



From The Heart

News For The Strong of Heart

Summer 2020

Keeping the Ember Alive

I've been struggling over what to write about for the lead article for a camp newsletter when there is no camp this summer. In some ways, my task is made more difficult because I am living on the empty Songadeewin campus. There are no boats on racks, no shutters raised, no vans in the parking area waiting for trips to leave, no docks in the lake, no rockers on the porches and most depressing of all, no other people sharing this vast space with me. This means not hearing the squeals of happy campers or the reassuring voices of staff, not seeing clusters of campers and staff at the picnic tables in the middle of our Longhouses, no sleepy dippers making their way to the swim area for a morning dip, no singing in the dining hall, and no fires in the center of our circle. It also means no worries about head lice, no crying from homesick campers or staff, no concern that we will run out of French fries at lunch or ice cream at dinner. What's a camp director to do? It turns out there is a lot.

When I made the video to let campers, staff and you know that we were suspending the 2020 season for in-person, live camp, I spoke of several things. There is the immediate sadness and disappointment, and more sadness



that comes later and continues to jump into my mind at random times. I cried during my morning dog walk every day the first week I was here. I believe we must honor these feelings, as well as those of relief for not having to travel or live in very close quarters during a world-wide pandemic. One of the lessons of our tripping program is how to deal with our own and other's strong feelings, how to soothe others and ourselves in the face of adversity, and how to carry on in unpleasant circumstances. We call this perseverance and see it as a personal quality to nurture and cultivate. I know it is something I learned on my trips as a girl at Songa and as a trip leader when I was the director of Annwi.

Another main point I made in the video was the need to "keep the

Building "The Lolly"

We are thrilled to have the newest building at Songadeewin finally complete. The Lolly McPhee Burton Trip Building was finished in July when the new shelving was installed. The building's name has been shortened to "The Lolly" for convenience when telling someone

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ember of camp alive" within us this summer. I remarked that I had needed to keep the Songa ember alive in myself for more than two decades after Songadeewin on Lake Willoughby permanently shut its doors in 1975. It wasn't until many years and much life experience later that I realized that the closing of my beloved camp had felt like a death to me. At first I felt lost, sad, angry and somewhat in denial. That summer I kept my school-year job at my local library and got ready to go to college. It was a great relief to learn that a few staff were going to try to run camp the next summer. I signed up for my second year on staff. But in late spring, just as I was leaving college, news arrived that not enough campers had signed up and there would be no Song-of-the-Wind on Lake Willoughby. I was again deeply disappointed, and a little desperate to find a summer job in mid-May. My mother, who'd come to pick me up, suggested we head to Keewaydin, not far from where we were staying, to see if long-time directors Waboos Hare and Abby



*Slim Curtiss '36, Abby Fenn '39 and
Waboos Hare '23*

Fenn might know of some girls' camps that still needed counselors.

What a brilliant plan that turned out to be! Long story short, I was almost immediately hired to be the camp babysitter and live at Keewaydin Dunmore for the entire summer! A dream come true for this former Keewaydin staff child and Songa camper and staff for nine summers. My job would start immediately, more than a month before any campers would arrive for their summers. After taking me into Middlebury to buy a demure enough swimsuit for working at a boys' camp, my mother left me at Keewaydin. My ember was going to be fanned into flame pretty quickly!



*Ellen Flight '58, hiking with Songadeewin on Lake Willoughby
Left to right: Rachel Gaffney, Ellen Flight, Ted Handy '52, sitting, Mary "Wilbur"
MacCracken, Suzie Wheeler and Dale MacLauchlan*



Pete Oliver '60 and Abby Fenn '39 as papers were signed to create The Keewaydin Foundation

Little did I know that at 19 years old I would have such a front row seat to the inner workings of a summer camp run by some of the most respected camp leaders in the United States. My education in camping started right away. While I spent a lot of time with three young children ages 18 months to six years old, and I spent a lot of time, almost daily, in



Ellen Flight, right, with fellow Wigwam Directors: seated, Owen Gutfreund '73 and standing left, Russ MacDonald '36 and Peter Hare '59

that bathing suit my mom bought me, I also got to spend a lot of time around the camp leaders at meals, and doing various tasks around camp as we opened up for the season.

