



THE CONISTON CHRONICLE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR CAMP CONISTON CAMPERS, STAFF AND ALUMNI • SUMMER/FALL 2004

The Summer Just an Incredible Year!



in the Coniston Community as JD) summed up this summer's camping season at Coniston. Everyone got to greet their old friends this year—almost all of the boys camp staff returned this summer, and 90% of the girls staff too. It's that high retention rate that keeps our camp traditions alive. Each year, people get to know each other better and better, and it really sets the tone for Day One, when campers and staff first walk into camp ... and everyone recognizes each other!

“What a great summer – just an incredible year!” That’s how Jen Deasy (known to all



Wood Shop: Big Hit This Summer

JD pointed out several programs that were really special to Coniston campers this summer. Wood Shop has become one of the top programs at camp. The program was coordinated

by Ralph Davidson, who started a wood shop program over 13 years ago, and came to Coniston this year to run our program. He's improved the

program a thousand times over. He's got a great collection of ideas and samples, and the kids just love him.

This year, Coniston woodshop campers made “shower totes”, wooden holders for soap, shampoo, etc., and by the end of camp you saw them everywhere—everybody



was using them! But the real hit of the woodshop program was “The Coniston Box”, wooden boxes carefully crafted with leather bindings and an opening top, with each camper's initials or name on the box top. This year, wood shop was held three days a week, but next year, because of its popularity, we are planning to really expand the program. This summer, more kids wanted to take the program than could fit in the classes—next summer there's going to be a lot of happy campers when we open it up to six days a week!

ADVENTURE CAMP— A Super Season!



Adventure Camp was also amazing this summer, JD said. These one- and two-week trips — hiking Mount Kahtadin in Maine, touring the sights of Canada, bicycling through Vermont, sailing off Cape Cod, whitewater rafting — were so special to Coniston campers. Can you imagine hiking Mount Kahtadin ... then a big feast all together that night ... and then whitewater rafting the next day ... just unbelievable!



Adventure Camp is an incredible bonding experience for the 10 campers and three leaders who make up each trip. They bond together so completely. The leaders control the pace so no-one is overly challenged, and everybody has a great time—and this year, for the first time, Adventure Camp enrollment was 100% full! JD says she heard it from campers, staff and parents alike—Adventure Camp leaders and campers did a great job this season!

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and Alumni

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STAFF MEMBER FOCUS: Emily Morse, 20, Newton, MA

When she was ten years old, Emily Morse's good friend Rosie asked her to go to camp with her "at some place I never heard of up in New Hampshire." She wasn't sure what she was getting into, but she went—and ten years later, she and Rosie are still close friends, still coming to camp (both as counselors) and Emily says with obvious pride that she hasn't missed a year yet! Described as a star with the younger kids, Emily was girls' Junior Division leader this summer, and for her, the experience was "like having a job I just love to go to."



Along with Eben Gannett, her counterpart in the boy's camp, Emily was in charge of supervising 8-10 year old camper cabins. She was also a campfire coordinator, responsible for planning the events for the traditional campfires which begin and end each session. Emily and Eben helped choose the staff member who lights the campfire, which is a privilege and an honor. It is always a special experience for a staff member to light the fire.

Emily also worked to raise campership funds from the summer staff. She organized a fund drive which earned enough to pay for one campership, then presented the concept to the Coniston board—who promptly tripled the staff's donation!

Emily feels strongly about Coniston's many traditions, and she stressed how important those traditions were to the Coniston experience. "It's so neat to watch the young-

er staff keep the traditions alive, learning them and learning to love them ... it's so great to see them grow up with us, and bring all that back to the younger kids, watching them re-live the traditions too."

What brings these dedicated campers back? Emily credits the quality of the CIT and LIT programs. The CIT program is very special. Our campers love coming here and becoming part of Coniston's traditions, but the CIT program shows you what goes on 'on the inside'—how the camp is really run. The LIT program is the next step, where first-year staff become even more involved with camp activities, spending a month in cabin and getting involved in planning events such as the evening programs.

Although Emily describes herself as a local girl, she brings a global perspective to Coniston. She is an International Relations major at the University of Delaware, and during her high school years, she lived and went to school in New Zealand. When she talked about camp to New Zealanders, she found they were surprised at the idea of a summer-long stay. But her experiences in New Zealand were very valuable in helping her settle Coniston's international staff into their new life at camp. "Camp is a very American thing!" she says with a smile. —



1984 Alumni Reunion

Coniston alumni also had a wonderful time this summer—the '84 CITs got together for a reunion weekend after camp was over. Even though their CIT days were behind them, they all kept referring to camp as “coming home!” The group had a great time reminiscing about the traditions of years ago ... many of the same traditions that have been kept alive through the years, and that Coniston campers enjoy today.

