



# From The Heart

News for the Strong of Heart

Fall/Winter 2025/2026

## From the Director

Dear Songadeewin campers & families,

Greetings from Vermont! Autumn has passed and we are settled into the rhythms of winter here on Lake Dunmore, which gives us space to reflect on the summer we shared together at Songa. It was a joyous summer at camp — full of outdoor adventure, friendship, challenge, perseverance, and growth.

Around campus, we laced up our sneakers and put to use our brand new basketball court surface and our new pickleball court! Both courts attracted pick up games during evening free time and campers practiced their skills during activity periods. On the waterfront, the introduction of a long distance swimming coup challenged many girls to swim and count their laps equivalent to a

*continued on page 2*



## Coming Back to Camp

*by Steph Patch '99*

It is really good to be back here at camp, in a place that's been a constant in my life. Which I need after the crazy year I had. This past year Hurricane Helene hit our town and devastated the community I work in. Everything was chaotic. There was no power for a week, no running water for months, roads and homes washed away, and worst of all my school shut down for weeks. It reminded

me of camping except I was so not prepared. At first, I felt overwhelmed, but something camp taught me kicked in: I focused on what I could do. I helped

neighbors, volunteered, and stayed connected. And I leaned into the same values we live here every summer: resilience, compassion, community. This experience reminded me of why this place is so special.

I am a teacher in the outside world and people always ask why I come back to camp every summer. Why do I want to work with kids after working with them all year round? I tell them camp isn't real. Sometimes camp is a bubble of happiness and sometimes it's hard but rewarding work. It's an opportunity to see young girls

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**From the Director**

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distance of one mile. In the groves, a family of young skunks inspired multiple costumes and acts in our Saturday Spectaculars, culminating in a musical choreography number featuring Emma Cookmack-Sandler as a singing skunk whose dream was to be a camper! The entire audience was laughing or crying at this moving and creative performance which weaved together many aspects of camp life at Songa.

The weather this summer was notable for being HOT, sunny, and breezy – incredible for all things camp! Songa’s waterfront was a popular place to be, all day, every day. Campers raised their hands to learn to sail, dive, swim, paddleboard, canoe, and worked toward many coups. A total of seventeen expert coups were awarded to campers this summer!

Across the lake, up on Mount Moosalamoo, something was stirring when Ella Parks set her mind to being the first Songa camper in 11 years to earn her All Trails. Ella achieved her goal (!) and we celebrated together, not only for her hard work but also



for helping to reignite excitement and passion for hiking at camp. During second month, Iris Batchelor followed suit earning her All Trails, as well as three staff, Niki Murillo, Cece Hojberg and Manca Hribar. Hooray for All Trails, strong legs for hiking (and portaging!), and for dreaming about the many rugged challenges and hiking trails that await us next summer.

The final week of the 2025 camp season brought the second-ever Flight of the Loon singling canoeing competition. Our finalists were Claire Larocca, Viviane Naber, and Anisa Javid, and the winner – for the second summer running – was Anyi Chen! There is now a new board hanging in Fraser Dining Hall commemorating the Flight of the Loon winner.

Summer 2025 brought back many talented camp leaders and staff. We welcomed Songa’s new Assistant Director, Lilia Cohen, as well as Jecca Turner who led Nawaiwan as grove director first month. In addition, Songa moms and their families returned to campus – on the leadership team, in the camp office, leading activities on the



waterfront, in the Arts Village and beyond. Gabby Ramseyer embodied the strength, grace, and positivity of a strong Songa woman when she came to camp eight months pregnant to work as Program Director first month and didn't miss a beat!

Celebration was in order as this summer was Sarah Harrison Lynn's twenty-fifth at Songa. Thank you for your unwavering dedication to camp, Sarah! When you are next in Fraser Dining Hall, you can search for Sarah's chair in honor of her lasting service to our community {see photo of Sarah on page 9}.



Off campus, Songa campers ventured forth in green canoes to work together as a team and to deeply connect in nature, friendship, and spirit. Our wilderness tripping program ran 39 trips, ranging from four to 30 days. 17 Willoughby seniors capped their final summer at Songa with 17 days of paddling, challenge, and exploration in Verendrye Wildlife Refuge and returned glowing, connected, proud of what they had accomplished. This group of seniors is full of incredible role models for our younger girls!