On Memorial Day weekend, 1977, two long-time campers and staff came to help clean the loft of the Wangan Room. Schuyler Thomson and Pete Oliver had only been names I'd heard from my brother's summers as a camper. That weekend they claimed the loft of the Wangan Room had never been totally emptied or cleaned in the history of the camp. At the time it seemed to be where old canvas tents and tarps went to die – along with mice and bats. While this was my introduction to the Wangan Room I would eventually come to run for nine summers, the really important part of my education came at lunch that day. After the three of us sat down to lunch with Abby Fenn he started to explain to them an idea he had for creating a not-for-profit foundation that would allow Keewaydin Dunmore to live on in perpetuity. What Abby was asking Pete-O and Schuy was if they would help make that happen. Neither of them was 30 years old at the time, but that was one of the embryonic moments in what has become the Keewaydin Foundation. I sat quietly, ears open, silently chewing my sandwich as ideas began to slowly take shape and an ember was lightly fanned into being.

I had a front row seat in how a camp worked as I helped Abby file, while sweeping the office and overhearing Waboos in conversation, and during meals when all manner of topics were discussed. At that time, I was fairly quiet around people I didn't know well, and by staying out of conversations on topics I knew little about, I was able glean a lot of information. While filing has never



Ellen Flight, right, wearing a funny hat at the Saturday Spectacular with Fay Green '09 as they sing at the end of the show. Fay had been imitating Ellen as part of a skit that night.

been that stimulating work, spending time with Abby Fenn was always interesting. In a real sense, I got to see how his mind worked as he carefully considered into which file each scrap of paper or receipt should be placed. There was a bank of more than 20 file drawers and years' worth of papers to be filed. During our few sessions I got to see the many and varied companies a camp had to do business with in order to function. While I might have learned the value of filing one's papers immediately to save time in the future, that was not a lesson I learned then or subsequently.

Spending time with Waboos in and around the office I got to see his keen memory for people and his genuine love of all things camp up close. Many former campers or staff from decades ago would arrive at the office ready for a trip down memory lane. After tentative entry into Waboos' office they would be surprised and delighted to have him remember them, where they came from, or some detail of their years as a camper. Much goodwill and many happy smiles or laughter were the result of such visits. I also got to see

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Waboos' hat collection – hats which he'd wear for boxing nights and at Friday Frolics when he led the camp singing "Keewaydeesi." More than 20 years later, when I was in charge of leading the same song at our Saturday Spectacular, I learned the power of putting on a silly hat. At first I felt self-conscious leading the audience at the start and end of the show. Wearing a silly hat allowed me to be a part of the show and put aside my discomfort.



Ellen Flight, right, with Seth Gibson '67, in her role as president of the Vermont Camp Association, presenting Seth with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019

More than anything, Waboos and Abby showed me in their day-to-day work how rewarding and fulfilling work could be in the field of camping. I had always enjoyed working with children and youth, and as life-long teachers, so did they. The added bonus of camp work over school work is the long-term connections camp leaders gain into the growth and maturation of young people. To meet people at age eight or nine and then be a part of their lives as they become teenagers and then young adults is fascinating to those of us committed to youth

development. Even more so for me, 40 years later, I love seeing these people go on to have children of their own. Not only did I see Waboos and Abby's commitment to Keewaydin and its long-term future, but over the years (I worked at Keewaydin for 19 summers before crossing to the west side of Dunmore) I saw how they contributed to the larger world of camping. Both men were active in their local American Camp Association (ACA) – Waboos with the folks in Eastern Pennsylvania where he was located in the winter and Abby with ACA New England. Abby went on to be President of ACA National in the late 1970s. The connection to colleagues from other camps and regions broadens one's view of camping, makes one aware there is more than a single way to do camp, and fosters connections at times in the year when our camps are quiet. It also allows camp directors to work collectively to make camp experiences for children across the country to be the best possible. It's no wonder that I continue to serve as President of the Vermont Camp Association and worked on the ACA New England Board and faculty member of the New Camp Director's Workshop.

So, what does all this reminiscing have to do with my busy spring and summer here at camp in 2020 with no campers or staff around? And, keeping the ember alive? Part of the busyness of the spring was doing all I could, with Pete Hare and Emily Schoelzel, to figure out if we could safely open the camps for this summer. As for any summer, safety was our first concern as camp directors. With my connections in the larger camping world through the Vermont Camp Association and ACA New England, there were experts in the field to consult and other camp directors to hear from. My 40 years working for

Keewaydin provided me with the deep knowledge of how much camp means to all our campers, families and staff. It also means I know intimately how just a single summer can impact a person's life. These ideas were never far from my mind throughout the spring. I knew deep in my heart what it would mean to "suspend" the season and used this knowledge to guide my part in the decision making. The generational connections to returning campers and staff as well as connections to our newest campers and staff through our interactions leading up to the summer also were a part of my considerations. After agonizing weeks of sorting through all the information we could gather from reliable sources when it came time to decide, Pete, Emily and I were very clear that we needed to skip this summer. And, that we would also need to work together with our leaders, staff and families to stay connected with our campers this summer.

