo-Went-Ha Camps experience is possible for every child, regardless of socioeconomic background.

Thank you for believing in the power of camp. Together, we are building something that lasts far beyond summer.

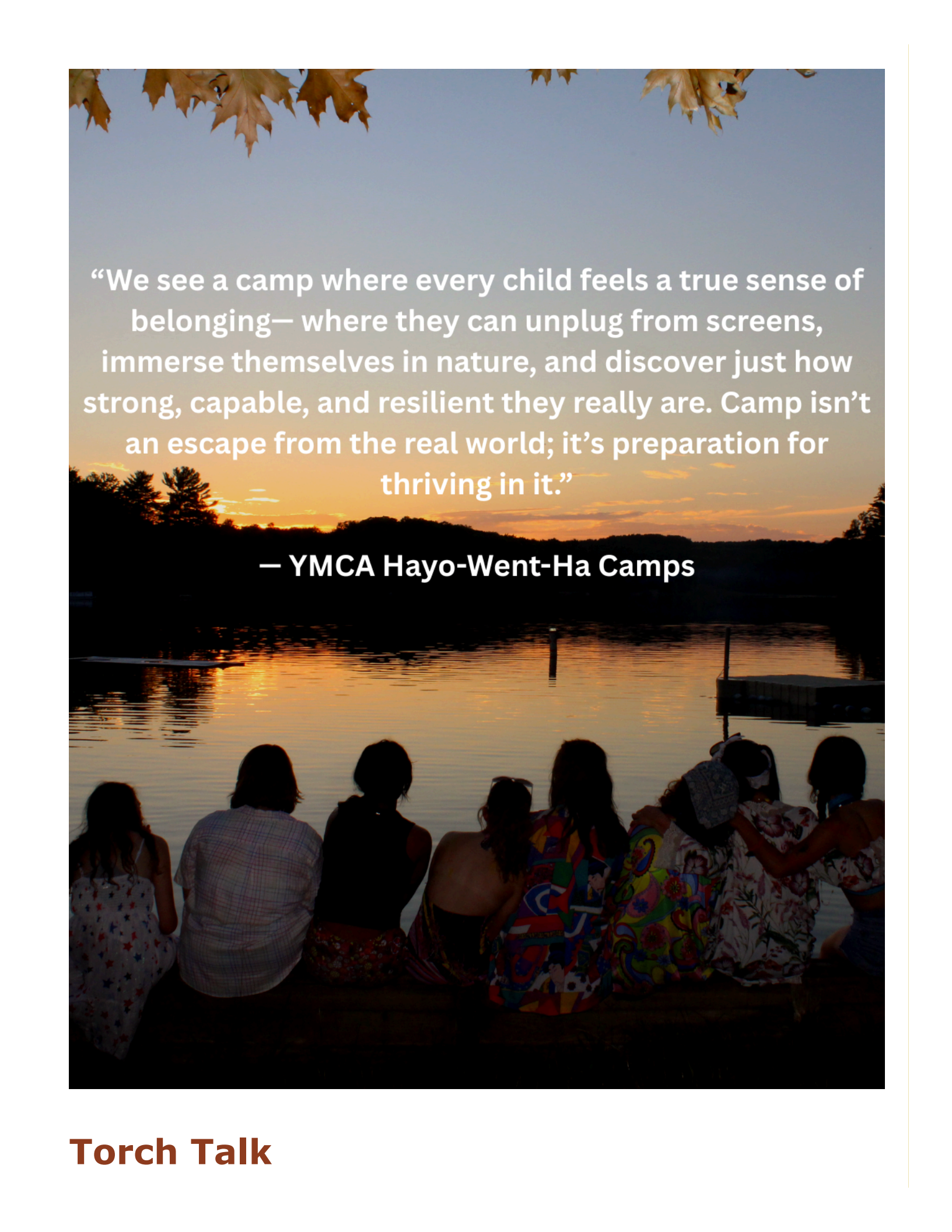
Introducing Nay Woodley who just graduated from Denison. She reflects on how camp helped her grow and thrive as an adult.

Alumni Nay Woodley shares her camp impact!

