

From The Heart

News for the Strong of Heart

Fall/Winter 2024

From the Director

Dear Songadeewin campers and families,

Greetings from Vermont! I write to vou on a cool, rainy autumn day. It's hard to believe that summer has come and gone! Outside, birches, maples, and oaks are ablaze in ambers, reds, and yellows and up on the highest section of Moos the silhouettes of the tallest pines are etched in a silvery, white frost each morning. The changing seasons remind us to savor each chapter of time, each summer at Songa, when our campers form deep friendships, stretch their minds and bodies. grow stronger and more resilient, find their voices, and practice being "strong of heart."

Summer 2024 at Songadeewin was many things, including the *summer of pickleball*, drawing huge turnouts for pickup games during free time and lots of learning and fun from experienced racquet sports players





and new players alike! After dinner, *boats out* became a favorite time of day for many eager Songa girls who made a habit of dashing into the groves to get their PFDs and paddles so they could make the most of this special time on the water. There they played, worked on their strokes, practiced singling, found their balance and strength, meandered on paddleboards, and worked on their rolls in kayaks.

This summer also marked the first-ever *Flight of the Loon* singling canoeing competition, held during the final week of camp. Motivated by the desire to reconnect with Keewaydin's tradition of form canoeing showcased in the *Tallman* competition, Songa staff Meredith Blanchard and Gabby Begelieter teamed up to dream up something that could inspire Songa campers to learn to single and have fun while doing so. All summer, girls sought out our smallest fleet of wood canvas canoes to work

Listen

A poem by **Carmen Epstein '99**, read at Sunday circle

listen.

not to the ringing or the pinging or the dinging of your phone but to the sound of our own breath and the beating of your heart.

listen.

not to the haters and the frowners Debbie Downers people who aren't feeding you what you need to grow people you don't care to know what makes your heart beat the way it does.

those people are also learning yearning to belong they might just get it wrong but you can offer them both grace and distance.

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Songadeewin of Keewaydin 500 Rustic Lane Salisbury, VT 05769

Tel 802 352 9860 Fax 802 352 4772

Lauren McDowell Camp Director

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lauren@keewaydin.org www.keewaydin.org

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on their skills; we often heard Meredith say at Morning Circle, "Come to Canoeing! If you can stern, you can single!" {See photo of the winners of the first-ever Flight of the Loon competition}

Songa's canoe Bok B trips were a great success in 2024. Small groups of brave 10 YOUR trippers and staff ventured into the natural world, lived and worked as a part of a team, took risks, learned new skills, and returned a bit different: grateful, grounded, having learned that they are capable of doing hard things and staying mentally strong. There is no doubt that canoe tripping and the growth that comes from such an immersive, interconnected, and challenging experience—is at the heart of Songa. Our 15 seniors ventured forth into Verendrye Wildlife Refuge where they paddled, portaged, and navigated for 17 days.

They returned to camp during a particularly dramatic and blustery afternoon, with winds approaching 40 miles per hour and whitecaps on the lake, it was impossible to have a traditional paddle in; instead,

the 2024 Verendrye "paddle in" took place in the dining hall!

Summer 2024 marked the return of several longtime Songadeewin staff who we were thrilled to welcome back to camp! Gretchen Herb flew in from her home in Taiwan to lead Nawaiwan

as Grove Director. First month, Mandy Paulson wowed us both on the stage and behind the curtain returning as a General Staff and Head of Drama, along with her husband Peter Wright and their two children, Ellis and Amelia. Second month, Gabby Ramseyer ran all things programming as Program Director; she was joined by her husband Ben, and their daughters, Quinn and Elsie. Ana Anfruns returned as a General





Staff in Willoughby, diving right back in with a 10-day trip to Temagami. What a privilege it is to be able to welcome these talented women back to camp as role models for our campers, staff, and community.

In other news and notables from the summer, Lelia Yerxa completed her twentieth summer on staff at Songadeewin, receiving a gorgeous canoe in honor of her service to our community. [see photo of Lelia and her family on page 11] Thank you for your dedication to Songa, Lelia!

