



# THE CONISTON CHRONICLE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR CAMP CONISTON CAMPERS, STAFF AND ALUMNI • WINTER 2005

## DONOR FOCUS

Where we ask the simple question: "Why do people donate to Camp Coniston?"



When Ray Dion's daughter Elizabeth asked him if she could go to camp, his reaction was quick and immediate—"No way!" Ray had come from a large family—the fifth of fifteen children—and while they camped together when he was a child ("... fifteen of us all together in a big canvas tent!"), his family never had the resources to send their children to summer camp.

### Ray Dion White River Jct., VT



RAY AND ELIZABETH AS THEY DISCOVER THE JOYS OF FAMILY CAMP AT CONISTON

But Ray's daughter and family were persistent, and six years ago, he reluctantly agreed to test the waters by joining his daughter for a week of Family Camp at Coniston.

He describes the incident as "an experience that changed my life. That first year taught me an important lesson about myself ... if my attitude could have been so wrong about camp, I needed to open my opinions, my perceptions about many other things in my life." After an exceptional week sharing the Coniston family camping experience with his daughter, Ray immediately signed her up for a summer session, and she's been a Coniston camper ever since.

"What really impressed me about Coniston was the counselors," Ray said. "Most Coniston counselors were campers themselves. I mean, here are college-age kids that could certainly be making more someplace

else ... and yet they give themselves so completely to these kids." For Ray, the central question that changed his beliefs about camp was, "Who do I want as a role model for my daughter? These counselors choose to be doing what they do—and that's the kind of person I want as a role model for my child."

Ray describes Camp Coniston as "his charity of choice"—the first place that any of his charitable dollars go to. For the past two years he's funded two Coniston Camperships, "so I can give a child the kind of experience my daughter had ... there's no better place to spend my charitable dollars." He mentions several important reasons for his support of Coniston—first, that Coniston is "a very big piece" of who his daughter is today; second, that he's able to give the experience to a child of "being able to go out and discover out who they are—that's what Coniston is going to do for them. The whole situation forces them to find out who they are, but in a supportive and loving environment." And finally, Ray is proud that, unlike other charities, 100% of his dollars go directly toward funding a deserving Campership child.

"Giving to Coniston is not just 'giving to Coniston'—it's giving a kid this powerful experience. I think, 'somebody's charitable dollar changed this kid's life', and that's what I want to do. I always say to John Tilley, 'At Coniston, you're building better adults.' They build the foundation of solid adults ... more confidence, more independence ... solid people! I give all the staff full credit—they're doing God's work. Coniston ... it's a very powerful place!" —R

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## THE CONISTON CHRONICLE

A Publication of  
YMCA CAMP CONISTON  
for Campers, Alumni  
and Staff

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# Director's 2¢

“Camp is great for kids!”

It's a simple idea, and something I'm sure we all know ... but it bears repeating. Our ability to provide the camp experience to kids—to a variety of kids, from all walks of life—is crucial to creating the complete Coniston Experience.

Camp can be an expensive undertaking—our \$890 fee is a lot of money for many families, and we know how hard many of our camper families work to allow their kids to enjoy summer at Camp.

But we also know how important it is to keep Coniston affordable (in fact, a quick survey of other camps shows how affordable we really are.) We can keep Coniston affordable because many individuals provide funds to enhance our facilities, to supply new equipment, and to maintain our many buildings and structures. Because our generous donors enable us to keep our costs down, we are able to fund a wide variety of campers—so they too may experience life at Camp Coniston. The reason camp is here now is because so many of our predecessors donated their time and resources; it's these individuals who have made it possible for all of us to be here, together, today.

Now it's our turn to ensure a bright future for Coniston—and that comes not only from camperships, but through the support of our buildings and infrastructure. Together, we can make sure our camp stays strong, stable and oriented toward the future—so more deserving kids can come to Camp, and gain the lifetime of growth that Coniston brings to them.

It's our contributors that make it possible for a full spectrum of campers to receive the benefits of the Coniston experience. Our thanks to everyone in the Coniston family—we'll see you this summer! →



## Do You Know...

... that originally, the Y purchased only 800 acres for our Camp Coniston site. Most of the remaining land—over four hundred additional acres—was donated to Coniston by generous landowners. The most recent gift came from Mr. and Mrs. Richard Mansfield, who donated their adjacent parcel to help continue and preserve the Coniston experience.