*I was thirteen years old when I lay in my bed the night before camp, anticipating what it would be like. I wondered who my cabinmates were, what they were like, and I anticipated swimming every day as I waited for the day to come. I worried about making friends, about not fitting in. It was all new for me. Then my parents drove me from Detroit to Traverse City, way up north in the pines and the Great Lakes, filled with fresh air. We walked around the camp, and they prepared me for my first adventure as a four-week Bushwhacker. We didn't know during that time that I would fall in love with Camp Arbutus Hayo-Went Ha. I enjoyed six summers at camp, returning to my friends and making new ones each year. I learned what it meant to be independent and the importance of community. I had never been so proud of myself, of my friends, as when we completed our trek, bike, or paddle and made it safely to our campsite, where we learned to survive together and enjoy the Earth. We worked hard, we played harder, and I learned invaluable lessons about life and girlhood.*

*When I started at Denison University, I was undecided. I was unsure of the path I wanted to take and the major that would prepare me for success. Then I found Earth Science, where I could learn and connect with my childhood wonders in the classroom. Those mountains I hiked and the inland seas I paddled became a language I could reclaim as an adult. I could share this joy and love with the world. I was even able to return to camp as a counselor, where I got to offer support to girls just like me and share my love of geology with them.*

*Today, I am starting my master's in Geology at Kent State University, where I hope to share my knowledge with the world. This is a privilege, to be connected with camp and working as a geologist, and I remind myself that I am a geologist because camp got to me first, and through geology, I can connect to my roots. Through camp, I learned how to be myself, and that has carried me through my life and given me confidence, as I know I am hardcore and headstrong and capable of anything and everything good.*

A group of people are sitting on a wooden dock by a calm lake at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with the sun low on the horizon. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the foreground, several people are seen from behind, sitting on the dock. They are wearing various summer clothing, including patterned shirts and dresses. The background shows a line of trees and a clear sky. The quote is overlaid in white text on the upper half of the image.

“We see a camp where every child feels a true sense of belonging— where they can unplug from screens, immerse themselves in nature, and discover just how strong, capable, and resilient they really are. Camp isn’t an escape from the real world; it’s preparation for thriving in it.”

— YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps

**Torch Talk**

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

## Staff Make the Summer

### Staff Make the Summer

Very soon, the magic of summer camp is going to start. Campers will arrive in less than 20 days (as of this writing), but I'm referring to when our staff show up at the end of May for the start of staff training. This is where we build the teams that will create the fantastic experience of the summer! We have a lot of great staff returning, and I wanted to highlight just a few for you:



### Gabe Masso

Gabe was a first-year counselor last year, diving directly into an entirely new challenge. Despite having no past history with Hayo-Went-Ha Camps, Gabe jumped right in and quickly became a vital part of the team. They formed great relationships with their campers and were a beacon of energy and creativity in their division. I am excited to have Gabe back on the team this year!

### Jake Mann

"Mr Boats," a nickname that can only be born at camp, Jake was with us for only one session last summer due to other commitments, and his departure was a loss we all felt. Jake brought energy to the "Stand Up Sit Down" Campfire and to any time the group was together. He had that rare ability to be cool, goofy, and appropriate at the same time, which made him an ideal counselor for our teenage campers. As a consummate sailor, he led our Viking Sailor trip last summer. This year, we're excited that Jake is coming back to share his spirit of adventure with our campers - kayaking and whitewater kayaking in Alaska. At least Mr. Boats will not feel too out of place.



### Augie Watts

Augie is a longtime attendee of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps, first as a camper and then as staff, following the same pattern as his father. As I got to know Augie better over the course of the summer and observed him in action with campers, I realized that he was not only one of our strongest counselors but also able to represent our values to campers in a way that they respected and wanted to model. This summer, Augie will be our Leadership Corps Coordinator and is an ideal fit for that role.

There are many more returners I could highlight and celebrate for their contributions to our camp community. We also have a whole group of enthusiastic first-time staff who are eager to join in and make their mark as well this summer!

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# Arbutus *Angle*

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

## **The Best Part of Camp – Friends!**

The best part of camp? (Besides you know, the s'mores and the games and the trips and the campfires and the.....) It's the FRIENDS! Over the course of coming back to camp and the volunteer events that we've had in the past month or so that has never been more evident - but why you may ask? People I haven't seen in years, due to life and moves and college and marriages, are popping up out of the woodwork! Stopping by to say hi or coincidentally ending up in the same place – it's like a surprise party every time it happens.

