

# Message from ACA, New England Board President

With the summer of 2022 in the rearview mirror, we can all take a deep breath and take a moment to enjoy our success before we move to thinking about summer 2023. The New England camping community remains stronger than it has been in years with ACA, New England fostering and supporting the work going on in all six New England states. I have always found camping to be the most truly community-focused and supportive of any professional group (where else would your “competitor” tell you the intricacies of their operations?). These last two years, however, have broadened the networks of so many, whether it was ACA, New England’s professional development offerings (weekly coffee and chats, newer director round tables, and experienced directors learning groups) or weekly Zooms, spontaneously put together out of necessity by colleagues during the spring of 2020. These opportunities became a permanent and important piece of the camp director community. Camping in New England is taking off its mask (most of the time) with a big smile and a new appreciation for our larger communities.

The highlights from 2022 center around the return of our ability to be together, outside of a box, and wearing pants!

- ACA, New England had our 100th camp conference! It is the longest-running camp conference in the county, and we celebrated 100 years in style. There was cake, memories, old friends, and, importantly, almost double the participants live and in-person than we expected!
- We were finally able to honor our past Executive Director, Bette Bussel. Last winter, we launched a campaign “The Road to 100.” Our goal was to raise \$100,000 for the ACA Fund for the Future: Honoring Bette Bussel. I am proud to report it was a *huge* success and we even exceeded our fundraising goal. ACA, New England will use these funds for innovation work — scholarships to support participation in our professional development that may include travel expenses and continued focus on non-conference professional development with an eye towards improving the BIPOC representation from volunteers helping us plan to support all camping professionals feeling part of *one* amazing community.
- The business of ACA, New England is strong! Fiscal Year 2022 was strong with sound financials: increased camp dues, and smart use of expense spending. We coordinated 75 accreditation visits, welcomed 9 new camps, 28 new associate visitors, and had 16 visitors do multiple visits. *Thank you* staff and volunteers! We also focused on taking our strategic plan and putting it into action. We are focusing on: a healthy, sustainable organization; providing quality services and training for *all* New England professionals; and increasing public awareness of camp’s ability to deliver well-being outcomes for participants.

This is my final year as president of this board, and it has been an honor to serve in this role. I have learned much, and, I hope, helped our association remain strong. We have an excellent President-Elect, Ian Moorhouse, ready to lead, and an incredible staff and community of volunteers who are leading us into our next 100 years. I want to use this last letter to recognize the staff team at ACA, New England. The staff are the heart of our community. This mighty team ensures that we all have the resources we need to run healthy camps that focus on social and emotional learning as well as fun, recreation, outdoor skills, and more. With my deepest gratitude I say “Thank you” to Michele, Elizabeth, Kerry, Bud, and Kyle. Simply put, we are a strong community because of all of you. Thank you for serving camps and camp professionals.

Betsy Kelder  
Board President — ACA, New England