So, like in any good summer, I am being called upon to learn new things and dig back into the archives of my mind to help create meaningful ways for all of us to "keep the ember alive." Songs and routines, special events and more personal connections – all of which happen with ease when we are together – now move to a great distance, but can still happen. The Songa Leadership Team (**Dorothy Mammen '13, Lelia Yerxa '03, Sally Thomas '09, Kempley Bryant '08, Susannah White '03, Abby Newkirk Opar '07, Jenn Hare '99, Lolo Cappio '01 and Laney McGahey '04**) kicked into high gear in the spring, while many were still teaching their students remotely. We began meeting weekly as a way to stay connected and to consider how to navigate these strange times. These meetings were similar to the

regular gatherings we heard campers and staff were having via electronic apps. We were also working on ways to engage with the Songa community this summer. I've learned to make short videos combining song tracks and photographs. I've seen that we can connect via Zoom to play a game or sing a song. None of it is as good as being at camp and doing the same things, but it can work in the short run.

Since the start of the pandemic, my camp connections have made all the difference in how I have kept the ember alive in me. Through all of this strange time I've relied on my camp friendships, appreciated the ever changing natural world around me, and stayed committed to the idea of staying Strong of Heart for myself, my local community and the larger world.

~ by Ellen Flight '58
Songedeewin Director



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where to take something or where to head to pack a trip out or in. The new building replaces, on the same footprint, the building we used to refer to as The Wangan Room. Just as the previous building contained all the supplies and equipment needed for trips, this new building also has a trip planning room which is separate from the trip packing areas. It contains the bathrooms for the staff living area referred to as "The Outback." This living area may need a name change because a new feature of The Lolly is that it's been turned 180 degrees so the action of trip packing will no longer happen on the road. So, the back of the building now faces the road and the porch is on the side



The Old Wangan Room building as seen from Rustic Lane

facing the campus and the Outback staff tents. Some tent platforms have been moved to provide plenty of room under the trees for spreading out while packing out or packing in trips. Like many of our other newer camp buildings the external design features allow The Lolly to blend in and some people have passed by without realizing it's totally new. That perception changes completely once one enters the building.



The new Lolly McPhee Burton Trip Planning building as seen from Rustic Lane, to be called "The Lolly."

The previous building was made up of four parts – a central one and one-half story room, a long back section that must have been added to include the bathrooms and later our three bay wallowing sink, and two additional rooms that were added to either end. These were added right on top of the existing roof lines so one could see the old roof shingles while inside. The space was cramped and challenging to move around once stocked with food and equipment and had poor air ventilation. Over the years the building had been attacked by carpenter ants, and one summer was literally eaten into by squirrels. It had become increasing clear that a more solid and user friendly building was needed for a major component of our camp program.

With the need for replacement clear, we assembled a group to help design a new structure. Nancy Margolin '65, who has been running the

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Wangan room since 2013, Lelia Yerxa '03, Head of Tripping, and camp director Ellen Flight '58 first assessed the needs. We then put our heads together with Victoria Gutfreund '89, an interior designer who has helped plan multiple buildings at both Songadeewin and Keewaydin. Due to new laws in Vermont the building needed to be on the same footprint since it lies within 200 feet of the shoreline. Once there were initial drawings, other staff were consulted and refinements were made. Then it was time to raise the money for the building and consult with an outside agency to be sure the design was acceptable.

Lauren Geiger '14, then director of development for Keewaydin, found an interested donor in Laurie Burton Graham '64. Laurie, like her mother Lolly, had attended Songadeewin

on Lake Willoughby. She is also the aunt and mother to multiple Songa campers from the first three seasons (and beyond) of Songa on Dunmore. A multi-constituent approach was planned and implemented, spearheaded by Laurie with eager support of her three brothers and other family members. When Mary Welz '19, Keewaydin's current director of development arrived, she continued to support the fund raising efforts. Three generations of the McPhee Burton family pledged donations as well as multiple friends and fans of Lolly. It is a huge tribute to Lolly and the woman she was that more than 83 families and individuals contributed to make The Lolly possible. The warmth and connection others felt from Lolly throughout her lifetime make their contributions a tribute to her generosity of spirit and loving nature.

At the end of last summer, Nancy and the post-season work crew moved everything possible out of the old



The Walloping Porch and main entrance to The Lolly

building. Food that would be good in 2020 was moved; all tents and other tripping equipment and odds and ends went into the East Cottage and the main area downstairs in the Health Center. Next the plumbing, sinks, toilets and lighting that could be re-used were removed by our maintenance crew and then stored. Finally, the excavator arrived to pull the building down and prepare the site for the build which would begin in January 2020 after the "slab on grade" made of concrete was poured before first frost.