We also see that in our Spring Spruce Up events, both sites host! If you haven't been to one yet, you should absolutely clear your calendars for next year's because we had a TON of fun! Imagine getting to enjoy camp with little to no responsibilities and time to hang out with your camp buddies at night – PLUS we'll feed ya well! It's like a mini camp reunion and so much fun to see. Both sites in their own ways saw staff from years ago and those that I've worked with in more recent years - being able to hear the old camp stories and be able to tell our own tall tales two weeks later? Nothing better!



I think the other side of camp that's really unique are the songs that define different generations - in putting together our staff manual, Liz and I were working on a song list to educate the staff on. Being from the mid-2010s it was funny to hear the difference in the slow songs we used to play versus what we've heard has become more popular among current staff. Going through a long-ago song list in the office you could hear many "Wait, who sang this one?" and "How does that go again?" and "Don't you remember!" from Gina, Liz and I (who all started at about the same time on staff) - and there is something special to remembering a song and a person in the same way! So while it may be hard to let go of those songs we treasure from our early days, I know these current campers and staff have their own "Don't you remember!"s to collect from campfires this year.

There's a moment when everyone leaves after camp - it's a slow trickle out with groups and travel and wrapping up camp but all of a sudden you realize that where there were people it's now silent. Having a big group on site for something like work weekend has finally broken that silence and I cannot WAIT for our first campfire with the staff - it's only a couple of weeks away now!

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## Grounds for Discussion

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

## Bathrooms are FUN!

Hello all from the grounds of our beautiful camps in Northern Michigan, this is my first contribution to the Whispering Pines. I was asked to give an update on our newly constructed bathhouses and to write about something "Fun", so here we go!

As camp approaches, so does the completion of our new bathhouses - one at Arbutus Lake and the other at Torch Lake. As of right now, we anticipate that the bathhouse at Arbutus Lake will be completed during the first week of camp. I have a fleeting feeling we may pull it off for the girls in time, but the weather hasn't been our friend so far. Torch Lake will be ready, possibly the following week. The remaining work will be inside fixtures and trim work. All the construction debris will be removed from both camps prior to the first day. RCI (Richter Construction Incorporated) will ensure all safety precautions are in place. I think the product you will all see at the end of this process will exceed expectations and set a new bar for what is the Hayo-Went-Ha Camps standards.



So "Fun", that's a big thing. I hope every camper survey contains this word. When I think of fun, I think of a smile. I find myself having fun at work on most days, and if not, I certainly have fun moments every day. I'm of the mindset that if my work can be done with positive energy, forward thinking, and a great team, it will reflect in the buildings and on the grounds of our beautiful camps. As camp draws closer, I always feel a little anxiety about being ready to deliver a premier camper experience. It's calming to know that with the reminder of the team that surrounds me here, we are going to reach our goals. Our table has been getting more and more full at our weekly meetings, and a strong community is beginning to form. It's FUN to see it come together. The dedication I see in our new team is exciting and gives me energy and faith in times of doubt. I know we have too many bright, hardworking, and kind humans filling our team, and failure is not even an option. That leaves the question: How awesome will camp be this year? I think 2025 will be ground zero for the rise to premier and, in my mind, will have us being one of the best camps in the country, not just because of where we are, but more so, who we are. Nothing of this size and scope can be premier unless you've got the people - we do and then some.

In summary, camp is a place full of fun, whatever that may mean to you in whatever form. On these grounds, we have places for group activities, "family" meals, individual achievements, group successes, deep thought, and personal reflection. It's my goal that we do a good job of providing all those environments and more to our campers and staff alike.

I'm thankful for all of the beauty these camps share with me, and I hope to be here doing my best to give back to it as much as I can. Have a great summer, thanks.

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## Hayo-Went-Ha Camps *Happenings*

**Reconnect with Camp:** Join a Hayo-Hike Near You!

**Reconnect on the Trail: Two Hayo-Hikes, Coast to Coast!**

**#1 San Diego Hike – June 1**

**#2 Virginia Hike – June 1**

We're excited to launch a new way for alumni to stay connected — regional Hayo-Went-Ha Camps alumni gatherings! These casual meet-ups are designed to bring the spirit of camp into communities across the country, whether it's a scenic trail, a local park, or a favorite coffee shop.

Our very first Hayo-Hikes will take place on June 1, with two events happening coast to coast:

**San Diego, CA** – Join Mary and Mackenzie for a relaxed morning hike at beautiful Torrey Pines. Alumni will gather between 9:45 and 10:15 AM at Bird Rock Coffee before heading out on the trail.