Thanks to each of you for all that you bring to our camp community. As we head toward winter, with the light and warmth waning in northern climates, I invite you to listen to your heart and listen with your heart, in keeping with our theme at camp this summer (see article on page 7 and Carmen Epstein's poem starting on page 1).

In closing, I would like to share a quote which I shared with this year's Willoughby seniors the night before they left for their Verendrye adventure. Written by Vaclav Havel, a playwright and humanitarian during an incredibly hard time, the writing is about *hope*: The kind of hope I think about ... I understand above all as a state of mind, not as a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul...

It is an orientation of the spirit, and orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons. ... Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for success, but rather, an ability to work for something because it is good.

There is no doubt that the work we are doing at Songadeewin and Keewaydin is good; indeed, creating the magic of camp and watching children learn, grow, and thrive inspires me everyday. I hope to see you on Lake Dunmore soon!

With Songa Spirit,



Listen continued from page 1



negativity can be toxic and insistent. try to leave some space. maybe listen from afar.

we make choices every day no matter who we are and in some small and simple way each choice grows to be more than what it seems.

we can choose to trust choose to care, loving is a must and if you share your feelings you might find it is a gift.

your positivity might lift those around you, it seems outrageous but positivity is contagious, just listen to a laugh choose to listen to the things that serve you don't be tempted by the things that bring you down you are strong you are loving and able think of all the things you are bringing to the table.

we haven't had a lot of practice in our culture but it's never too late to start you can choose to listen to the breeze, trees, listen to all the things in and around you starting with your own heart.

Remembering Aline Harter — Songadeewin on Lake Willoughby, 1946 - 1975

by Ellen Flight '58

Aline Harter, former camp director and Songadeewin matriarch, passed away peacefully on April 26, 2024 at the age of 100. Aline spent the last 24 years of her life living on Lake Willoughby, home of the original Songadeewin camp. Aline lived a full and rich life; she taught, mentored, and inspired many in our community. The following is a reflection from Ellen Flight, sharing her memories of Aline's life and spirit.

I feel fortunate to have been a part of the celebration of life for Aline Harter held last summer, on August 31st, at her home on Lake Willoughby. Aline died peacefully last spring at the age of 100, surrounded by her family. Friends and family gathered to remember Aline, to take in and reminisce around the many photo albums and scrapbooks Aline had created, and to be with one another. Through the wind-whipped rain, the old "camp upon a hill" could be seen across Lake Willoughby from where people gathered.

Aline spent more than 30 summers at Songadeewin on Willoughby, starting shortly after her marriage to her beloved husband, Jack Harter. Jack's parents, known as Doc and Ellie Harter (though Ellie was almost always referred to as "Mrs. Harter"), ran Songadeewin when Aline first arrived to camp in 1946. As she raised her children at Songa, periodically sending a son



Jack, Aline, Ellie and Doc Harter at Songa on Lake Willoughby

off to Keewaydin Dunmore and Keewaydin Temagami, she slowly began to learn the "behind the scene" and off-season parts of the job of running a summer camp. Doc was her first mentor and then Mrs. Harter began to help her learn the jobs of being the leader of the camp's ceremonies, particularly at The Four Winds and Candlelight ceremonies.

For me, it's funny to realize that when I arrived at Songa in 1967, Aline was in only her second year as Ogimakwe, the name given to the leader of the Songa ceremonies at that time. To me she was the consummate camp director and I would never have guessed she was "new" to that role. Later, when I was director of Songa on Dunmore, while leading both the Four Winds and Candlelight ceremonies, it was Aline's voice that echoed in my head as I repeated some of the same lines from each iconic ceremony. I can still hear her saying "Gladly do we accept thy torch and add it to our Friendship Fire," as part of Four Winds, or asking the staff to come forward to light their candles and to then pass along the light that represents the spirit of Songadeewin to their campers.

