

Whispering Pines



HAYO-WENT-HA CAMPS
Two Camps. One Purpose.



DECEMBER 2025

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Musings and Meanderings...

By John (JC) Carlson, CEO

Hayo-Holiday Wishes: Keeping the Flame Burning Together

Every year as the holidays approach, I find myself reflecting on the traditions that matter most. The ones that bring us closer and remind us of what truly lasts. At Hayo-Went-Ha Camps, one tradition has risen to the surface for me: **Keepers of the Flame**. Our annual fundraiser bears that name because it reflects this cherished tradition, our shared values, and the strength of a community that believes in something bigger than itself.

Earlier in my YMCA career, fundraising made me nervous. Asking for financial support did not feel natural. That changed over time as I witnessed the power of camp in the lives of young people. When you see a camper's confidence grow after hiking one hundred miles on Isle Royale, watch friendships form through shared daily challenges without a single phone in sight, and observe children discovering who they are while unplugged and surrounded by nature, you begin to understand that inviting others to support this mission is really an invitation to be part of something deeply meaningful.

Our mission at Hayo-Went-Ha Camps truly matters. Families see the impact camp makes, and so do we. Our return rates are remarkably high because camp builds resilience, character, confidence, and a sense of community that stays with young people long after they leave. This is what fuels the Keepers of the Flame Campaign and why it matters so much every year.

Through this campaign, we are strengthening the foundations that help the camp thrive. Our plan is to use the funds raised to renovate two Wilderness Adventure Centers, upgrade essential equipment, invest in staff and infrastructure, and ensure camp remains safe, accessible, and exceptional for every child who arrives at our shores.

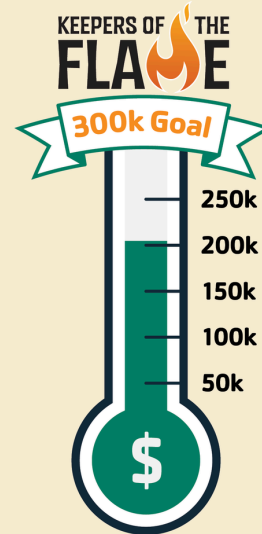
The generosity we have seen so far is inspiring. As of December 16, we have raised more than \$200,000, bringing us more than two-thirds of the way to our goal. A total of 165 supporters have already contributed. Our forty peer-to-peer fundraising teams have been busy with their support and outreach.

We still have a long way to go, and now is the time to lift up our camps. Every gift matters, and every supporter makes a difference. Your support helps ensure that the Hayo-Went-Ha Camps experience continues to inspire growth, confidence, and connection for the campers who need it most. Join us in reaching the finish line and sustaining the camp community we all value so deeply.

[Click here to show your support!](#)

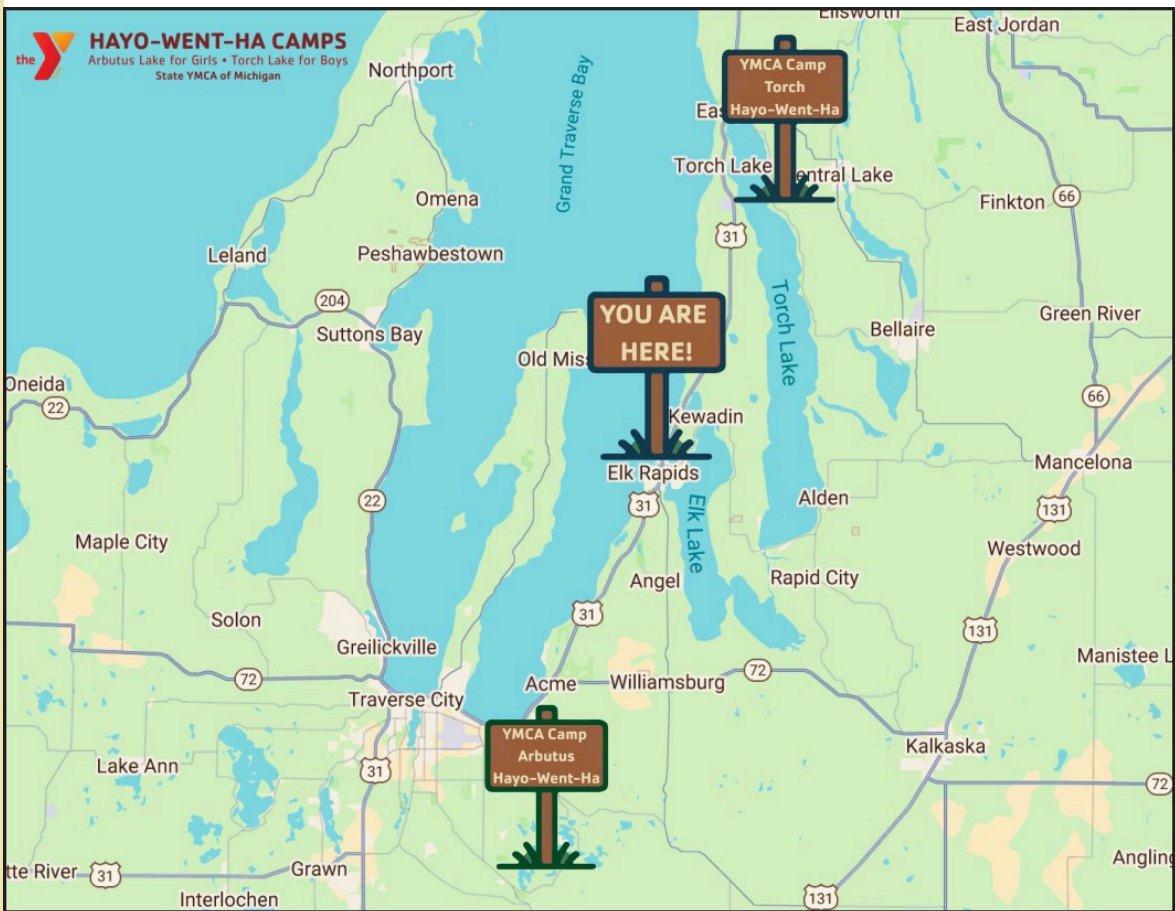
**WE NEED YOUR
HELP TO REACH
OUR GOAL!**