Our theme at camp this summer was Choose to be Curious. Merriam Webster defines Curiosity as 'an active desire to learn or to know, interest leading to inquiry'. In life, as you grow up, I wish for all of you to never stop learning, growing, and acquiring new skills. At Songa, this starts when we listen, ask important questions, and delve deep into nature in



camp and as part of a small group on trip. As you focus on school, work, family, and pursuits in your life this winter, take some time and soak up the photoscape of our summer at Songa, sing your favorite camp songs, and choose to be curious as you venture forth. I hope to see you on Lake Dunmore soon.

With Songa Spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren". Above the name is a simple line drawing of a heart.

## Coming Back to Camp

*continued from page 1*

grow into teenagers and then young women.

There's something really special about watching campers return summer after summer — they are a little taller and a little more confident. You see them go from homesick 9-year-olds to self-assured teenagers. You see the terrified look as they go on harder trips but when they return you see their faces light up as they unpack from their trips and share their stories. Just as I did when I was a camper. And sometimes, you even get to work alongside them when they return as staff. That full-

circle moment, it never gets old. It reminds me that what we do here matters more than we realize.

Of course, camp isn't always easy. I still remember my first year on staff — how unprepared I was for how tired I'd be after the first week! I thought I had to have all the answers, be perfectly patient, and never make mistakes. Some kids need more than others. What I've learned since then is that showing up with honesty, consistency, and heart matters more than perfection. Kids don't need perfection, they need you.

Camp isn't just about games or hikes, although those are great. It's about creating a space where

young people feel seen, safe, and supported. A space where they can grow into the best version of themselves, and where we get to grow right alongside them. Camp is a chance to be free of the 'must do's' in school, and all the homework. Camp gives kids a chance to make decisions for themselves in a meaningful way.

So, as we get ready to start this summer, I just want to say: don't underestimate the small moments, a kind word, a patient ear, or a goofy joke. Those are the things kids remember. And those are the things that stay with you, long after the season ends.



# Songa Friends around the World

By Ellen Flight, '58

*The following is a reflection written by Songa's founder, Ellen Flight, about her travels between Vermont, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Europe in the spring of 2025.*

From early March to late May of 2025 I finally took my fantasy retirement trip and traveled around the world for 10 weeks. Starting and ending in Boston, as per the requirements for the 'Round the World' airline ticket, I headed west. I took a quick stop in Los Angeles to adjust to a time change and then I was on to Honolulu, Hawaii for a few days to acclimate and see a Peace Corps friend of my sister. I left Hawaii at 9 am on a Thursday and passed through the international dateline to arrive in Auckland, New Zealand at 5 pm on Friday evening though the flight lasted only 8 hours. Former Songa staff, **Steph Tubb '08** met me at the airport and was my amazing



Steph and Ellen

guide. For the next four days, we drove, took ferries, and explored the area surrounding her home city of Auckland. A highlight was watching the surfers on the famous black sand beach of Muriwai.

Next, I took a bus to Hamilton, New Zealand to meet up with former staff, **Megs Titchner Doull '01** where I stayed with her family in Kahikihiki.



*Sending off Megs' and Logan's children, Gabe, Finn and Elza, to school*

I left Hamilton on the train to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, located at the south end of the North Island. New Zealand is a beautiful country with amazing views. An interesting feature of this train route is that in order to gain elevation they built a huge spiral of track; as you circle the track, you can see the other end of your train making the grade!



*Fiordland National Park, South Island, New Zealand*



*Margot and Ellen*

After a few days in Wellington, I took the ferry across the Cook Strait to the town of Picton on New Zealand's South Island. Here I was met by **Margot Ferrier '02**. She and her husband Aubrey built their home with beautiful views of the Queen Charlotte Sound. I ate green lipped mussels and fresh venison and again saw the spectacular beauty of their surroundings. A big surprise on my tour of the South Island was literally running into the parents of former Songa camper and staff **Sophie Basseches '06** in the restaurant of the Hermitage Hotel at Mount Cook National Park. What a small world it is.



*Amy and Joshua Basseches*

After a full month on the two islands of New Zealand, I headed to Sydney, Australia. I shared brunch with **Kaitlyn Mort '17** and **Alister Preston-Jones**. They have since been married on the shores of a loch in Alister's home country of Scotland.

