

# Message from ACA, Illinois Board President

ACA, Illinois saw even more camps come out of the pandemic ready to fully operate in summer 2022. The ACA, Illinois Board focused our work on supporting our camps as they prepared for their accreditation visits, activating our committees, reenergizing fundraising efforts, offering many opportunities for virtual learning and networking, and remaining connected with our membership through monthly leadership updates.

ACA, Illinois is a community of camp professionals dedicated to enriching the lives of children and adults through the camp experience. We live our mission through strategic goals of getting more youth and adults into camp while also helping those camps provide safer and higher quality programs. ACA, Illinois accomplishes these goals as an individual 501(c)(3) through:

## *Campership Funding & the DFI Title XX Camping Services Program*

In fiscal year 2022, 4,000+ clients of the Illinois Department of Human Services attended camp through the DFI Title XX Camping Services Program. Over \$850,000 was dispersed to camps. This much-needed funding helped to also support the added cost of necessities like PPE and additional staff to keep campers healthy and able to attend camp through COVID. We look forward to continuing to grow our agencies to offer even more camp opportunities for our Illinois residents, as well as continuing to grow our Fresh Start Funds.

## *Professional Development for Camp Professionals*

Last year, ACA, Illinois continued to offer online learning opportunities and monthly leadership updates for our members during new phases of the pandemic. In the coming year, ACA, Illinois will offer both virtual and in-person to maximize accessibility and opportunity to engage more camp pros. More than 100 events, meetings, and community gatherings drew 3,500 registered attendees from 36 states, Mexico, Australia, and Canada. Highlights included DEI-focused book clubs, open “coffee talks” for networking, and monthly leadership meetings.

## *ACA Accreditation Program*

The ACA accreditation program is the core of what the American Camp Association stands for — quality camping experiences for children, youth, and adults starts with high quality practices and procedures. These high standards to follow are reviewed, reflected on, and lived every season by our accredited camps. The time and energy to go through accreditation shows commitment to the value. Along with other local areas across the nation, we also struggled with the shortage of visitors. We offered education through visitor training, offering personalized advocates to support camps, and increasing our Standards Committee to engage with our camps. Our camp professionals reported high levels of work and home stress that made navigating accreditation and/or serving as a visitor more difficult in 2022. This coming year, ACA, Illinois’ Board of Directors has dedicated additional resources and attention to growing our visitor group and providing additional support to our accredited camps.

We look forward to bringing back our in-person events, such as our Executive Seminar, and continuing to prepare for another incredible summer of 2023!

Happy Camping,

Catherine “Cat” Curry  
Board President – ACA, Illinois