## Do You Know...

... that our summer staff believes so strongly in Camp Coniston that, for the past two summers, they've donated their own money—a dollar at a time—to fund a Campership and send another deserving kid to camp!

## Campers From All Backgrounds: Why is it so important to Camp?

Over the years, we've found that a variety of kids, from all walks of life and backgrounds, are truly important toward creating the complete Coniston experience. If camp was made up of one population of kids who can easily afford camp, and another population who can't ... Coniston would be *two separate populations*. It is very difficult to create a social connection between these two dissimilar groups—and that's not the beneficial experience we want our camp to be.

It's critical that we have a complete spectrum of campers, including that 'middle group' that bridges both populations. Campers and staff begin to learn about each other, to understand their differences and their similarities ... and that's what creates the experience we've come to love. Campers from all economic backgrounds are important for helping generate personal growth, trust and understanding in all campers—and it's your generous giving that makes that possible.

**Ross Tilchen**  
15, Bethesda MD

Ask Ross Tilchin what he likes most about Camp Coniston, and you'll get an

answer that might surprise you. "It's not necessarily the things we do at camp—although they're fun, no doubt about that! What really excites me is the *relationships*. Almost all Coniston counselors have been campers themselves, and it's such a close-knit community, such a warm and welcoming atmosphere ... there's an enormous opportunity to find people to work and play with, to discover who you are, and what you're interested in."



ROSS AND HIS SISTER, CARLA, SHARING THE SPECIAL EXPERIENCE OF CONISTON

Ross is a young man with a rare appreciation for the person-to-person values so essential to the true spirit of Coniston. Ross has been a Coniston camper since age 9, and ever since his first year, he's felt a special love for camp and has come back every summer. When he turned thirteen, he participated in his bar mitzvah, the traditional coming-of-age ceremony of the Jewish faith. One of the customary aspects of the ceremony is to give a portion of the gift monies to charity. For Ross, there was no hesitation—he decided to make his gift donation a full Campership to Camp Coniston.

For a thirteen year old, a full Campership is, to say the least, a very significant investment, but Ross said it was exactly the way he wanted to mark his coming of age. "I wanted to give my money to something that was very important to me. My bar mitzvah was in the summertime, and I decided to do something that really affected me directly—not only to make a gift to someone who really needed it, but even more important, to support the diversity of people in the camp population."

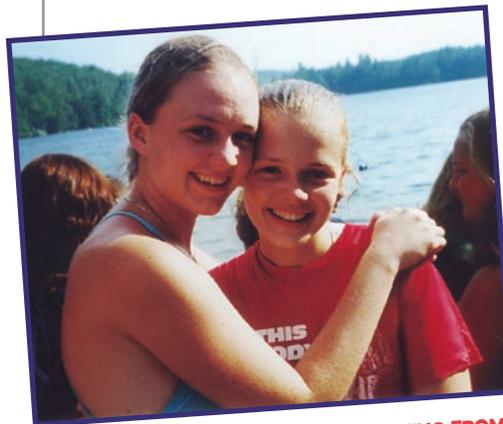
As good as that donation made Ross feel, he feels even better about the camper he's sponsoring. "The most rewarding thing is, to make sure that kid is having a great time—to give him the chance, just like I had, to fulfill all that he's trying to do." —R

As the parent of three Coniston campers, one might say that Myra Hugg belongs to a

**Myra Hugg**  
Newton, MA

true "Coniston family." When her oldest son John outgrew the local day camp ("At ten years old he told me, 'Mom, it's just not *fun* anymore!"), Myra began asking friends and neighbors for a summer camp recommendation. Her son's two-week stay at Coniston began a camping experience for her family that stretched across fifteen years, and the lives of every one of her children.

Myra found it difficult to describe why Coniston has become such a powerful force in her children's lives. "I don't know how to put my finger on it, but I know you can't package it. It's a *feel*", she said, "something you sense when you first come to camp." She told of bringing her oldest daughter Lauren to Coniston, in preparation for her initial summer. "I asked her if she wanted to see her cabin because, after all, she'd be living there for two weeks, and her immediate response was, 'Mom, I don't need to see it — I know I want to come here.' My kids have thrived at Coniston. They loved the counselors, the activities ... they even loved the food!" (And that, even though Lauren was a strict vegetarian!)