Coming Next Summer...

Although she didn't want to give away any secrets, JD talked about some of the surprises coming up for next summer. She said she's really looking forward to Coniston's new chapel site overlooking Cranberry Pond. 99% of camp probably doesn't know that Cranberry Pond exists, but this year, all three CIT groups worked to clear the site, and put in steps and seats all the way up this natural amphitheater. This was a complete CIT project—the CITs even came back to camp in October to do more work—voluntarily! JD said, when Cranberry Pond Chapel is complete, it will be the only outdoor space that can comfortably seat the entire camp, and it is a place of peace and beauty set out in the woods.

JD also hinted about a very special addition to the Coniston waterfront— an Indian “war canoe” that can seat over 14 people! An entire cabin, counselors and campers, can fit into one! We are also planning a nine-hole Frisbee Golf course, with tall metal “Frisbee catchers” at each hole.

But she didn't want to say too much—there'll be even more surprises for next summer! —

Coniston History: A CONTINUING SERIES

In This Issue:
"The Search for Coniston"

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, the YMCA was actively involved in the search for a new location for what would eventually become Camp Coniston. At the time, George Dorr of Dorr Woolen Mills in Lebanon, NH was the chairman of the Board. He had his pilot's license, and with other board members, spent many hours flying all around western New Hampshire looking for possible lake sites.

One of the locations they spotted in their travels was Eastman Lake in Grantham, NH. To get a closer look, they drove out to the lake for an on-site inspection. However, this trip was complicated by the fact that it was the middle of a cold and snowy New Hampshire winter. That didn't slow them down—the gentlemen strapped on their snowshoes and headed off into snowy woods to survey the lake and surrounding land.

Unfortunately, their journey came to an abrupt halt when one of the party's snowshoes broke, and that can really slow things down. The party turned back, making their way as best they could while night began to fall ... the cars seemed miles away as they struggled through the dark and the drifts ... and all the while their families waiting at home, wondering how a simple trip could have taken them so long!

It was well after dark when they finally returned home, and after warming up, they decided that perhaps Eastman wasn't the place they were looking for after all! So the search continued for the new site for Camp Coniston ... —



Next: Camp Interlaken—the perfect location.




Have you checked out Camp Coniston's website lately?

If you have, you're among the hundreds of campers, old and new, who stay connected to the Coniston experience through the internet. Our website is incredibly important in maintaining the close bonds among the Coniston community. We change the front-page photos every day, and we update the office “caption box” with events like staff birthdays—plus important camp information, such as application and payment deadlines and program participants.

www.coniston.org

We invite all members of the Coniston family, past and present, to join in the fun. You might find your best friend at camp on-line tonight! —



CIT FOCUS

While many camps struggle to get good CIT's, Coniston's counselor-in-training program gets over 100 applicants per year. 90%

of Camp Coniston's summer staff comes through these programs. In fact, over the past five years, the program has grown to the point that CIT training is split between Camp Coniston in New Hampshire, and their sister YMCA camp in California.

Because of the high quality of the Coniston experience, acceptance into the CIT program is a competitive process—it can be more

challenging than getting into college! Applicants fill out an in-depth application in October for the upcoming camp season. References are required, along with a detailed listing of extracurricular activities. We look carefully at each applicant with an eye to "building a team", to create a group of personalities, skills and interests that fit well within the Camp ... and that adds to the experience among each other.

West Coast Program: Dan Symonds, 16, Maplewood NJ

Camp Coniston. He started his career as a camper seven years ago, at age nine, and has returned to camp every year since. "Things change from year to year," he said, "but all year long, you're always thinking about it—camp is always in your mind. The staff just makes it a perfect summer."

This summer, Dan took his first step toward joining the Coniston staff by participating in the West Coast CIT program. A diverse group of counselors-in-training begin their education by staying for a week at Coniston, acquainting themselves with camp and getting to know each other. They start by "shadowing" a counselor for three days, to learn first-hand about the counseling experience. Dan said he was so proud to begin the training—"I had such a swagger as a CIT!"

Even though his roots are in the city, Dan Symonds says that he "first discovered the woods" when he came to



The group then traveled for two more weeks, including a ferry trip to the Channel Islands, and hiking in the Grand Canyon. Dan says with satisfaction that only one percent of hikers make it all the way down the Canyon, and he spoke of the desert temperatures—"I bought a candy bar at the bottom, and it melted before I could get 300 feet!"