The go-ahead to build the structure began in earnest in the winter with Eric Foster in charge of the crew. Foster's Frame to Finish has worked with us many times, most recently at the Songa campus, building the Arts Village. The crew made good progress framing the building, getting the trusses up, and enclosing the building. Then the pandemic arrived and everyone except essential workers were ordered to stay home. Building came to a screeching halt for many weeks. When the building trades were again allowed to work on outdoor projects Eric and his small crew were able to get back to work. It was not too long afterwards that we decided to suspend camp for the summer, which meant the trip program was not impacted by the delays.



The new "back" of The Lolly which is now where most of the activity of the building will take place

The week of June 28 the shelving was finally installed, the bathrooms were completed and locks were added to the doors. During the week of July 13, local staff and some older campers who live locally came to campus to help move all the gear and equipment into our lovely new trip building. Food that was kept over the winter will be sorted. The food that will expire before 2021 will be donated to our local food shelf.

Dedication in 2021

We look forward to being back on campus with everyone for the summer of 2021 when we'll really get to enjoy the new building and see how it improves the tripping experiences of packing out and packing in. In August 2021, when alumni from both camps can gather after the season, we'll dedicate the building. We look forward to welcoming members of Lolly's family back to Lake Dunmore to help us celebrate. If you'd like to join us, please do!



2020 Songa Theme

As many of you know, we have had a theme for the summer each summer since 2002. Although we are having a "skipped summer" this year, we still have a theme and a theme t-shirt. In late June we sent all registered campers and staff their theme shirt along with other materials to help them stay engaged with us this summer. The theme this year is "Songa is Not Where We Are; Songa is Who We Are. Keeping the Ember

Alive." The Leadership Team, which creates the theme each summer, introduced our theme in the first Sunday Circle of the season. Here are the reflections of Assistant Director **Dorothy Mammen '13**, Longhouse Leader for Wabasso **Susannah White '03**, and Longhouse Leader for Nawaiwan **Jenn Hare '99**.

Dorothy Mammen



Dorothy Mammen '13, left, with Nancy Margolin '65

Good morning. I'm Dorothy Mammen, the Assistant Director at Songadeewin. I live in Middlebury, Vermont, not far from Lake Dunmore. In fact, you can see Moosalamoo from my house, in the background behind me here. Camp is so near ... and yet, this summer, so far. I can't tell you how odd it feels to be recording a Sunday Circle reflection from home, rather than giving it live, where I'm able to look into all your faces. Maybe some of you would be squinting in the sun, and maybe some of you would be fidgeting, eager to get this year's theme shirt and go for a swim. I'm so sad that we have to skip this summer at camp together, that

we can't canoe, swim, sail, sew, play, sing, eat our meals together, and go on trips.

But at the same time, I feel a great joy, imagining all of you out in the world this summer, being yourselves, being Songadeewin wherever you are. It's like this summer, Songadeewin is all over the world. And that is this year's theme: Songa is not WHERE we are, Songa is WHO we are.

I've been thinking about what Songa means to me. I miss camp; but dig deeper, what do I miss? And dig deeper still, why do I miss what I miss? What does a Songa summer kindle in me? What does a Songa summer stimulate, touch and develop in me? The courage to step outside my comfort zone, the opportunity to practice using my voice, the pleasure of helping the other fellow, the awareness of our interconnection, the warmth of practicing kindness, the joy of just plain having fun!

Then it hit me. Every year at the end of camp, I take all that courage, awareness, warmth, fun, and love, home with me. This is always true, but it's especially important to realize this year, when we aren't able to come together. All that is Songa is inside us, wherever we are, and we can exercise our courage, use our voice, build on our interconnection, find joy in being kind and helping others. I hope you will keep this in mind all summer, and when you miss Songa, that you will think about what you miss, find that inside yourself, and blow on that ember a little. You can keep Songa alive!

Susannah White



Susannah White '03

At Songa, we have so many songs that ground us in our sense of place. We sing about our life beneath the blue skies and lofty mountains; we sing about waking up where the birch and the maple grow; we sing about sitting 'round the campfire; and, when we sing about the upward trail, we maintain that “nothing compare to the lakes and the trees and the air”.

This, of course, makes perfect sense. Our home in Vermont is the home we have always shared together. It's where our memories are made and our friendships are forged. It's what we see when we close our eyes and dream of camp.

There is one song, though, that has been on my mind lately, because it's about something a little different. It's called The Echo, and it comes from the original Songadeewin. These are the words:

The echo is calling me back to thee, my Willoughby, my summer home
It's bringing the singing of friendship fire beside the light of campfires glow
I still remember the glowing ember
Beaming on the hillside faintly in the night
The warm wind at twilight
Is whispering of Songadeewin evermore
The echo is calling me back

In how this song is written, you get the sense that the girl or woman who wrote it was somewhere faraway, perhaps many years removed from her time at camp. She's reflecting about what Songa means to her, and you can tell that she is longing for it. I relate to that right now, as I'm sure many of you do, too.