LAUREN AND ANNIE HUGG, RETURNING FROM ANNIE'S CIT HIKE UP MT. WASHINGTON

Myra gave another example of the impact of Coniston in her camper's lives. "I have a neighbor who lives kitty-corner from us whose daughter, Sonya Freeman, went to Coniston ... and my daughter Lauren (who

was also a Coniston counselor) babysat for them. I ran into Sonya and her friend one day at the ice cream store in town after their first summer at Coniston, and Sonya introduced me as Lauren's mother. Her young friend's eyes got big and round and she said, almost in awe, 'You're *Lauren Hugg's* mom??!' I went home and said to Lauren, 'I had no idea you were so *adored!*'"

Even though her kids are grown, it's the significance of the Coniston experience in her children's

# Camp Financials:

## THE FUTURE OF CONISTON



**E**ach year, YMCA Camp Coniston receives about 8 percent of its gross operating revenues through donations. Because we are primarily a fee-for-service nonprofit, the number of Camperships we can provide are a direct reflection of the amount of money we're able to raise. Also, the improvements to our facility and programs often directly reflect gifts made to camp.



**The Lodge, circa 1920**

YMCA Camp Coniston has a long history of generous donation. In fact, when the YMCA of the USA ran all troop support services for the Allies during World War I, our YMCA Camp collected over \$150,000 to support this endeavor! What's more, when it came time to relocate camp in the 1960's, donors raised over \$298,000 to move the Camp to our present location. But as these two stories suggest, donations to Camp Coniston have come only when there was a clear and specific need.

YMCA Camp Coniston is fortunate to be a financially healthy nonprofit. As a nonprofit, money above and beyond our operating costs is turned back into camp and program improvements. For 2004 the Camp had gross revenues (*fees and donations included*) of 1.59 million, with all money returned directly to camp support.

**A**t this time, there is a critical need to bring Camp Coniston's finances "to the next level." This will ensure that our buildings and facilities are

brought up to a higher standard and maintained for the benefit of the next generation of Coniston campers. Our long-range improvement plan, currently being formulated by our Board and staff, will address these important needs—you'll be hearing more about that in the near future.

But for the moment, we extend our sincere thanks and appreciation for all the generous support that our donors have extended to Camp Coniston—it's your giving that makes our future bright! —

### Planning Ahead:

#### Crucial to Coniston's Future

There are several big projects around the corner for the future of Camp Coniston. Among the improvements, the Girls' College is badly in need of significant repairs ... and the "centerpiece" of camp, the Old Lodge and Dining Hall, which was originally built in the 1920's, is in desperate need of renovation. The Coniston Board of Directors and staff are busy working on a long-range improvement plan. Please, consider helping us in this effort—to ensure quality life-changing experiences for Coniston campers for another 90 years to come.

### Do You Know...

... that a donation of any size to Camp Coniston will get you a free copy of the famous Coniston Calendar—and will also recognize you in the Donors listing inside the calendar!

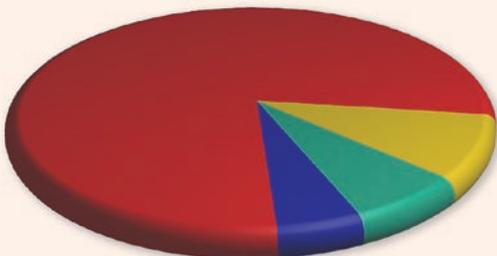
### Do You Know...

... that each plaque on a dining hall post represents the first gift from that person or foundation to Coniston of more than \$1000?



**The Lodge, Interior View**

### 2004 Revenues (fees & donations included) Total \$1,590,000



- **Summer Programs**  
\$1,247,984
- **After School Programs**  
\$150,291
- **Gifts/Donations**  
\$113,345
- **Other Programs/Pre/Post**  
\$81,095

## History:

## In This Issue:

**B**efore we continue with the search for Coniston, here's a quick timeline of camp before 1963. When our YMCA was founded in 1910, one of the first things they did was open a summer camp—Camp Soangetaha in Goshen, NH (in fact, that same original charter hangs on the wall in John's office—dated February 11, 1911!) From 1911 to 1963, the camp was run by the county YMCA, and then was slowly acquired by the NH State YMCA. When the Goshen property was sold and the present campsite was purchased, the NH State YMCA became the sole administrator of camp's business.

