

# Message from the Board Chair and President/CEO

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This year has been an inspiring journey, shining a national spotlight on the profound impact camps have on shaping young minds. Our commitment to creating safe and nurturing camp environments is unwavering, and we believe it is crucial in nurturing the character development and human-centered skills that help youth — and future leaders — flourish now and in the future.

In 2024, we completed a significant update to our strategic plan, reflecting our commitment to our refreshed mission and vision: to empower camps to create quality experiences to build a world of belonging and growth.

In January, the American Camp Association (ACA) received an incredible \$45.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to advance the work of youth character development at camps through our six-year Character at Camp initiative. This initiative will empower camps to reach their character development goals by providing resources for staff training, curriculum development, assessment tools, communications, and strategic partnerships. Through this initiative, ACA will offer guidance to all camps through both online and in-person training, networking opportunities, and innovative educational resources. In addition, over the next four years, ACA will offer grants to eligible camps to support, extend, or expand character development programs.

Our focus on belonging and character development is intentional, especially considering the continuing concerns around the mental health of our nation's youth. We know that camp is a space where young people learn resilience, build initiative, and develop positive social and emotional skills — all essential for their well-being. Our commitment to supporting camp staff recruitment and retention is critical to ensuring that every camp experience is led by the right mentors who guide and inspire these skills in campers.

We are continually humbled and deeply appreciative of the hard work, passion, and dedication each of you brings to this community. Together, we are creating safe spaces where children feel a sense of belonging and can build the skills to become happy, healthy, thriving adults. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to making camp a place where the values of community, growth, and belonging come alive every day.



Lizabeth Fogel, EdD  
*Chair, National Board of Directors*



Henry DeHart  
*Interim President/CEO*



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