My first memory of Aline, after receiving mail from her all spring

in preparation for camp, was her coming out of the front door of the office at the imposing Fox Hall on my first day at camp. I had carefully worn my dark green shorts and white shirt, along with brand new brown and white saddle shoes, to feel the part of a Songa camper that day. (It wasn't until later that week that I realized we only wore "greens and whites" to dinner on Wednesday and Saturday nights.) If my recollection is correct, Aline also had on her greens and whites. but I am absolutely sure that she wore a huge, welcoming smile on her face that instantly made me feel welcome and a part of Songadeewin.

As a camper, I remember attending nature during busy hours in the 1960's with Aline. She seemed to know every plant and tree on the sprawling campus and shared her love of cultivating flowers. I remember going on a "fern walk" with her where she showed us how to identify more than a dozen different ferns. To this day when walking through any woods in New England

I can spot Sensitive, Braken, Christmas Tree, Interrupted, Hay-Scented and other distinct ferns I learned the names of as a



camper. Another project I remember doing with Aline was creating a large terrarium with plants from the surrounding forest floor. We started from scratch, painting a large metal container, installing glass sides, layering stones, dirt, duff, and finally the woodland plants. It was beautiful!



Ellen Flight introducing Aline at the dedication of the Harter Lodge, Lake Dunmore

As I look back now, I realize that I learned two essential lessons from Aline's leadership which enhanced my time as Songa's director: how to initially greet campers and staff and the importance of knowing their names, and the importance of creating ongoing positive relationships with local people who support the work of the camp. I think in both cases Aline's way of leading began by showing respect for each person as the starting point. A living example of this was the number of loyal friends from the Willoughby area who had worked at Songadeewin and who were present at the August celebration of life for Aline.

I will end this remembrance of Aline with a quote from an article about her life at Songadeewin which appeared in an earlier edition of <u>From the Heart</u>:

At the end of her memoir, Aline recalls singing the familiar song "Tall Girls, Short Girls," with a former staff, especially the final lines, "Answer the ever alluring call, come to Songadeewin the best of all." She writes; "And that is just what I did, I answered the call, I came to Songadeewin, the best camp of all. My beloved Prince Charming magically transported me to a hilltop in Vermont where a piece of his heart always dwelt. It charms me, warms me, delights me to picture Harter with a long paddle, in the stern of a green canoe, gliding upon a still lake that rests between two mountains where the Four Winds blow and where forever that hilltop camp lives on in my heart." We can all be thankful for the wonderful job Aline did keeping and making our camp what it was for a generation of camp girls. Thank you, Aline!



Aline Harter at her home on Lake Willoughby

Don't let the kids have all the fun. Keewaydin Club: Canoe trips for adults July and August 2025

Please reach out to Keewaydin Temagami Director, Emily Schoelzel for more info.

emily@keewaydin.org - 802.382.4709

Overcoming Fear and Paying It Forward

by Helena Bryant '08

Songadeewin has been a part of my life through not only the most formative years of my childhood, but my early adulthood as well. I started as a camper in Aspen at nine years old, and just finished my seventh year on staff during the 2024 season. Fifteen years of my life have been spent on Lake Dunmore, and I wouldn't be who I am today without the incredible people I've met, and the challenges I've faced.

In 2013, when I was a camper in Junior Willoughby, I went on my first white water trip. On the second set of rapids of the trip, my boat flipped. This is something that happens all of the time in white water, and of course I was completely fine. However, being the anxious kid that I was, this experience completely changed my perspective of white water. We ran a couple of sets after that, and each time, I broke down. I left camp that summer never wanting to do white water again.

The following summer, I was put on a white water trip. During our shakedown at the river, we ran a section called the gorge, which is a huge wave train. I was already nervous, but seeing all of that water made me break down. The rest of the boats ran it, but I refused to leave the shore. I sat there crying and hyperventilating for what felt like forever. I honestly don't even remember how my counselor convinced me to get in the boat and run the set. However, I do know that she sat with me on the shore for



Helena, far left, with Purple Reign Verendrye trippers and co-staff, Fatmata Sesay. August 2024

that whole time, helping me calm down and reassuring me over and over again that I would be okay. It was a turning point for me that has continued into my time on staff.