**Alexandria, VA** – Longtime campers and staff Casey and Hadley are hosting our first Virginia Hayo-Hike at Huntley Meadows Park, known for its peaceful trails and scenic boardwalk. It's a great chance to reconnect with local alumni and enjoy the outdoors.

These gatherings are open to all alumni, and family and friends are welcome. Whether you're swapping camp stories or just soaking in the fresh air, it's a great way to reignite the connection we all share through HWH Camps.

This is just the beginning. If you're interested in hosting a Hayo-Hike or alumni meet-up in your area, we'd love to help make it happen.

Let's keep the camp spirit alive — on the trail, in our communities, and in our hearts.

For more information or to host a gathering, contact Amanda at [amacaluso@hayowentha.org](mailto:amacaluso@hayowentha.org).

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**Help Support Our Staff Auction  
and Help Send Kids to Camp!**

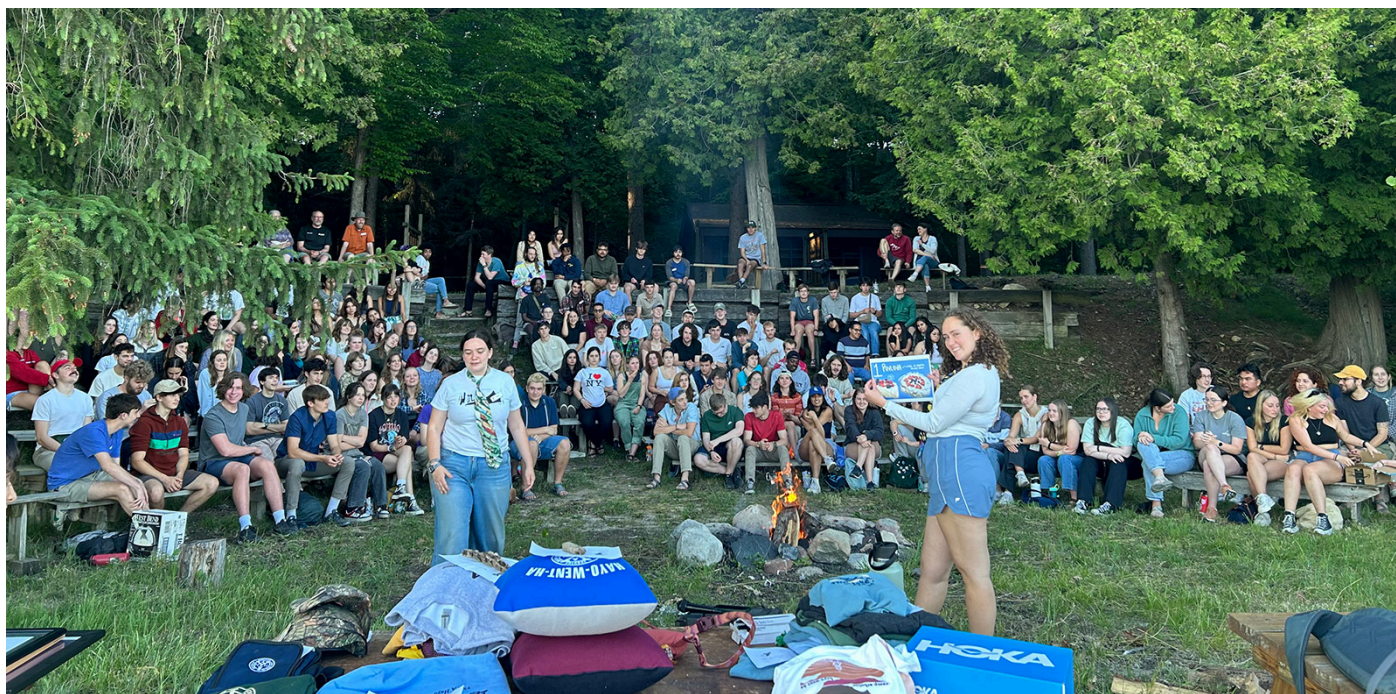
Each summer, our incredible Hayo-Went-Ha Camps staff come together for a lively and heartfelt tradition — the Staff Auction. This much-anticipated event raises funds for our Campership Program, providing financial assistance to campers who may not otherwise be able to experience the magic of camp. What makes the auction truly special is that it's entirely driven by our staff. They donate, bid, and celebrate — because they believe deeply in making camp accessible for all.