An echo is a sound that is repeated or reverberated after its original sound has stopped. Much like the writer of this song, I have been thinking lately about the ways Songa repeats and reverberates in me when I'm far away from camp...when I'm not under blue skies, lofty mountains, or the shelter of a maple tree. Today, I'll share just one example of an echo that I've been turning over in my mind, in the hopes that it might help you to discover some echoes of your own.

I've been thinking about a younger me...the girl who learned to paddle for hours through fierce headwinds. Many of you will have had this same experience, certainly out on trip and perhaps even on Dunmore: you are paddling with all of your physical strength as your boat moves up and down with each wave. It might even be raining as you go, making the grip of your paddle slippery. Regardless of the weather, you're probably wet as the water splashes up and into your

boat. Every now and then, you allow yourself to glimpse the spot on the horizon where you know you'll be able to rest, but it never seems to get any closer. For every mile you paddle, it seems the wind sets you back another two. All you can do is keep paddling—one stroke, then another. Fighting through headwinds is an act of faith, really, and an act of will.

Importantly, it's also an act of solidarity. Whether you're in bow or stern, your boat partner needs you just as much as you need her. There is an unspoken understanding between boat partners that it's impossible to make it through headwinds alone. I've had boat partners with whom I've sang loudly—through headwinds almost screaming at the sky. I've had boat partners with whom I've cried through headwinds. I've had boat partners with whom I've even sang-cried through headwinds. Sometimes all you can do to get through the headwinds together is to count each stroke as it passes in unison: one-two-three-one-two-three....Very often, I found that headwinds were a moment for an agreed upon silence between boat partners. Sometimes words just aren't what's needed. Sometimes you just need to move through the winds knowing that you are not alone, and that at some point, the winds will shift and things will be better.

So I've been thinking about that girl, who learned to paddle in headwinds. Who learned to sit with the discomfort and uncertainty of things beyond her control, and who learned that she doesn't need to do things alone. As we have each faced unpredictable and unprecedented change and discomfort this year—as we face a summer without camp—I've heard so many echoes like these; they're echoes that call me back to the parts of myself that I carry with me wherever I go.

Today, I invite you to think about what echoes you are hearing from Songadeewin while we spend this summer apart, and how Songa repeats and reverberates inside of you, no matter where you are.

Jenn Hare



Jenn Hare '99

Our theme this summer is Songa Isn't Where We Are, It's Who We Are, and I'm going to come back to that in a moment. But I want to start this Sunday Circle reflection by acknowledging that this summer I,

like many of you, feel overwhelmed by what I'm missing. We missed the end of school—many of you missed graduations and birthday parties. We're missing our friends. We are seeing and experiencing all of the justice that's missing from the world. And as of this week, we're missing camp. We're missing the sound of the gong; we're missing splashing into the lake for free swim. We're missing the dining hall getting louder and louder as we fill it with song after dinner. We're missing the nights walking back to our cabins and tents from the Spectacular, when we can see a sky full of hundreds of stars.

It's a lot to miss! With all of those missing pieces, it's easy to feel alone. So what can we do, this summer, to feel less isolated?

I want to share with you words from two women which have helped me answer that question. This spring, as I stayed inside alone each day in my apartment in Philadelphia, I read a book called *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Dr. Kimmerer is a botanist and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She writes about how, as a botanist, she learns the names of every plant, and sees them not just as beings to study, but as her family. "Most people," she writes, "don't know the names of these relatives, in fact they hardly even see them. Names are the way we humans build relationship, not only with each other but with the living world. I'm trying to imagine what it would be like going through life not knowing the names of the plants and animals around you...Philosophers call this state of isolation 'species loneliness'—a deep, unnamed sadness stemming from estrangements from the rest of Creation, from the loss of relationship. As our human dominance of the world has grown, we have become

more isolated, lonelier when we can no longer call out to our neighbors."

With these words, Dr. Kimmerer reminded me that our network of relatives and companions is much wider than we think it is. So this spring, in the middle of the city, I started to pay more attention to and learn more about some of my plant and animal neighbors. I ate dinner at the window, watching starlings circle the sky and perch on buildings across the street. I carefully watched the big tree between those buildings grow greener everyday—I'm still trying to find its name. I took slow walks and noticed sparrows, chickadees, mourning doves, squirrels, and then the crocuses, daffodils, irises, and peonies that bloomed in my neighbors' gardens. I found a robin's nest in a cherry tree in a park close to me—and went back often to check on it until the babies hatched. How could I feel alone? All around me were other beings sharing my world. I thought of the candlelight reading—my help is in the mountain—and realized I didn't have to be by the mountain to be near nature. Even in a dense urban setting, I could sit and spend time with plants and animals that soothed my soul and brought joy to my heart. I'm so grateful for these friends.