A main goal for the Australia part of my trip (still heading west) was to take the Indian Pacific train from Sydney to Perth, a three and half day journey. It was en route on this train when I saw kangaroos in the wild (in the bushes along the train track).



*Aubrey and Margot in Western Australia*

they picked me up and we spent the day exploring some of their favorite spots along the coast.

After my time in Australia, I headed west once more, this time to South Africa. Here I met with my cousins and my aunt, **Lois Flight Myburgh '41**, the oldest of the Songa alumni that I would see on my journey. Lois is 94 and attended Songa on Lake Willoughby as a girl.



*Natalie Ann Chapman in Fremantle WA (Western Australia)*

In Perth, I met up with **Natalie Ann Chapman '15**. We spent the day exploring the coastal town of Fremantle where I would stay for almost a week. Natalie was following my travels on Instagram and saw I was headed her way so she reached out and we connected - a lovely surprise! Another bonus of my stay in Fremantle was that **Margot and Aubrey** were visiting their grandchildren who live down the coast in Western Australia;



*Celebrating Kathy's 65th birthday with Laura and Aunt Lois*

The final destination of my travels was Scotland where I met up with another lovely group of Songa staff - **Rose Lindsey '22**, **Vanna Vinser '17** and **Sophie Melvin '22** in Glasgow. We met at a famous pub - The Griffin

- where we enjoyed traditional Scottish food to prepare me for my two week travels into the Highlands.



*Rose, Sophie and Vanna in Glasgow at The Griffin*

With all the amazing places I visited over ten weeks I can honestly say that the highlight of the trip for me was seeing and spending time with the Songa-connected folks, whether our stays were pre-planned or happened spontaneously. Learning what they loved about their home countries and spending time reconnecting with them brought each place to life and helped make the trip even more special to me. My wish for each of you is that you maintain contact with the friends you've made a Songa (over 20 plus years for me in some cases) and have a visit with them at some time in the future.



*Ellen in Scotland*

**Don't let the kids have all the fun.**

**Keewaydin Club: Canoe trips for adults  
July and August 2026**

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

[emily@keewaydin.org](mailto:emily@keewaydin.org) - 802.382.4709

## THE KEEWAYDIN ANNUAL FUND



*Last summer at camp  
was amazing!*

Your gift to the Annual Fund today keeps Keewaydin strong  
and ensures every camper has the chance to make memories and  
learn lessons that will last a lifetime.



6 Please make your gift today at [Keewaydin.org/give](https://www.Keewaydin.org/give)

# Meet Songa's New Assistant Director!



*The following is an interview between Director Lauren McDowell and Songadeewin's new Assistant Director, Lilia Cohen. Lilia moved to Vermont last June, went to trip school, led her first canoe trip to Rangeley, Maine, and was our Program Director during the second month of camp. During the offseason, Lilia will work for Songadeewin and on other projects at the Keewaydin Foundation. We are thrilled to welcome her to the year round team at Keewaydin and Songa.*

## ***Where did you grow up? Can you share any camping experiences?***

Seattle, Washington. I grew up camping all over the Northwest. Favorite memories are the annual backpacking trips I would take with my dad in the Willowa Mountains of Eastern Oregon.

## ***Where did you go to college and what did you study?***

I went to Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. I took classes all over the map and ended up majoring in Politics.

## ***Tell us about how you decided to pursue your Masters degree.***

I've loved theater for as long as I can remember and when I was a kid, being on stage was a critical mode of self expression and confidence building. I always knew that theater would

be a part of my life but I wasn't sure exactly in what capacity. After moving to NYC in 2021, my boss who worked in the creative industry encouraged me to take an acting class. Here, my love of acting and theater work was rekindled. At this point, I also knew that I was passionate about education and working with young people. I did some digging and found the Master's program I ended

up pursuing, a Master's in Applied Theater, which uses theater as a medium for education, community development, and the pursuit of social justice.

## ***What job are you coming from?***

I lived in New York City before moving to Vermont. I had a teaching job at an independent school in the West Village as well as various other freelance teaching artist work in the city.