My favorite trips to lead now are white water. I absolutely love it. I love the feeling of the water pushing the boat forward. I love having to think on my feet to avoid obstacles. I love writing songs about white water that get put in the camp songbook. But most of all, I love sharing my love of white water with my campers, a love that fourteen year old Helena would never have dreamed of, if it weren't for the compassion and kindness of my staff.

In 2023 on my first month trip, all but two of our six boats flipped,

a few sets before the set where my boat had flipped back in 2013. As I was maneuvering up and down the rapids pulling countless wannigans, tents and river bags from the water, I couldn't help but think about the anxious fourteen year old who would have frozen and broken down. It really shows how much things can change in ten years.

Most campers won't take tripping skills like canoeing, white water and portaging into their adult lives. However, the perseverance, self-confidence, problem solving, leadership and adaptability they learn from these challenges will help them grow into strong and capable adults. For two years now, I have had the privilege of working alongside Marisa Neary, my staff who gave me the



Three Purple Reign trippers on Verendrye

confidence to give white water another try back in 2014. Being on staff with Marisa has given me the opportunity to thank her for the impact that she had on me ten years ago; I now get to pay this gift forward as I lead my own campers through whitewater and watch them overcome their fears.

A Songadeewin Summer: Listening to Our Hearts

by Lauren McDowell

The theme of camp this summer was "Listen to your heart. Listen with your heart". During our first Sunday Circle at camp, I introduced the theme and asked each of us to wonder what it means to 'listen to our hearts and with our hearts?' Below is my talk:

Each summer at Songadeewin, we have a tradition of having a theme a theme of the summer which we take time to think about both during camp and at every Sunday Circle. You may have seen the little pillow cushions on the low, wooden chairs in Beenadeewin.

These were sewn from previous Songa "theme shirts." Each summer's theme has something to teach us, that we can try to see in each other, and practice. This summer, the theme is "Listen to your heart. Listen with your heart."

So let's break this down. If we want to be able to "Listen to our hearts and listen with our hearts," we first have to be able to just listen.

So how do we learn to listen? In order to get good at anything, it helps to practice. For listening, it is especially helpful to close your eyes. So close your eyes now and listen. Pay attention to whatever it is that you hear. We'll do this for about 60 seconds.

Now keep your eyes closed and rub two fingers together with enough pressure to really feel the ridges on your fingertips. Pay attention to the feelings in your fingertips.

Now curl and uncurl your toes and pay attention to the sensations in your body.

Okay, you can open your eyes. What did it feel like to listen first to your surroundings and nature, and then to listen to your body? To pay attention? What did you hear and feel?

Maybe you heard a sound that was very close, like a friend's shoes crunching on pebbles. Or maybe you noticed the sound of leaves blowing in the wind. Or did you hear water lapping the shore or a motorboat or a bird? Or maybe you were listening and running your fingers together and then suddenly you found yourself thinking about something else!? Right?

When you venture out into the wilds of Vermont, New York's Adirondacks, Maine, and Canada this summer, you get a chance to be self propelled and to be in places that few people ever visit! It is most natural to listen and wonder when we are immersed in nature.

The practice of listening without being distracted tunes us into our animal selves, listening both to nature and to our own bodies. The sounds, sights, and sensations we hear, see, and feel give us important clues, both about the world and people around us and about ourselves. There is one part of our brain that is unique to humans that separates humans from other animals—it's the prefrontal cortex. This is the place in our brain which is activated when we are imagining and being creative. When we spend time in nature, we grow this part of our brains!

So now you know why it's important to listen, but how do you *listen to your heart*? Well, I think this means paying attention to what makes you feel most alive. When you do this, you trust your instincts, you make space to find your authentic self and your voice. You learn to speak up and to draw people in. When we are present and listening to our hearts, we are curious, we begin to wonder. We can activate and innovate. We can think up big questions! We see possibilities. We are naturally inspired to "help the other fellow" and to practice gratitude.

So you may be wondering, "how exactly do I listen *with* my heart? What does that look like?"

I thought about this for a while, and you may have a different answer, but I think that *listening with your heart* means that when you find yourself having a hard moment, feeling down or upset, you get in the habit of taking a breath and asking yourself a simple question: "What is the most compassionate thing I can do right now?" (hint: Sometimes you may need to be compassionate to yourself first!)

