



THE CONISTON CHRONICLE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR CAMP CONISTON CAMPERS, STAFF AND ALUMNI • FALL 2008

**Announcing Coniston's
New One-Week
Resident Camp Program
August 24 - 29, 2009**

SEE PG.3 FOR DETAILS!

Sue Strebel

Everybody's "Favorite Camp Nurse" Celebrates Two Decades of Caring for Campers



Sue Strebel shares a 20th-anniversary smile with her "Coniston kids," son PJ and daughter Jeanine

"So there I was twenty years ago," Sue Strebel recalls, "and I got a phone call from Bob Sanders, Coniston's camp director at the time. They were desperately searching for a camp nurse, and I looked at the phone and I said, 'No way ... I can't do that!'"

Sue had a pretty good idea what she'd get into if she became a nurse at Coniston. For many years her mom had been Director of Camping in Bergen County NJ, and Sue grew up with camping as part of her life.

"Plus, at that time, I also had a young marriage, and two very small children to take care of ... there was no way I could take on that responsibility."

But the Sanders, a husband and wife team who attended Sue's church, wouldn't take her 'no way' for an answer. "They finally got me to just try it for two weeks, and I packed up, the kids moved to Camp with me, and I put my little son into a backpack ... and off I went to become Coniston's nurse!"

Hey! She likes it!

Sue ended up staying for three weeks that summer, and four weeks the next, and many summers after that as a Coniston camp nurse. "I found camping at Coniston so hospitable and warm ... and my kids loved it, so it made me that much happier to be there."

Sue also spoke of something she felt was very special to her about Coniston "... the importance of respect for one another. My son said, 'At Camp, nobody knows where you're from, and

everybody's at the same level when you get there. You start with a clean slate, and nobody can make judgements.' That helps everyone to respect people for who they are ... it's one of the things I really like best about Coniston."

Positive progress

Sue is in a unique position, to be able to see real changes at Camp over her twenty years. "Aesthetically the Camp looks so much better," she said. "The front lawn used to be filled with little buildings, and now it's so much more open. It's become such a friendly welcoming space."

Coniston has also grown greatly in terms of programming. "Now, with so many arts and performance programs added to the various sports activities, it give us so much room to grow and develop ... it really shows that we each have our own talents."



Sue with her Session 4 nurses at Camp Coniston, Katherine Nevins and Mary Marzelli

CAMP CONISTON



A PUBLICATION OF YMCA CAMP CONISTON

PO BOX 185, GRANTHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03753

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A Publication of
YMCA CAMP CONISTON
for Campers, Alumni
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Here in New Hampshire we've been enjoying one of the nicest falls in recent memory. But it wasn't too long ago, this past summer, when I remember that we experienced one of the rainiest Julys we've ever seen.

For many camps (and campers) (and parents!) this could have been a difficult situation ... disappointed kids, a stressed staff, and a challenging summer for everyone.

But when I talk to people about the summer, that's not what they remember ... everybody had a really good time! Now, what made that possible? Why, despite the one of the rainiest Julys on record, do people remember having a good time at Camp?

Basically ... because of you.

Because you supported Camp Coniston we were able to build, renovate and reclaim these wonderful spaces for rainy-day fun. The expansion of the Dining Hall, the cleanup and extension of New Hampshire Hall, the Drama for Production and Arts & Crafts rooms ... some of these areas can now hold the entire population of Camp!

And believe me, all you need to do is ask any camper or counselor, and you'll find out how important these spaces are to put a bright face on a rainy day.

The sun actually did shine on us this summer, because you supported us in the past. And, as we continue to improve Camp, you help us deal with our 'rainy days' yet to come.

John Tilley

Director's 2c

Rain? Not a problem!



"Hey, it stopped for a minute ... hit the hoops!"
We squeezed in a few b-ball games between the raindrops.

Who cares if it's raining outside ...
we're dancing in the new Dining Hall!!



Boys Cabin #11 rocks out to "MTV Day" in NH Hall during the rain

Rainy-day activities are fun because we're all together!



Sue Strebel

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Sue also loves the family-style dinners at Coniston. "The old cafeteria (now New Hampshire Hall) was so small, meals had to be done in shifts. Now we can all eat together, as a Camp."

Staff Loyalty

Sue is not the only one who comes back year after year — her nursing staff has returned with her as well. She also has great respect for Coniston's counselors ... "I first meet so many of them as very young campers when they start out, and now it's great to see them come back as staff, to teach the kids what they learned."

Sue spoke of the importance of her job, and the counselors, as 'surrogate parents.' "We care for their kids in so many ways at Camp ... over the years I've found that parents trust our decisions and take our advice. It makes you feel good to be well-respected and trusted."

Coniston's care for kids can show in subtle ways. "For example," Sue says, "it makes a kid feel secure, if they have allergies, to be able to eat the food that's right for them. We also spend a lot of money on Epi-pen kits to go on hikes and overnights, so the kids can feel safer and more at ease."