The other words that are giving me comfort right now were spoken by a woman in my teachers' union named Kathleen Melville. This winter, she ran for president of our union and lost - I had worked to try to help get her elected. In her speech after the election, she said that running the campaign and then facing this loss was the hardest thing she'd ever done. But then she said, "This union is my family. And because we have a family,

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we can do hard things.” What struck me about this was that she wasn’t saying having family made hard things go away, but that with a family, doing hard things is possible. With a family, we are not individuals facing the world alone. When we announced we were skipping this summer of camp, I thought of these words, because, of course, Songa is my family. And distance does not keep our family apart. So together, we can get through a summer of physical separation. We can take action in our communities against racial injustice. We can adapt to the difficult changes of a pandemic world. Because we have a family, we can do hard things.

So this summer, as you think about what you miss, also think about what you have. No matter where you live, you have birds flying by outside your window, sharing the joy of flying with you. You have trees and plants nearby, showing us how to thrive and grow in any circumstances. And you have Songa sisters, scattered throughout the world like constellations in the sky, each with the bright light of Songadeewin in her heart.

Songa isn’t where we are, it’s who we are. And who we are is a family.



TIME TO GET SOME SONGA SWAG!

Looking for a Songa T-Shirt? How about a bucket hat, or a sweat shirt, or quarter zip? Maybe a Songa knit cap! It’s time to go shopping at the Keewaydin Store! There’s so much you can find there! Go to our website (www.keewaydin.org) and look for the “Camp Store.”



Songa Bucket Hat



Songa Pom Pom Cap



Songa Quarter Zip

Visit our website at www.keewaydin.org and click on Camp Store! Or click [here!](#)





Writing A New Camp Song



Writing a new song for camp has become something of a tradition at Songadeewin. Back when I was a camper on Lake Willoughby each summer the Green and the White teams wrote a new song for the Songa Contest. I loved that tradition and was always very excited to hear the new songs each summer. I also paid attention to which songs came to be sung and embraced by campers. When we reopened Songa on Lake Dunmore I wanted to make song writing a part of the experience. Today at camp there are several ways new camp songs are introduced. On a formal basis, each Old Timer's group is charged with writing a new camp song that they present for the first time on Old Timer's Day in the dining hall. This has produced two new songs each summer. Likewise, each Verendrye trip writes a song



that we first hear at the annual banquet. In addition, sometimes trips return with a new song which occasionally have been added to the Songbook. This is the case of the favorites *"Walloping in the*

Dark." and *"Hey There Songa."* And then there are the songs that have been written for our anniversary years: *"Songadeewin's Turning Ten"* (Jenn Hare), *"Sisters Fond"* (Ellen Flight for year 15), *"The Place I Can Be Me"* (Jenn Hare for year 20) and *"Dark Green Canoes"* (Ellen Flight for year 20). Note: the latter I wrote to show that a "short, peppy tune" could be used to write a good camp song because most previous songs, in all categories, have been long multi-verse stories of Songadeewin, and occasionally you just want to sing something shorter.

So, how does one go about writing a new camp song? As you just learned, I've written two and helped with writing the first Old



Song

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Timers Song – “A Summer Up at Songa” (tune: “A Spoonful of Sugar”). The first and most critical step is choosing a sing-able tune. This can be a mistake some make, especially if there is a bridge or critical key change involved. There are some great tunes which are easy to sing along with when the expert artist is warbling away, but they don’t always translate into good group singing songs. So, for my song writing I first think of tunes I love and have easily sung with others. For “Sisters Fond” I used the hymn “In the Bleak Midwinter,” the title being an ironic one for a summer camp song. But, this tune always stuck with me after we had sung it in church each December. For “Dark Green Canoes” I returned to a “car song” my family and I sang “White Choral Bells.” What I liked about this one was that it could be sung as a round. Rounds are really fun to sing with large groups – thus good candidates for a camp song.



This summer I am working on a new camp song to a tune called “Hyfrydol” which is a Welsh Hymn Tune by Rowland Prichard. It first appeared in a songbook for children in 1844. The name means “cheerful.”

One measure of its sing-ability is that it has been arranged by multiple musicians and has been used for hymns in many languages and across many faith traditions. But that alone is not why I chose it. I remember the first time I was aware of hearing it when a singer using a guitar introduced “Blue Boat Home” to my congregation. This version of the tune was arranged by Peter Mayer in 2002 and I immediately thought that someday it might make a good song for camp. That someday is now.