Several years after Soangetaha was founded, the Charles Dudley family began making plans for a camp of their own. Longtime residents of New Hampshire's Upper Valley, the Dudley family had always felt a strong desire to help youth, and to give them the camp experience.

On April 1, 1926, when our Y camp was 15 years old, the Dudleys purchased a site in Croydon, NH from the Sawyers, a long-time local farming family. The Dudleys proceeded to open and run Camp Interlaken, a very fine private girls camp with a focus on horseback riding. Interlaken welcomed campers from the Philadelphia area, the Southern US, even as far away as Europe, and was home to a number of famous alumni—

among them the actress Blythe Danner, who is also Gwyneth Paltrow's mom! The Dudleys built many of the camp structures we use to this day—for example, the Lodge, constructed in 1923, the Camp Office, built in the 1950s, and many of our cabins. By constructing the buildings, the Dudleys physically set the tone for what was to come in the years ahead.



The Dining Room — Senior Lodge

In the early 1960s, the Dudley family made the decision to leave the world of camping, and had started looking for a purchaser. At the same time, our state YMCA had begun looking for a new home for their camp (see *the Coniston Chronicle Fall/Winter 2004 for a nice bit of history on that search!*) The YMCA wanted a secluded property on a private lake, and the Dudley's camp made the perfect site—the buildings were in place, the lake was beautiful, and the property could be preserved for generations of campers to come. It was the ideal spot to expand.

The Dudley's intent was to preserve the camp experience for future generations—to provide quality, life-changing experiences to youth from New Hampshire, and around the world. John Tilley said it best—“It's a goal that Coniston still takes seriously, and literally.”

And so the move was made—from Soangetaha, to Interlaken, to the camp we love today. Finally, we found a permanent home! —

**In The Next Issue:** How Coniston Got Its Name

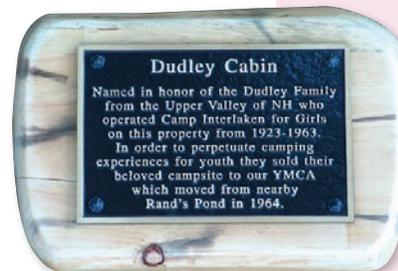
## DONOR FOCUS

...continued from page 3

lives that led the Huggs to try and sponsor at least one Campership per year. “Camp was the highlight of my children's high school years. The preparations, the deadlines, the applications, their friends and the summer to come ... that's all they'd talk about! My kids made friendships they'll connect with for the rest of their lives.”

**A**nd, for Myra, it's not just the benefits to her children that impel her to support Coniston. “You can see it ... *all* the kids come out of Coniston with that kind of growth. I want to know I'm giving to someone who 'does good work', and I'd want every kid to get what my children have gotten from Coniston. Camp has been an immeasurable benefit for these kids.”

Myra paused in thought for a moment, and then said quietly, “You know ... it's really about living in America. We all want everyone to have the same opportunities, the same benefits and the same chance for progress, for success, and for growth ... and this is a way to actually make that happen. That's why we give.” —



### “The Dudley Cabin— A Very Personal Gift”

Part of the legacy that the Dudley family left to Camp Coniston is the Dudley Cabin, a rustic and secluded structure on the far side of the lake. Until very recently, the Dudleys used this cabin on a regular

basis. They loved the spot and were very active campers—even though they were both approaching 100 years old! When the Dudleys passed, the Dudley Cabin was recognized in their honor. They sold their beloved campsite to our YMCA, to preserve the Coniston camping experience for generations to come.

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# CAMP PHOTOS!



# Do You Know...

... that Camp Coniston is a non-profit organization recognized by the federal government, and that gifts to Coniston are tax-deductible.

We know that many generous alumni have chosen to bequeath part of their estate to Camp Coniston ... would you be willing to do the same?

You can help to ensure Coniston's future—to know that kid's lives will be enriched and enhanced far beyond our own.



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