NEVER too old...

Even after twenty years of caring for Coniston campers, Sue says she "never feels 'too old for Camp.' I said to JD, 'When I finally get old and crotchety please let me know, because then I'll know it's time to go.'" We can just hear JD's reply ... "Sue, we hope you're not going anywhere anytime soon!"

ANNOUNCING CONISTON'S NEW ONE-WEEK RESIDENT CAMP PROGRAM MONDAY, AUGUST 24 – SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 2009

Due to increasing demand for Coniston's programs over the recent summers, we have designed a new One-Week Resident Camp Program — Monday, August 24th through Saturday, August 29th. This new program is specially designed for boys and girls who have completed 2nd – 7th grade.

Campers will participate in many of Coniston's traditional camp activities such as arts & crafts, boating, swimming and archery, as well as specialized group activities with their counselors each morning. This program is a great introduction for new campers not quite ready for two weeks—and a great add-on for two week campers enrolled in another session, but not quite ready for four weeks. Campers may also choose to pair this week with Adventure Camp.

We have included an application for your convenience. All rules and "fine print" from the 2009 Parent Information Handbook apply to this new session as well. If you have any questions, please contact Lorraine at (603) 863-1160.

Registration is open on a first come, first served basis ... so apply today!

Health Update

A REPORT TO PARENTS

This past summer, during session one, Camp Coniston experienced a health situation which hasn't happened in over twenty years ... a viral infection at Camp.

COMMUNICATION

We communicated with parents via phone and email to notify them of the virus, and to let them know of our decision to delay check-in for Session 2. This extra time gave our staff the opportunity to disinfect the Camp, and to identify the affected people.

THANK YOU PARENTS!

The response we received from Coniston parents was overwhelmingly positive, so much so that we began our email update of July 9th by saying,

"Thank you Session 2 parents — you are fantastic! Numerous kind words and comments on check-in day really boosted our morale, and at this time, the overall health of Camp is excellent and things are back to normal."

Here are some typical responses from the over 200 emails we received at the Camp office:

"Great to receive this update, and just wanted to say we were so impressed with how this was handled."

"Thank you so much for keeping parents up to date and our kids safe. You've done a terrific job with them."

"Thank you so much for handling this situation in the correct manner. (As an RN, I know) it's hard to have to make these tough decisions, but I appreciate the camper's health and welfare were your number-one consideration as always."

Once again, our thanks to all the Coniston kids, counselors, staff and parents who helped us through ... you are the best!

PRESENTING THE

YMCA CAMP
CONISTON

Renovation — OF THE — YEAR

It might seem like it would be pretty hard to get people excited about a building renovation ... really, what's there to get excited about?

But if you stuck your head in the Dining Hall at mealtime this past summer, you'd find more excited people than you could shake a spoon at ... the Dining Hall Renovation is a huge success!

It needed a little work ...

The Dining Hall opened in the summer of 1998, and since then it's gotten tighter and tighter. Everything we looked at to fix it ... expansion, rebuilding, things like that ... were just too expensive.

A new idea ...

Gary Forster, the YMCA camping consultant, visited Camp to analyze the problem. Gary hated the fact that "we had all this stuff out" ... dish racks, refrigerators, the salad bar, just too much equipment. We realized we didn't need more space ... the problem was that the kitchen had 'crept out' into the dining hall!

To solve this we brainstormed a number of plans and decided that, by building out alcoves for dishes and service, and redesigning the traffic flow, we could fix the whole problem.

Some big improvements!

The Dining Hall renovation was just what we were looking for ... a super-efficient fix that solved our problems. We were able to increase the seating space by over one-third, cut cleaning time in half, significantly decrease noise and heat from the machines, and double our storage space ... all by adding only 20% more room!

Now we have more space to eat together, meet together, party together ... and dance to DJ tunes together at dinner ... truly, the Renovation of the Year!



Let the concrete flow! Work under way for the Dining Hall renovations.



An historic moment ... John Tilley with his arm around the very first camper to enter and exit the new 'roundabout'.

The Dining Hall!!

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Camp Coniston's

Afterschool Programs

Director Jane Amey talks about bringing the Coniston Experience to deserving local kids

Jane Amey looks on with a smile as laughing kids run and play around her. "When you see how much need there is in the local community, and how much these kids benefit, you realize what a wonderful thing this is for us to do."

Now in its 11th year, the Coniston Afterschool Program was founded at the request of community leaders from each town. "They came to Coniston," Jane says, "with a real need. Where is a safe, constructive place for kids to go while their parent finishes the workday? What do families do when both parents have to work? That's the need we serve."

Fun and recreation after school

Jane describes Coniston's afterschool program as "a recreation-based program with a neighborhood feel. The message is, 'it's fun and safe for you to play here!'" The program builds in plenty of play activities, but also mixes in arts and crafts, and homework/quiet time.