This is where you come in. We're calling on our alumni, families, and friends to help us make the auction bigger and better by donating items or experiences. Vintage camp store gear — like old T-shirts, sweatshirts, or patches — are a huge hit and always stir up fun memories and bidding excitement. Another favorite? Creative day-off activities, such as a local restaurant gift card, an art class, afternoon sail on a boat, or an outdoor experience. Anything that brings joy, relaxation, or a bit of adventure to our hardworking staff team is greatly appreciated.

Whether it's a treasured piece of camp history or something fun to do on a break, your donation not only fuels a spirited auction — it helps send kids to camp. And that's a legacy we can all be proud of.

To donate or learn more, please reach out to Amanda Macaluso, Director of Alumni and Community Engagement at [amacaluso@hayowentha.org](mailto:amacaluso@hayowentha.org).

Thank you for supporting our staff and our campership program.



## Torch Lake Spring Spruce up

Wow, what a work weekend! We had a tremendous turnout of 75 people by my count. Fortunately, we had plenty of work for volunteers to get involved in.

By organizing project managers ahead of time, we were better equipped to handle such a large number of helpers. We set up tents, organized Bonbright, built bunks, cleaned many cabins, replaced ceiling tiles, spread wood chips, restored the camp store, moved countless leaves, and more.

This event also marked the return of Chef Renee! We ate well, including steak and baked potatoes for Saturday dinner! Having childcare available made it easier for more families to participate. A huge thanks to John (Jake's brother), Josh, Liz, and Tristan for helping out with the kids!

People really seemed to enjoy each other's company. This event is a great opportunity for camp to accomplish a lot of work while also serving as a mini-reunion for many with their camp family.



## Arbutus Lake Spring Spruce up

The Arbutus Lake Spring Spruce Up was a roaring success this past weekend! Seventeen different folks/families showed up to brave the cold spring weather and help us get ready for the campers. The rain didn't stop them as we cleaned cabins, designed our new library, built a platform for tents, and so much more. With only a couple of more days until staff arrive and under a month until the campers get here, this is when we put the 'pedal to the metal' so to speak in getting ready - to have so many wonderful hands helping us in that rush feels like such a gift! We're in really good shape going into the season here, and we couldn't have done it without them. Besides all we get done, it's a great time to connect with campers and alumni families alike, and we're so grateful to have gotten to spend that time with everyone this past weekend!

**Volunteers** – looking to give back to the camp you love? [Click here](#) for some great alumni volunteer opportunities. Please email Amanda at [amacaluso@hayowentha.org](mailto:amacaluso@hayowentha.org) if you would like more information or would like to join us.



## Hayo-Went-Ha Camps Homecoming!

We're bringing a classic tradition to the shores of Torch and Arbutus Lakes — Homecoming, Hayo-Went-Ha Camps style! Whether you're an alum, a current camp parent, or both, you're invited to reconnect with the camp community at our first-ever HWH Camps Homecoming. Homecoming is all about gathering with old friends, meeting new ones, and celebrating the shared experiences that make camp so special. This casual event is timed just after camper drop-off, making it easy for parents to join in and for alumni in the area to swing by.

**SAVE THE DATES:**

**Saturday, June 15 or Saturday, July 13**

**Location:** SHORT'S Pull Barn, Elk Rapids

**Time:** Right after drop-off — come by anytime in the afternoon!

We'll have camp-inspired brews like Arbutus Ale and Torch Light, games, friendly competitions, and updates on what's ahead for HWH Camps. It's a chance to catch up, hear what's new, and be part of the energy and excitement of summer.

No RSVP needed — just stop by and say hello!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Amanda at [amacaluso@hayowentha.org](mailto:amacaluso@hayowentha.org).

**We can't wait to welcome you back. See you this summer!**

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## Welcome Back, Renee!

We're thrilled to share some exciting news — Renee DeWindt is back at Hayo-Went-Ha Camps!

Finding the right person to lead our food service team each summer is no small task. It takes someone with skill, heart, and the energy to run not just one, but two busy camp kitchens, all while preparing nutritious meals for hundreds of hungry campers and staff. We're incredibly lucky to welcome back someone who knows the role — and the camp community — inside and out.