Listening with your heart is slowing down enough to tune into the needs of others. To notice the person next to you. To notice the symmetry of a pine cone, the pattern of ripples on the water from a paddle, the depth and wonder of a pitch black, starry night. To see the beauty that surrounds us in nature. When you *listen with your heart*, you consider your actions and your words, and the way you treat other human beings and the natural world around you.

Only when we listen *to* our hearts and *with* our hearts, can we truly see all of the beauty around us. So this summer we will work together to do hard things and be both brave and compassionate. We will find our calm and confident center. We will notice differences in other human beings with a sense of curiosity, not judgment. Because when we *listen* with our hearts we can begin to imagine what might be possible, here at Songa and beyond.



SPREAD THE WORD!

Songadeewin and Keewaydin are traveling to share the good word about our camps with new families. Do you know a camper who would be a great fit for Songa or Keewaydin? Tell them to join us, in person or on zoom to learn more!

Keewaydin Dunmore/Songadeewin - Open Houses 2024-2025

DATE

Sunday, January 19, 5:00-7:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 21, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 22, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Thursday, January 23, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Friday, January 24, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Saturday, January 25, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 6, 7:00-7:45 p.m.

LOCATION Dorset, VT Cambridge, MA New York City Larchmont, NY Washington, DC Haverford, PA Zoom

The Keewaydin Annual Fund



It is the support of our community that makes each summer a great success!

Your gifts to the Annual Fund support scholarships for campers, salaries for top-notch staff, upkeep of our canoe fleet, and maintenance of our facilities on Lake Dunmore and Lake Temagami, & much more.

Thank you for doing your part to keep the traditions alive and the programs strong.



Please make your gift today at keewaydin.org/give



Becoming Strong of Heart

by Cassidy Shaw-Catoe '18

Being Strong of Heart has always been a saying at camp. I always recognized what it meant, and that it was important, but I didn't truly understand what it felt like until this summer on Wilderness, Through burn areas, sweat, tears, and sounds of laughter, we persisted until we couldn't — and then we did some more. Going into this trip I was hesitant and intimidated for what was to come, but as each sunset and each day went by, I got strongermentally and physically. I learned what it means to truly love nature and the simple things like dipping my cup into Lake Mistassini. From bears to rivers and lakes, my crew and I showed what it meant to truly be Strong of Heart. Every setback or hiccup we had along the way, we pushed through, as the sticker on my water bottle said, "at the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can". We certainly did, and I am so thankful for my crew and for all of you at Songa.

Thank you, Songadeewin, from the bottom of my heart. This camp has changed me into the woman I am today and has shaped me into the best versions of myself.



Songa Wilderness 2024

This summer we are happy to report the second consecutive running of Songa's Wilderness program, after a three-year hiatus during the Covid years. Under the direction of Keewaydin's Wilderness Director, Sam Brakeley, and led by Songa trip leaders, Erin Jinishian and Noah Knight, six Wilderness trippers ventured forth along the Eastmain River, capping their adventure at the Rupert Dam after 30 days in the wild north. The youngest Songa girls at camp were in awe of our oldest trippers when they paddled in on August 4. We aim to confirm another Songa Wilderness trip for summer 2025.



Trip leaders Erin Jinishian & Noah Knight



(L to R) Top row: Cassidy Shaw, Lucia Cruise, Fiona Perry, Front row: Mavi Martinez, Emma Shaw, Luciana Francisco-Loya

Alumni News



Isabel Greenfield and Summer Greenfield Selvig

Isabel 'Isy' Greenfield '99 and her husband Dan Selvig welcomed a baby, Summer Greenfield Selvig, born 9/28/24. Isy says, "Hello all! I hope you are well. I am doing great and going through a few exciting life changes right now! My husband, Dan, and I just had a baby girl named Summer, born on September 28, 2024. We are all healthy, not too sleepdeprived, and enjoying time at home together along with our first baby, Red, our goldendoodle. We have been living in San Francisco for the last 10 years, but come December we are moving to Dan's hometown of Missoula, Montana! We have both found new jobs as physicians there (he is a GI; I am an OBGYN) and are looking forward to being closer to family to help with Summer. We have bought our first home there and would love to host anyone in town for a visit. Wishing you all the best."