Six programs, five locations

Camp Coniston supervises 95 kids in six different programs, in Lebanon, West Lebanon, Sunapee,



Now these are some happy kids! Coniston Afterschool Program children at the School Street School in Lebanon, NH

Plainfield and New London, NH, and the programs continue to grow. "We're bursting at the seams in New London, and we are so grateful they recently gave us more room ... we can maintain two programs there now."

The program uses staff from Colby-Sawyer College, as well as paraprofessional classroom aides from local schools. "Our staff is just awesome, totally incredible ... all the training and experience you could want."

Who funds the programs?

The program charges a nominal fee, but Jane mentions with pride that Coniston pays for all other costs, as well as numerous Afterschool scholarships, with funding coming directly from contributions to Camp.

"We strive never to turn a child away, and it's donations to Coniston that let us make this happen," Jane said. "We all want happy, safe kids ... and our parents want the same thing."



Almost 100 local kids say, "Thanks Camp Coniston, for all the fun!"





The

Expect the Unexpected ... and love it!

Rain? Hey, we're OK with rain! Life isn't perfect and neither is the weather ... but at camp, it feels just perfect to us!

At camp we realize that it's FUN to get a little wet, and play games together outside no matter what the weather. When it's too cold or we have thunder, we have cool inside activities like "Murder Mystery," "Mr. & Miss YMCA," "Coniston's Best Dance Crew," "Scramble," "Random Object," and "MTV Night" which has all sorts of group skits and performances with our friends (instead of, for example, sitting in silence in front of the computer or TV!)

At camp we run and play and get to be LOUD! We dance in the dining hall, we sing whenever we want, we laugh all throughout the day, and the rain doesn't stop that. At camp, we can get dirty and no one is judging us on our clothes or appearances, only on the way we treat each other.

Isn't that a great life-lesson that we should all have the privilege of learning?

With an amazing group of Camp Counselors and the leadership of Boys Camp Director John McNair, Girls Camp Director Rachel Foley, Program Directors Gen Izutsu & Zach Friedman, 2008 was an amazing summer for us all. We had cool programs, lots of support through a virus and lots of rain with never-ending positive energy every single day!

Who can forget the fun we had with Robot Wars, Scooby Doo Mystery, Clash of the Civilizations ... and 4th session got a LIVE BAND at the Ice Cream Social that included Will Short, Shane Goodrich, Alex Grip, Evan Glynn and John Tilley. They rocked the pavilion!

Bleach is our Friend ... and we love it!

For the first time in our records, we had a contagious virus at camp that resulted in about 3 hours of sickness, with 6 hours of sleep after. We did our homework, and like other close-knit residential environments that have seen the same



Summer!

virus (such as prep schools and cruise ships) we found out that BLEACH is the answer!

We found out some of the local schools had seen this virus at the end of the school year, and because of snow days, there were very few if any spare days between the end of school and our first check-in day at Camp. The virus joined us 1st session, and with a 48 hour incubation/contagious period, people who did not even know they had it were bringing it into the cabins.

With the commitment of our resident nurses and all of the camp staff, we thought we had conquered the virus with only a few campers coming to the infirmary, but on the final night of Session 1 we had a spike ... and the next morning, we made the first-time-ever decision to delay the next check-in!

All month campers went off-site if possible ... while on-site, all of the staff bleached and wiped down every surface in Camp. What a job... *what a team!*

A place to love to learn

"When I was a kid, I went to camp." There is power in that statement, and that experience. We know that people are stronger because of what they learn at Camp ... living away from home for two whole weeks, with people they've newly met, and truly experiencing nature in the woods.

Camp is a place where we learn how to problem-solve at all ages; we learn how to deal with challenges and are stronger people because of it. We learn to be independent, we develop communication skills, we work together on a team ... and we create new and long-lasting friendships that feel more valuable than anything.

Friendships, both new and old are good for the soul. At Coniston we have fun together across the ages, we rely on each other, we grow up because of each other... and the weather just doesn't change a thing!

See you again in 2009!

JD

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IN MEMORIAM

Harry Wardell

September 27, 1916
— September 7, 2008

Harry Wardell, long-time Executive Director of the New Hampshire YMCA of which Camp Coniston was a branch, died September 7, 2008 in Rockland, Maine.

Harry, along with George Dorr and Doug Reed, was instrumental in moving Coniston from nearby Rand's Pond to its present site in 1964. Camp was very dear to his heart, and his impact on children's lives continues in every person who attends our Camp.



*Harry and Carol Wardell
at Camp Coniston, 2001*

Harry and his wife Carol last visited Camp in 2003, when he was recognized along with George Dorr and Doug Reed with a memorial bench honoring their vision for the future of camp.

His legacy will live on in his family, and in the great opportunities he gave to all Conistonians, past, present & future.



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