Renee previously served as our Food Service Director from 2014 to 2021, bringing warmth, creativity, and consistency to every meal. After taking a break during the pandemic to work locally in Benzie County, Renee returns to camp with even more experience and enthusiasm. Now part of our year-round impact team, Renee will not only oversee both Torch Lake and Arbutus Lake kitchens but will also play a key role in strengthening our year-round programming and retreat offerings. Her return marks an exciting step forward as we continue to grow our capacity and deepen our impact across all seasons.

Welcome home, Renee — we're so glad you're back!

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## The Trip Worth Doing: A Lake Superior Kayak Adventure

There are a lot of great trips at HWH Camps — this is one of them and there are still openings this summer at both camps!

Our 12-day kayaking adventure through Lake Superior Provincial Park is more than just a wilderness trip — it's a powerful, hands-on experience that challenges and inspires. From learning to pack your own kayak and paddling along rocky shorelines to gliding across glassy waters and exploring cascading waterfalls, this is a trip that leaves a lasting impression.

The rugged beauty of Southern Canada, combined with the immersive nature of sea kayaking, offers campers the chance to grow in confidence, independence, and outdoor skill. Guided by expert sea kayak instructors, campers are supported every step of the way — ensuring both safety and fun.

We still have a few spots open in second session at both Torch Lake and Arbutus Lake, and adding one or two more campers would make this trip even stronger. If you've been on the fence, this is your sign — don't miss it.

Explore wild coastlines. Learn something new. Do something unforgettable.

This is the trip worth doing.

[Click Here to Learn More!](#)

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## From Trails to Peaks

*By Gina Georgiou, Director of Wilderness Experience*

### Earth Day Every Day at HWH Camps

With Earth Day fresh on our minds, I couldn't help but reflect on how lucky we are at camp to call Michigan our home base. Honestly, Mother Nature outdid herself here — and it's up to us to return the favor.

Right in our own backyard, we've got miles of adventure just waiting to be explored. Take the North Country Trail (NCT) for example — it runs right past Arbutus! That's part of a 4,800-mile trail spanning eight states, from North Dakota all the way to Vermont. It winds through forests, fields, small towns, and wild, remote stretches — and we get to hike it straight from camp. How cool is that?

Here's another wild stat: Michigan has over 13,000 miles of state-designated trails. That includes hiking, biking, equestrian, ORV routes, water trails — you name it. That's more than the round-trip distance from Detroit to Anchorage, Alaska. Think about it: you could hike across the country and still have trail miles left to explore here. From the sandy ridges of Sleeping Bear Dunes to the wild beauty of the Porcupine Mountains, we've got a front-row seat to nature's best.



And one last fun fact (I promise) — Michigan is the only state that touches four of the five Great Lakes. That means you can wander through deep forests in the morning and catch a sunset over crystal blue waters by evening — sometimes without ever leaving the park.

**So here's my challenge to all our incoming campers and families:**

- Get outside. Hit a trail. Break in those boots.
- Make a campfire, roast some marshmallows, and sleep under a sky full of stars.
- Let's honor this beautiful land we call home and keep our Leave No Trace promise so that future generations can enjoy it just like we do.

Let's get out there and explore.



# Alumni Spotlight

Written by Hadley Robinson

## Jodi "Hamo" Hamilton

*When I first heard that Jodi Hamilton had donated a kidney to a young boy in need, I was not **that** surprised. In all the years I worked alongside of her, I found her to be one of those big-hearted, caring people, who would do anything for her friends, fellow staff members and campers. I reached out to talk to her about what inspired her kidney donation, how camp has had a profound impact on her and how terrified she was to take campers to Killarney.*



### **Q: What was your camp era?**

A: 2001, 2002, 2007, 2008, 2016, 2017, 2018

### **Q: What's do you do day to day?**

A: I am currently a regional advisor in the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers for the Queensland Government. I'm based in Townsville, Australia.

I am responsible for supporting 11 regional councils to ensure funded projects are delivered, to deliver training and governance support to Councils, and assist with understanding their legislative responsibilities with a focus on improved transparency and integrity.

### **Q: You recently donated a kidney! Wow. Tell us about what inspired you to do that?**

A: After my last stint at camp in 2018, I headed to Spain to do the Camino de Santiago (800km /500 miles) walk across Northern Spain. You have a lot of time to reflect on that walk.