## ***What is your favorite place to explore in the outdoors?***

This is such a hard one! I've had the privilege of exploring the outdoors in so many beautiful places. I think I am forever loyal to the Pacific Northwest. The beauty there is wild and rugged. The mountains and alpine lakes of the North Cascades in Washington might be my favorite landscape.

## ***What special skills do you have?***

Making theater with young people, running long distances, and never letting my dog leave my sight. If you were at camp this summer, you definitely met my dog, Doug! He's a 9 year old mutt and we're attached at the hip. He became widely known around camp for his goofy smile and squirrel fanaticism.

## ***Coolest thing you've done?***

After graduating college, I rode my bicycle for three months coast to coast (Oregon to Virginia and raised money for the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Each night, I would either tent camp or stay with people I met along the way. The ride not only fueled my love of outdoor adventure but also really restored my faith in humanity. The journey was physically demanding of course but there were so many kind

souls who made the challenges feel lighter. Whether it was treating me to an ice cream on a hot August Kentucky day or making me a sandwich to go for lunch on my way out in the morning, I was overwhelmed by the



kindness of strangers. Here's a picture of me commemorating the end of the ride by dipping my front tire in the Atlantic Ocean.

## ***What is your preferred genre of books?***

Creative nonfiction. I love to read narrative accounts of people's life experience with creative and fictionalized flair.

## ***What do you hope to bring to Songa?***

Serious fun! Also an open mind, an appreciation for nature, love of the arts, and my passion for outdoor adventure with young people.

# SPREAD THE WORD!



## Keewaydin Dunmore/Songadeewin Open Houses 2025-2026

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!

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
Thursday, March 12, 7:00 - 7:45 p.m.*	Zoom
Saturday, March 21, 1:00 - 3:00pm	Los Angeles
The Gandhi/Sellars Family	

For more details or to sign-up for an event email [daria@keewaydin.org](mailto:daria@keewaydin.org)

\*Eastern Time

## Building the Songadeewin Professional Network

*A call for late spring  
internships to align  
with a summer  
working at camp!*

Are you a Songadeewin alumnae whose business or profession could use a great intern? Songadeewin employs bright, talented, and hardworking college students, many of whom are eager to pursue internships during their college years and who are torn between doing so and returning to work at camp. They often have 5 or 6 weeks off between the end of their college



semester and the start of camp — May 1 to June 15 is the window of opportunity for a crucially-timed internship that would allow them to return to camp. If you are interested in learning more or receiving applications from Songadeewin staff, please contact Lauren, [lauren@keewaydin.org](mailto:lauren@keewaydin.org).



## Thank you to our wonderful volunteers!



The following Songadeewin staff volunteered their time and talents in 2025. Many volunteers returned as visiting staff to lead activities, songs, games, lead trips, and generally fun with our campers. Thank YOU for all that you brought to our camp community!



- |                        |                       |                        |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Alex Germek '99        | Erin Jinishian '13    | Saheedah Majolagbe '13 |
| Eliza Aldrich '14      | Rivers Holtzmann '11  | Kailah Russell '09     |
| Hayley Arader '05      | Sophie Krichevsky '11 | Sarah Trunsky '14      |
| Meredith Blanchard '12 | Hillary Leonard '24   | Omi Wolfe '15          |

## Alumni News

**Charlotte Corkins '16** finished her freshman year at the University of North Carolina with a bang. She is a member of the UNC women's lacrosse team which won the national championship!



*Charlotte Corkins*

**Helen Engvall '13** is a freshman at Clark University in Worcester, MA pursuing a PhD in Psychology. Her dream job is to be a therapist for kids of all ages, specifically those in the LGBTQ+ community. When

she is back home in Vermont, she loves snowboarding, reading, going on walks, and spending time with her family, friends, and pets.



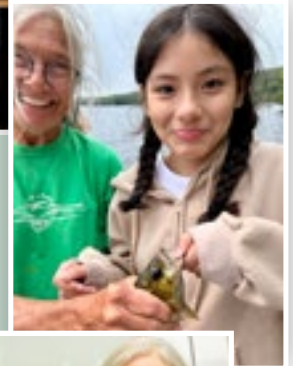
*El McCabe, Amber & Deja*

**El McCabe '06** and Amber Palmer-McCabe welcomed their daughter Deja into the world exactly 10 weeks early on 7/17/25. "Deja fought valiantly in the NICU and passed away 3 weeks later. She will always be a Songa girl at heart."