The group made a final stop at Zion National Park in Utah before returning to Coniston, to make fast friendships with the East Coast CITs. He described the triumph of the traditional greeting ceremony. Of all the events in the CIT program, that's the one you really look forward to. Everyone in camp lined up, cheering you on as we rushed into the water—you will not find happier people anywhere

on earth than a CIT running into the lake! That's what you wait to do.



ME, MOLLY, KATY IN THE GRAND CANYON

Dan describes the East and West Coast programs as "one love". Both programs share the

same experience—to let more people become Coniston CITs. When asked to sum up his CIT experience, Dan said, "The love of Coniston is contagious. Everyone respects and values their time there so much—it's like a mutual understanding of how valuable our time at camp is to all of us. Let's put it this way—the people I've liked the most in my life have come from Coniston." —*RS*



WESTCOASTERS CHILLIN' AT THE "IN-N-OUT BURGER"

Then, as East Coasters returned from their climb of Mount Washington, West Coast CITs began their journey to southern California, where

they spent a week working at YMCA Camp Oakes on Big Bear Lake in the San Bernadino

mountains. Dan said that, every night, a different CIT gave an inspiration for the evening. Known as Vespers, the inspiration could be a song lyric, a story, a skit or a poem, something that was very important and meaningful to them personally ... and you could really see the effect it had on these kids.

Like so many Coniston campers, Jacquie Zimmerman found her way to camp through a close relative. "My brother was a counselor at Coniston, and my first year as a



SARAH AND JACQUIE ON MT. WASHINGTON

her about almost anything. "As a CIT, I realized how much the kids look up to you, and how much of a leader you can be yourself. It's almost like ... you help the kids grow, and in the process you grow so much yourself." Jacquie worked in water skiing, she was trained in lifeguarding, first aid and CPR. She found the training challenging, and everyone worked through it together. It was a great opportunity for CITs to learn about each other, and themselves.

Jacquie spoke of the traditional CIT climb to the summit of Mount Washington as one of the peak moments of the summer. "Having everyone there made it an incredible experience ... that everyone works together to get through the climb. And when we all reach the top, and see the world spread out below you—it's amazing!" She said the traditional ceremony, where the entire camp lines up to greet returning CITs as they rush into the lake, was "an incredible feeling of accomplishment and togetherness ... the excitement and adrenalin was so high, so much joy and emotion, everyone cheering and hugging each other ... it was one of the best experiences of my life!"



THE RUN INTO THE LAKE!

of the summer, you look forward to coming back all year. It just seems like nothing ever goes wrong at camp!" —

East Coast Program: **Jacquie Zimmerman, 16, Hopkinton, NH**

camper was his CIT summer," she said. "When you're younger, you look up to the counselors so much. You have fun, and you see the counselors having so much fun, and you think, 'Wow—some day I'm going to be a counselor here!'"

After five seasons as a camper, Jacquie was accepted into Coniston's East Coast CIT program. During the one-month training, she worked in cabin with 7th and 8th grade girls, and said they were comfortable talking to



**ALL THE 1 + 2 CITs AND DIRECTORS
KIM & JOHN ON MT. KEARSARGE**

Jacquie definitely plans to apply to the LIT program for this coming summer. "Coniston is such a special place ... when you leave at the end

Fundraising:



We're pleased to say that, like the camp overall, fundraising is going very well for Coniston. We've experienced continual growth in recent years; in 1999 we raised about \$3,000 ... and this year, over \$36,000 went directly to funding Camperships for deserving kids, through the generous giving of Coniston's friends. We're fortunate to fund roughly 10% of our camp attendance through Camperships, supported completely by Coniston fundraising efforts.

Most Campership kids are recommended through area schools. We maintain a close relationship with school nurses and counselors, who recommend kids to us who need Coniston's help to make it happen.

Our fundraising also supports programs like **Camp Winning Spirit**, a unique program for kids with cancer.

Coniston runs this program in cooperation with the NH Childhood Cancer



CHILDHOOD CANCER
L I F E L I N E

Lifeline, a completely parent-run group to help families with a recovering child.

Camp Winning Spirit is the only one we know of in the country, where kids in all stages of treatment are welcome. The whole family comes to camp during Labor Day for four days of fun, discussion and mutual support. This is a forum where children and parents discuss how to solve problems and discover new resources. Camp Winning Spirit is partially funded by the Hugh and Irene Gallen Trust (Hugh was Governor of NH from 1979 to 1982), but the bulk of the funding comes directly from donations.

This was Camp Winning Spirit's most successful season, with 18 families joining the Coniston staff for a weekend of activities, mutual support and just plain fun.

How can you help? By continuing the tradition of support to Camp Coniston, so that we may provide these valuable opportunities to kids and families in need. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to Coniston—we know there's a kid who needs your help. —

*** CAMP PHOTOS! ***



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