Kate Ward '00 and her husband, Ian Thornton, are thrilled to announce the birth of a son, Owen Henry Ward Thornton,





Kate Ward, Owen & Ian Thornton

born June 21, 2024. They are all doing well and even managed to take Owen to visit Songadeewin and Keewaydin this fall while visiting Vermont!

Mark Raishart '16, former Songadeewin driver, and his family farm won the 2024 Vermont Tree Farmers of the Year Award. The Raishart Family runs Foxglove Farm with a commitment to practicing sustainable forestry and to passing down their passion for forests and their dedication to responsible stewardship to the next generation.



Jenn Hare '99 is now working at Constitution High School in

the school district of Philadelphia. She's enjoying taking the trolley to work each dav and getting to know her new students! Jenn Hare





Sarah Harrison Lvnn '03 has driven many Songa trips to Verendrye Wildlife Reserve. This fall she traveled back to Le Domaine and headed out on a

Sarah Harrison Lynn

three-day paddling adventure with a friend. Sarah shared, "The loons were plentiful and called out day and night. It was a lovely paddle and we saw only two other canoes in our three days."

Olivia 'OP' Primeaux '04 started her first full time teaching

position. OP says, "Hi Songa Family! After leaving Vermont, I spent the rest of the summer traveling to see family and getting ready for school. This fall, I began teaching 5th and 6th grade math at Shady Hill School in Cambridge, MA. I introduced the game 'Wah' to my students and they love playing when we have a few extra minutes at the end of class. One of my favorite parts of my new job is getting lunch with my new colleague Lolo Cappio-Frost! Hope everyone is staying warm and having a cozy fall."

Lolo Cappio-Frost '01 accepted a new teaching job at Shady Hill School in Cambridge, MA this fall. Lolo says "The best part of my new job at Shady Hill is that I teach in the same hallway as OP! I am teaching 3rd science (learning a lot about the ocean and whales) and 7th grade science (human body). I have really enjoyed learning about the human body in more detail and hearing how the students connect their personal experiences to the curriculum. Orla is also walking now and starting to say new words all the time. On the weekends when we go for walks in the woods as a family, Orla spends her time filling her hands with loads of acorns. I think she might be part squirrel."

Thank Yous

The following Songadeewin staff returned as visiting staff during the summer of 2024 to lead activities, songs, games, spend time with campers, and be a part of camp life. We are grateful for all that they brought to our camp community!

Kat Bogataj, Katja Bogataj, Sophie Krichevsky, Reb Modell, Kailah Russell, Becs Zelis

A huge thank you also to Maeve Sabine, director and lead teacher at the Saxtons River Montessori School in Saxtons River, Vermont! Maeve worked with Lauren and the lead Saplings staff, Daniela Morales, over the course of the winter and spring to further develop the Saplings program in its new location on the West Side of campus. Thank YOU!



Lelia Yerxa, Calvin Garner and children Eleanor, Francie, and Maeve with Lelia's 20 year canoe



The Flight of the Loon winners, Anyi Chen, Rose McDiarmid, Annika Stark, and Emma Connell



Songa second month families with their daughters! Gabby and Ben Ramseyer & Quinn and Elsie, Lolo and Riordan Cappio-Frost & Orla, Abby and Matt Opar & Deirdre, Phoebe, and Josie, Calvin Garner and Lelia Yerxa & Eleanor, Francie, and Maeve



Making portaging look easy on Verendrye, Purple Reign



2024 Verendrye trips arrived back to campus during a significant wind storm! Afterward, it was all hands on deck as Songa girls and staff exemplified our camp motto help the other fellow. Here, campers retrieve Songa's Very Big Canoe, which the winds had deposited near our tennis courts on the West Side!



Tumping a wangan and gear!

Verendrye 2024, Something in the Orange crew, led by Aven Williams and Liv Lavino

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