**YOUR DONATION TODAY WILL
HELP OUR MISSION THRIVE.**



Rooted in Community: Our Elk Rapids Outpost...

By Erin Steffen, Director of Business Operations and Community Engagement



Y.M.C.A. Hayo-Went-Ha Camps has opened a small administrative Outpost in downtown Elk Rapids, Michigan, perfectly located above Happy Camper Coffee Shop. It is the ideal spot for a camp focused on creating happy campers and strengthening community connections.

The Outpost gives us a year-round presence in the heart of the region. It is a welcoming space for families, donors, and partners to connect with camp and a hub for staff collaboration between our two campuses. This space represents more than an office; it is a step toward deepening our impact in Northern Michigan.

Our Community Engagement Plan will guide how we build local partnerships, offer meaningful outdoor programs, and increase local visibility. Early priorities include outdoor adventure-based events, volunteer support, youth and family programs, and a calendar of community touchpoints. We are also expanding our efforts to serve local youth and have set a \$30,000 financial aid goal for our Sparks Day Camp program to help children in our home communities experience the joys of summer camp. By 2027, we hope to see thriving day camps, strong partnerships, and a growing presence that enriches every camper's and family's experience.

While small, the Outpost represents something big. It reflects our commitment to being present, accessible, and engaged. It is a place where relationships grow, support is nurtured, and the spirit of Hayo-Went-Ha lives all year. We look forward to welcoming the community and exploring the possibilities ahead.



Mission Momentum

By Amanda Macaluso, Director of Development & Alumni Experience

Keepers of the Flame: Celebrating our Team Leads and Spreading the Reach.

Our camp community really is all over the country and all over the world. Our 2025 Keepers of the Flame end-of-year campaign is shining brightly, thanks in large part to an incredible community and the group of team leads who are fanning the flame.

This year, more alumni, parents, staff, and friends than ever have stepped forward to serve as team leads. Each one has created a personal fundraising page, shared their own camp story, and reached out to their circles to say, "Camp matters. Help me keep it going." Because of their efforts, and the generosity of those responding, we're already at 67% of our \$300,000 goal.

These team leads are doing much more than raising dollars. They are reconnecting camp friends across years and generations, sharing the impact camp has had on their own lives and families and inviting new supporters to learn about YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps for the first time

Each team is working toward its own goal, and together those goals add up to the \$300,000 we need to support camp operations, maintenance and preservation, and the new Wilderness Adventure Centers at both camps. Their energy and enthusiasm are helping ensure that future campers can experience the same friendships, growth, and wilderness adventures they remember.

If you'd like to join them, you can visit the campaign, find a team led by someone you know (or someone whose story speaks to you), and make a gift in honor of the camp you love. We're deeply grateful to every team lead for the time, heart, and camp spirit they've poured into this effort—and to every donor who has answered their call. With your help before the end of the year, we can close the gap and finish this campaign as strongly as it began.

Please visit our donation page to explore the teams and find someone you know, or someone whose camp story resonates with you. It's a great way to show your support and be part of the camp community.

[Join us today as a Keeper of the Flame.](#)

[Please consider a gift, and help ensure that camp continues to matter, now and for generations to come.](#)

[Thank you for being part of this community.](#)

[Thank you for carrying the flame.](#)

State of the Flame 2025

Did you miss our State of the Flame address on World Kindness Day?