About a year later, back in Australia, my childhood friend Tom was urgently wanting me to join his real estate business. But once we chatted more, I learned what was really bugging him underneath the surface — he knew his son James was going to need a new kidney because of health complications since birth. None of their family members were a match, so he was on a waitlist. While he didn't need a kidney yet, if he got ill, it was likely that he'd have to have dialysis treatment until a kidney arrived. I love Tom, but joining his team wasn't going to solve the bigger issue. I asked if I could get tested for a possible match.

Turns out James and I were meant to be! We had an incredible match, so much that it was the talk amongst the specialist teams. I was then "benched" until last year. I was in hospital for only 3.5 days post surgery. James of course had a different but successful journey. Mike (the kidney) has made himself a cozy new home with James and it's truly remarkable the difference it has made in his life. Blows my mind.

James is now 10 years old in grade 4 and I am so lucky to be on this journey with him and his entire family. They're a special bunch.

### **Q: How has camp influenced your work and your life?**

A: This is something I reflect on frequently! My first couple of years at camp were the ones that really impacted my path. It was the Killarney trip with the Explorers in 2002 that I discovered a physical and mental strength in myself I wouldn't have found in any other job.

The responsibility, trust, and autonomy we had on that trip continue to be things I seek from an employer. That empowered feeling to do what needs to be done is hard to find!

Camp is in my blood, it's "home," and the friendships I made there are some of the deepest and most special friendships I have to this day. I never laugh as much with anyone as I do with my camp friends — hysterical side-splitting laughs. My camp friends know me: raw, messy, smelly, strong, funny, fierce, independent — and a hug with a camp friend is something very different to a hug with anyone else. It's a connection to each other, a place, an experience, it's special. Oh man, no surprises, I'm crying while writing this.

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

A: That first drive down the old driveway past the front house (which was then the main entry), past Birch Pond, along the pines to Trailside Lodge, where the office was upstairs. And then, my second year in 2002, the night before heading to Killarney, I was sitting in the dark on the steps between the trip shack and the waterfront, bawling my eyes out in fear of what I was about to be responsible for. Bree Berry was with me (more tears right now), and provided so much comfort, belief and confidence in me. Those kinds of vulnerable conversations are rare. I still have the little note she wrote and it has the same impact whenever I'm in moments of self-doubt.

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

Please [click here](#) for all other alumni spotlights featured in previous newsletters.

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## Gifts in Kind

*RedBoat spent a week at Hayo-Went-Ha in August 2014 for a Four Way Lodge reunion and is now back on Torch Lake, having been donated to camp. Read all about the life and love of this fantastic craft!*

## Rebel Sloop Joins Hayo-Went-Ha Camps Torch Lake site Fleet

On a whim, I searched Craigslist for sailboats soon after moving to a lakefront cottage. To my surprise and delight, a boat almost exactly like the one I had learned to sail on starting in 1960 was available in Suttons Bay. Although I hadn't been in a Rebel since 1967, I knew my way around it with my eyes closed. This 16' fiberglass sloop was designed with northern Michigan inland lakes in mind, and it belongs on Torch Lake. Personal experience tells me that it's great for beginners who are learning the ways of wind and water and equally great for experienced sailors who are hungry for more time savoring the wind and water.

I never planned to fall in love with sailing, and it didn't happen overnight. My first experiences on a sailboat as an 11-year-old involved rigging, bailing, and learning knots but not much actual sailing. Once I got out on the lake (Torch), however, I was hooked. Standing on the foredeck, trimming the jib, or handling the tiller, I always felt at home. Learning the wind's patterns and feeling the water's power awakened something in me. Sailing engages all the senses.

I learned to sail on the Four Way Lodge camp fleet of Rebels, just a mile or so south of Camp Hayo-Went-Ha. The sailing counselors were the best, helping campers build confidence in our skills as we were introduced to more and more challenges. We learned so much about the boats, the lake, the wind, and the weather. It was a huge accomplishment to demonstrate sufficient competence and confidence to be allowed to sail a Rebel solo and be known as a Skipper.

The Four-Way Rebels all had white hulls and red decks, and campers named them Wynken, Blynken, and Nod (the slowest), recalling a 19th-century nursery rhyme. I started calling my boat, which has a red hull and white deck, RedBoat, and the name stuck. It was a joy to introduce my grandchildren to sailing on RedBoat, teaching them to trim sails, to tack, and to do Crew-Overboard drills for safety and for a dip in the water on a hot day. I'm thrilled that RedBoat is now at Hayo-Went-Ha, where a new generation of campers will get to ride the waves as they develop a love of sailing.