## 25 Years of Service Sarah Harrison Lynn



**Thank  
YOU!**



**Marisa Neary (Kiefaber) '12** and her husband Devon welcomed a son, Ira Ryder Neary, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025. "We are



*Marisa & Devon & Ira Neary*

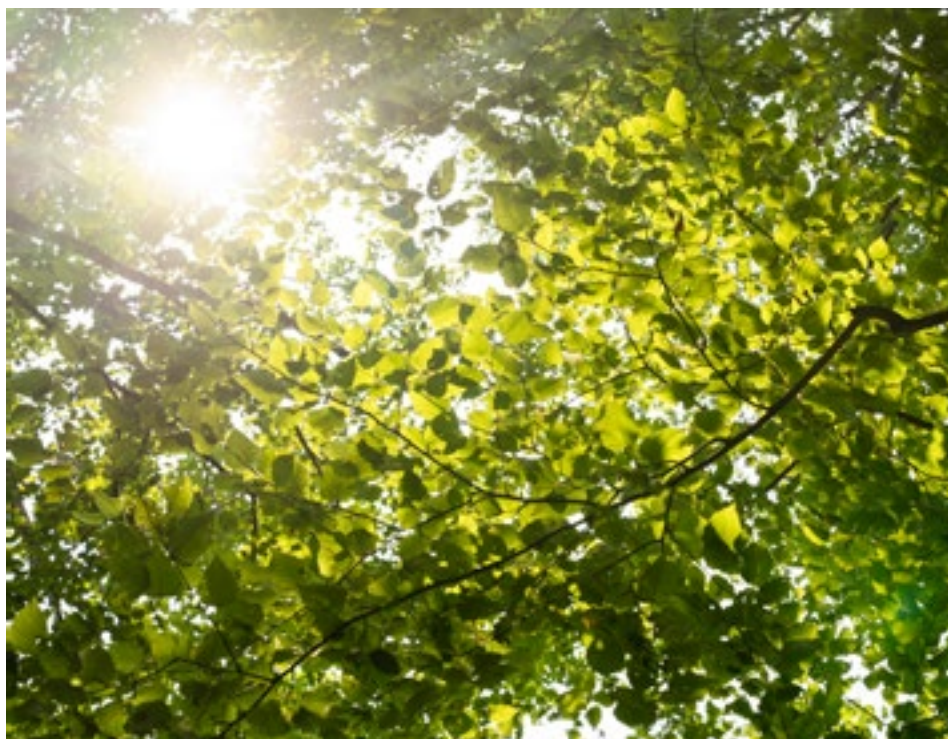
"We are all happy, healthy and settling into this new life together. Devon is such an incredible partner and our dog, Kipawa, is adjusting well to being a big sister!"

# Camper Writings on 'Choose to be Curious'

by Anna Jones '20

*The following was written and read aloud by camper Anna Jones '20 at Sunday Circle during camp.*

When I first heard our theme for the summer I didn't think much of it, but as I have spent more time dissecting what it means to be curious, I have understood the bigger impact of curiosity. Being curious leads us to ask questions and be more aware of our surroundings, helping us learn more about ourselves and the world around us. I can recall many times I have sat in a class at school and wondered 'how do we know this?' It's because someone once was curious, someone asked why? or how?. At the beginning of the summer we talked about how the younger you are, the more curious you tend to be. But I think as we get older we can remain curious, we just don't realize it. While reflecting on my trip experience, I realize that trip is a place where we all experience curiosity. While thinking about my curiosity on trip I tried to think about a long paddle or portage, but instead what stuck with me was the van ride back. We have many wildlife interactions in the Canadian wilderness



Artwork by Daniela Morales

such as a bear and a moose spotting. Something much more memorable was the animal that sparked everyone's curiosity. Once we had reached our put in for a portage on day five, we

looked around at the swamp surrounding us. A small black, cat-like creature in the mountains caught our attention. We debated what it could have been but it wasn't until the van ride back when my trip staff decided to look it up and we realized that we may have spotted a rare kind of bobcat!

Reflecting on this experience made me realize how curiosity deepens our awareness and understanding of wildlife and nature. So throughout the rest of the summer, choose to ask questions, and choose to be curious.

# Summer Photoscape





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