You can still catch it. We've recorded the full program so you can watch at your convenience. It's a chance to hear about this year's highlights, see the impact you've helped make, and get a first look at what's coming in the year ahead.

[Watch Now!](#)



January Moments

We're sending you the best from Hayo-Went-Ha Camps as we kick off this end-of-year and holiday season. I'm reaching out to request January Moments from our alumni, campers, and staff this year to feature on our social media accounts!

You may be asking, what IS a January Moment? Started by former CEO Dave DeLuca, January Moments occur at a time of year when it can be cold outside and feel as far removed from summer as possible. During this time of year, we like to warm up with good & fond memories and keep ourselves looking forward to the bright moments of the summer with memories that we call January Moments!



If you have a favorite memory and related photo from your summers here that you can share with us, you can send it to MackMo at mmorison@hayowentha.org! We look forward to seeing ALL of your memories. Thank you in advance for sharing them by December 31st. We'll accept submissions throughout January if you're inspired as they roll out!

Celebrating Adam Delezenne's Impact

After two years as Director of Camp Torch Hayo-Went-Ha for boys, Adam Delezenne is moving on to new adventures.

During his time with us, Adam made a lasting impact on the boys' camp program and played a key role in initiatives that strengthened our camp community. His dedication, energy, and leadership have left a meaningful legacy that will continue to benefit campers and staff alike.

We are deeply grateful for Adam's contributions and wish him all the best in his next chapter. Join us in celebrating his time at Hayo-Went-Ha and the positive mark he has made on our camp family.



Keepers of the Flame

Please check our Team Leads below.....



Andy (AJ) McKnight - Sailors Dreaming

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Betsy Foley – You CAN ride in my Little Red wagon

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Ben Montague - Torch Lake legends

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Caitlin Owens – Team Firstmatelin

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Cat Baxter – BAXter BAXter

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Chris Holter – Lakeside Legends

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Christa Shier – The Shier

GOAL: \$750

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Debbie Stephens – Team Olds(mobile)

GOAL: \$10,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Doug and Ellie Vahey – Hayo-Went-Ha Hokey Pokey

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Elise Rolisin (Miller) – S'more Camp Fun for ALL!

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Eliza Upton – Arbutus Takes the Big Apple

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Emma Macaluso – Emma Mac, when are you Coming Back?

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Hadley Robinson – My Camp Family

GOAL: \$12,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Jacob Leski – Lesk Is More!

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Jim Asselin – Each for All, All for Each

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Jim Austin and Jerry Fine – Ghosts of Camp Past, Present and Future

GOAL: \$20,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Jodi Hamilton – Give It Up For Mama Jojo!

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



John Birnsteel – Louisville Sluggers!

GOAL: \$10,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



John Kelley – Happy Campers

GOAL: \$10,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



John Zore – The Ladd Drive Lads

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Katie Sulau – Cove and Miche Forever

GOAL: \$20,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Lawrence LeBlond – Order of the Black Kettle

GOAL: \$10,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Liz Roy – LIZ in the Thicket

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



MackMo and the Impact Team

GOAL: \$5,000

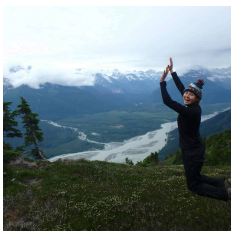
[DONATION PAGE](#)



Marnie Brewster – Team Brewster

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Mary Tobin – Mary at the Sleeping Bear Dunes

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Matt and Andy Carlson – Food Grubbers Anonymous

GOAL: \$10,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Megan Peters and Stephanie Donalds – Babes in the Woods (Keeping the FLAME Alive)

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Meghann Donahue

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Mimi Dyer – Cincinnati Campers

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Nathan and Amelia Rode – Keep the Fire!

GOAL: \$5,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Rex Sessions – Chicago Fire

GOAL: \$20,000

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Sal Cracchiolo – SCUBA Sal

GOAL: \$27,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Stephen Graham - Hayo-Went-Ha String Band Superfans

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Tod Stenger - S.P.L.A.S.H. Paddle Heros

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Trevor Block – One more Summer Team

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Trevor Emig – Camp, Shorts, & Dockside Memories

GOAL: \$20,000

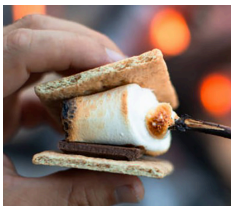
[DONATION PAGE](#)



Captain Zach – Team Captain Zach

GOAL: \$2,500

[DONATION PAGE](#)



Young G Team

GOAL: \$750

[DONATION PAGE](#)

2026 Camp Events



HAYO-WENT-HA CAMPS
Two Camps. One Purpose.



Our Contact Information

{{Organization Name}} • *{{Organization Address}}*
{{Organization Phone}} • *{{Organization Website}}*

{{Unsubscribe}}