*Guest writer – Anne Hoagland Magoun*

"I'm sure RedBoat is happy to be back on this special lake."



## **“Wear” in the World are Our Alumni?**



*Julie S. – Grenada*



*JC and Laura – Sedona, AZ*



*Penelope – Bryce Canyon, UT*

# Generational Gems

*An interview with Craig Mott, 3rd generation family member*

## **A Family Legacy at Hayo-Went-Ha: Reflections on Generations of Campers – The Mott Family**

For many families, YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps are more than just a summer destination — they are a rite of passage, a place where traditions are passed down, and lifelong memories are made. The Mott family is one such example, with three generations experiencing the magic of camp, each in their own way.

### **A Legacy That Began in the 1930s**

The Mott family's connection to Hayo-Went-Ha dates back nearly a century. Doug Mott, was a camper in the 1930s and early 1940s, attending from his home state of Michigan. By the time his sons, Andrew and Craig, were ready for camp in the mid-to-late 1970s, the family had relocated to Illinois, yet the pull of HWH remained strong.

### **A Camper, A Counselor, A Leader**

For Craig, the experience of HWH went beyond just being a camper. He fondly recalls his years at camp, including his time as a counselor and his participation in the Pat Rode CIT (Counselor-in-Training) program, a program designed to develop young leaders. He was fortunate to be under the mentorship of Greg Rode and Jim Austin, two well-known figures in the camp community at the time.

His adventures at HWH included being both a Bush Ranger and an Isle Royale camper, embracing the rugged, wilderness-based programs that have long been a signature of the camp experience.

### **The Next Generation: Keeping the Tradition Alive**

Years later, the tradition continued when Craig's son, Jack, attended Hayo-Went-Ha in 2008 coming from Pennsylvania. Jack was a Helmsman and, like his father before him, loved his time at camp.

Though Jack did not return in subsequent years, the impact of HWH remained with him, just as it had for his father and grandfather. The traditions, experiences, and friendships formed at camp continue to shape those who attend, no matter where life takes them.

### **Keeping the Spirit of Camp Alive**

For families like the Motts, Hayo-Went-Ha Camps has been a defining part of their lives, creating lasting memories across generations. Though times change and life takes campers in different directions, the essence of camp — adventure, camaraderie, and personal growth — remains timeless.

As Hayo-Went-Ha looks to the future, it carries forward the legacy of countless families who have walked its trails, paddled its waters, and gathered around its campfires — forever connected by the shared experience of summer at HWH Camps.



*Jack, Craig and Andy visiting camp again in 2021.*

[Click here](#) to read about the generational gems we have featured in previous Whispering Pines editions.

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## **Celebrate Summer with Us: The Friends of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps Gathering**

Join us for a special tradition that brings our community together in the heart of Northern Michigan. Each July, our dedicated Board of Directors — representing Hayo-Went-Ha Camps from across the country — gathers in person, and we take this opportunity to celebrate with you: our alumni, families, and friends.

We're thrilled to invite you to the *Friends of Hayo-Went-Ha Camps Summer Gathering* at Short's Brewing Co. in Elk Rapids. This annual event is more than a meeting — it's a joyful

reunion. Come connect with current board members, enthusiastic staff, and fellow alumni who call this region home (or just can't stay away!).

Whether you're catching up with camp friends or just soaking in the stories and memories that make HWH Camps so special, this is an afternoon not to miss.

**July 18 • 3–6 p.m.**  
Short's Brewing Co., Elk Rapids

**We can't wait to see you there!**

## Calendar of Events

Please [click here](#) to see all the exciting events this year!

### Campfire Club: Thank you to those who keep the fire burning!

Please find a list of donors from the months of January, February and March 2025. Thanks to your generosity, we can continue providing life-changing camp experiences, supporting families in need, and maintaining the programs and facilities that make camp so special.

Every gift helps us create opportunities for campers to grow, explore, and build lifelong friendships. We are grateful for your support and for being part of our camp community.

[Click here](#) to see all the generous donations from January through to May. We truly appreciate your support—thank you for being a part of our camp community!

### 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!*



STATE YMCA OF MICHIGAN  
**HAYO-WENT-HA CAMPS**  
Torch Lake ♦ Arbutus Lake



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