After choosing the tune then it’s time for the words! This is perhaps the most challenging part. What’s my message, what do I want to invoke in the singers and those who listen to this song? For me, I need to have these questions answered and the tune needs time to rumble around in my head for a while. While writing “Sisters



Fond” part of my thinking was that we needed one more song to use at the beginning of The Candlelight Ceremony at the end of each session. So, I wanted something that reflected what Songa means to us when we are not at camp and how our connection to one another is so deep. When working on “Sisters Fond” the words for the first verse came to me halfway through a morning dog walk. I was the furthest distance from home without paper or pencil. I had to sing that verse over and over in my head hoping I wouldn’t run into any of my dog walking friends who might interrupt me and make me forget the words. The rest of the song came within a day or two.

At the time I was taking guitar lessons and practiced and tried words for a few days. Before officially unveiling the song I had the chance to share it with a few Songa staff who had stopped by for a visit. Mandy Paulson ’12 made a critical suggestion which helped finalize the song. I think that visit was when I realized the song should be called “Sisters Fond”.

SISTERS FOND

Each summer we have gathered on Lake Dunmore's shore,
Making our great friendships, to last forever more.
Living, tripping, playing in the great outdoors,
Happy with each other, nothing to yearn for.

Lessons here for learning, make us Strong of Heart,
We pitch in to help and learn to do our part.
Laughing, sharing, being, this has been our way,
Songa is our home where we long to be each day.

When the season's over, and we we're on our way,
Lessons about living in our hearts will stay.
We have stood together with our sisters fond,
Songa is our shelter, camp has been our bond.



DARK GREEN CANOES

Dark green canoes upon a Vermont lake,
Girls becoming Strong of Heart, what does it take?
Friendships so deep and loving guidance, do,
Trips, the arts, activities, and nature, too.

With the 20-year Round – “*Dark Green Canoes*” – fewer words were needed, which in itself was a bit of a challenge. What was the overall concept to be conveyed and how to do it in four lines? In this instance, I wanted the focus to be on our canoeing and the main pillars of our program: tripping, in-camp activities, artistic expression and living closely with nature.

In addition, the guidance from our staff and the friendships also contribute to everyone being Strong of Heart.



Song

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This brings us to my song for 2020. I've listened to various versions of the tune on YouTube to get in my head. And I printed out the words of one version so I would see how the words fit a line and verse. Now I'm letting it rumble around in my mind. One morning I woke up around five a.m. and a few lines had come to me. I jumped up to write them down. That happened again a few mornings later, too. Then more than a week later, while walking my dog Koko, I realized that the theme for this song should reflect the tag line of our 2020 theme: *Keeping the Ember Alive*.

I imagine inspiration will continue to come in fits and starts and I hope to have a finished song by the end of the summer. This time I will be working with Kate Gridley '19 to lay down the musical tracks so we can teach it from a distance. This will also allow me to teach not only the melody or soprano line, but also include the alto line. There have always been campers and staff who are natural altos and struggle with some of our higher pitched tunes. With an alto line taught from the beginning the song will be more inclusive and will have a richer sound. So, stay tuned, a new camp song is in the offing.



Force of Nature

This fall as we prepared for publishing *The Northwest Wind* we sent out a challenge to some of our alumnae to reflect on the idea of the force of nature. We challenged them in part with the following words:

The term force of nature can conjure visions of violent storms and extreme weather, fire and earthquakes. However, when one steps to the edge of the Grand Canyon she experiences a different kind of force of nature. The gentler force of dripping or meandering water that can carve vast chasms in the earth such as the one which created the Grand Canyon. It's similar to the gentle yet constant lapping of waves at the seashore or steady flow of a river which create round smooth stones. It is these gentler, but steady and strong forces of nature which are harnessed by our programs to help young and old alike grow and develop as people with strong core of values and self-confidence to take on the larger world. And, like the lapping waves or the drip of water it is our hope that they will make a difference wherever they go next.

Veronica Salmeron '02 responded with the following essay:

In 2001, at the young age of 11, I was awarded a scholarship to attend Songadeewin of Keewaydin in the state of Vermont through The Michael Eisner Foundation. At first, my parents were skeptical about the idea of me being away for a month in a state they knew nothing of and to be supervised by people they didn't know. After meeting with Michael and Jane Eisner and their sons, and hearing their personal camp stories and experiences, my parents became convinced that this was a great opportunity for me to step out of my comfort zone and experience life outside of Los Angeles. They agreed to let me go.

My first year as a camper was very interesting to say the least. In comparison to Los Angeles, Vermont seemed like a completely different world. Adjusting was a challenge for me. The tall buildings, noisy cars and busy freeways that I was so accustomed to were now all replaced by thousands of trees, annoying mosquitos and calm lakes. Aside from the environment, I had to adjust to the fact that I was considered a minority in the camp. This added some insecurities and made me feel out of place. I wasn't sure I would fit in or if I was worthy



Veronica leading a canoe trip in 2014

of this opportunity. But as the days went on and I began to make friends from different walks of life, the insecurities I once felt started to disappear. And, once I embraced my cultural differences, I saw my potential and grew strong in the belief that I belonged. I saw I was just as worthy of this experience as anyone else. As my summer as a camper came to an end, I realized the importance and power that being different can hold. I could go home with a sense of confidence and belonging. I returned to be a camper for a total of four summers.

In 2011, I began my journey as a staff member. My life as a camper had such an impact on me that I knew I had to give something back. Being able to experience and learn what it takes to run a camp as special as Songa inspired me to do my best to provide as great an experience as I had had as a camper. After staff training, and once campers began to arrive, I realized that there were a handful of first time campers that were in the same position I had once been in as a camper. It was their first time being far away from home and away from the norms of their community and life. I quickly took them under my wing and helped guide them out of being homesick and then encouraged them to step out of their comfort zones. I helped them to try things they never knew existed. I saw these young girls begin to embrace their differences, see the potential in themselves, and flourish into confident young women. I saw myself in them.

The experience I had as a camper and staff helped me to realize that I could bring what I learned at Songa home to my own community, and possibly help others discover their potential. In 2014, I began my career with the Los Angeles County Probation Department, working with troubled



Veronica portaging in 2014 as part of Trip School training

youth. Granted, it's nothing like Songa, but the fear and insecurities I once saw in myself I see in many of the youth I work with today. As difficult and challenging as it might be, I try to encourage them to step out of their comfort zone and try something they never imagined themselves doing. Some may believe it's a waste of time, but my hope is that one day I can inspire even one of the youth to see

the potential in themselves to make better choices.

My experiences at Songa have fostered a force and strength within me, and I carry this through my life. It has helped me see the potential not only in myself, but in other people. It is this personal force of nature that continues to drive me to help troubled youth in my community in hopes to make a difference in their lives and our communities.



Veronica Salmeron was a camper for four years and then returned to be on the Songa staff in 2011 and 2012. She has worked with the Los Angeles County Probation Department as a Deputy Probation Officer since 2014. Veronica attended Cal State Northridge and graduated with a B.A. in Sociology with a focus on criminal justice. She began assisting the Eisner Foundation in 2018. Her hometown is San Fernando, California, located in the San Fernando Valley.



Veronica chaperoning campers to Songa in 2019 with l to r: Chelsea Morales '16, Karen Gaspar '17, Dee Lopez '18, Veronica Salmeron, Luciana Francisco Loya '19, Nataly Perez '18 and Mavi Martinez '19

~ NEW AND NOW ~

While looking for photos, I came across these pictures of the Harter Lodge and Grandmothers Garden when they were new. Enjoy these photos showing how things can change in a few short years. You can clearly see how well all our plantings have done in the 2020 photos.



Fraser Dining Hall before the Harter Lodge and Grandmothers Garden were created



Brand new Grandmothers Garden, 2014



Grandmothers Garden after fresh weeding, 2020



Harter Lodge with new plantings out front, 2014



Harter Lodge, 2020



Looking west to Harter Lodge, Grandmothers Garden and Fraser Dining Hall, 2020

Please join us in 2021 for the dedication of
THE LOLLY MCPHEE BURTON TRIP BUILDING
Saturday, August 28

Join us and Lolly's family to dedicate "The Lolly" at alumni reunion in 2021!



Lolly (in white kerchief)
and friends around the
campfire at the Cove on
Lake Willoughby

Lolly McPhee
Burton '37, center in
red with granddaughters
and grandnieces, L to R,
Kathy Burton '01, Emily
Burton '01, Margaret
Bastidas '04, Lolly,
Katie Burton '99, Laura
Graham '01 and Grace
Burton '99 at Songa
during a midseason visit



◀ THE KEEWAYDIN ANNUAL FUND ▶

Closing camp this summer due to COVID-19 has resulted in unprecedented financial losses.

We need the support of all Keewaydin alumni, families and friends
to help us stay strong to do what we do best:
provide life-changing camping experiences for kids!

Now more than ever we need you to “Help the Other Fellow!”



Please be as generous as you can in supporting
the 2020* Annual Fund! Thank You.

Keewaydin.org/give

*fiscal year ending October 31, 2020