RE:CONNECT
WHAT TODAY’S KIDS NEED
2013 ANNUAL REPORT
Recently, I was reminded of the power and rejuvenation of free, unstructured time in nature as a visitor to the Gunflint Trail. The Gunflint Trail is fifty-seven miles of road that leads from the North Shore of Lake Superior to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, very near the Canadian border. The original path that has today become the “Gunflint” was originally an overland footpath used to travel from the inland lakes to the shore of Lake Superior.

No one knows precisely when the footpath was established, but we know it was long ago. It was first used by the native Ojibwe who have called that area of Minnesota home for thousands of years. With the availability and popularity of cars and the discovery of recreational opportunities and natural resources, it wasn’t long before the path was widened to a road. And this road reconnects me to nature in a profound way.

This area of Minnesota is a gift; it allows anyone who is traveling through it to take a journey. I wandered, I explored, and I was able to get that feeling. You all know what I mean—the feeling of really getting away, clearing my mind in the open space on quiet lakes and trails. This is the time I treasure; I treasured it as a child at camp and I treasure it now as an adult. It’s a time to explore the places that let me look a little deeper into myself because it’s quiet enough and wild enough to let me reconnect with myself and what’s important. In only a few days among nature and exploration, I reconnected back to myself, and I’m a new woman.

Kids today need access to nature. They need experiences in community, away from a screen. Kids today need camp experiences.

And, by the way, Gunflint Trail has no cell service . . .

Tisha Bolger
President

(Source: Willis H. Raff, 1981, Pioneers in the Wilderness, Cook County Historical Society)
Why in today’s world, with the plethora of opportunities for young people to “connect” with 24/7 communication systems, would ACA suggest it is time to “RE:Connect”?  

It is important to remember that to connect is also defined as a mental and emotional process—not just through an email, text, or social media. The cause and effect of quality connections that embrace positive mental and emotional feelings can enhance a sense of harmony with oneself, others, and the world.

Hope and harmony are as important for young people today as the academic skills that the cacophonies of public voices are demanding. Yet, a young person’s access to the elements of hope and harmony is approaching a frighteningly deficit model.

Consider that today the average radius of play for kids is 500 feet. This fact alone illustrates a form of deprivation—less time and access to the natural world, less opportunity to see friends in person, and fewer chances to explore, be challenged, and be curious about new surroundings. The cause and effect of such disadvantages may cause unwanted impairments—handicaps, if you will. Positive, comprehensive child development cannot be placed on the endangered species list.

So, the ACA camp community is committed to providing young people with the opportunities to RE:Connect with experiences that create the foundation for future success—as individuals, parents or caregivers, and citizens of a community and the globe.

Peg L. Smith  
Chief Executive Officer

ACA is a national association representing  
- 10,000 individual members  
- 2,600 camps  
- Over 2,300 of which are ACA-accredited  
... and growing!
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO RE:CONNECT?

Technology seems to change everything: the way we do business; the way we interact with one another; the way we unwind. But there’s one area that remains unchanged, with or without technology—what kids need for success.

KIDS NEED TO LEARN BY DOING
KIDS NEED MORE TIME IN NATURE
KIDS NEED REAL RELATIONSHIPS

These are the things that children gain from quality camp experiences. These are the things they have always needed—now possibly more than ever.

THAT’S WHY WE BELIEVE . . .

KIDS NEED CAMP EXPERIENCES.

In our technology-saturated world, camp experiences RE:CONNECT children to real learning, to each other, and to themselves.
Meeting the Needs of Today’s Kids

**Radius of Play**
500 ft.
The radius of play for children today is less than 500 feet (roughly 18 acres).

**Screen Time**
7 hours
Kids spend more than 7 hours a day in front of a screen.

RE: Connect
Camp experiences are opportunities for kids to unplug, get outside, get active, and make new friends. With so many new options for families to explore—varying session lengths, activities offered, and move—EVERY child can benefit from a camp experience.

**Meeting the Needs of Today’s Kids**

**Physical Activity Level**
Kids need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day.
80%
Over 80 percent of all camps have campers engage in physical activity levels greater than an hour a day (Ages, Facilities, and Programs Report, 2011)

**Critical Skills**
In today’s workforce, employees are expected to be able to communicate, collaborate, and think critically.
According to ACA’s Workforce Development Project, young adults working at camp reported gaining:
- communication skills
- problem solving skills
- leadership skills

**Camp Options**
Camps continually evolve to meet the needs of today’s kids and families. A wide range of program options are available based on:

- **Session Length**
  - 3 days – 8 weeks
  - Day Camps and Resident Camps

- **Campers Served**
  - Boys, Girls, Coed, Teens, Adult
  - Special Medical and Developmental Needs, Families, and More

- **Areas of Focus**
  - Activity, Specialty, General, Cultural/Religious, and More

- **Scholarships Offered/Tuition**
  - Fees: <$100 to $800+ on average
  - Scholarships: 210+ Million Awarded by ACA Camps Each Year
EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION
LEARNING IS NOT A DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITY

Through unique and innovative programming and partnerships, ACA camps capitalize on experiential education.

ACA’s new partnership with the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) broadens the STEM-related (science, technology, engineering, and math) educational resources that are available to the camp community and enhances STEM-related professional development opportunities for camp professionals.

ACA teamed up with Scholastic to keep kids reading in the summer—promoting the Scholastic Summer Challenge, a program that encourages children to read and log their minutes to help set a new reading world record. Reading at camp provides campers with opportunities for quiet and reflection in addition to the active camp lifestyle.

INSPIRING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- Over 30 percent of ACA camps have recently added nature/environmental programs, while nearly 30 percent have added gardening programs, and 9 percent have added agricultural/farming/ranching programs.
- Trending now: Campers want to know where their food comes from! One in four ACA camps have added programs for campers to cook with food from camp’s garden.

EDUCATIONAL ENRICHMENT AT CAMP

One in five ACA camps report adding STEM programming in the past two years.

In 2013, nearly half of all ACA camps reported partnering directly with schools either year round or as part of their summer school programs.

(Source: ACA’s 2013 Emerging Issues Survey)
By introducing children to nature, you make them aware of nature.

For many kids, camp is the first real access they have to nature, and ACA camps are constantly working to incorporate environmental awareness into the day-to-day lives of campers.

In 2013, it was estimated that the ACA camp community preserved over 400,000 acres of land, helping to ensure natural places in which kids can explore, discover, and learn.

ACA and field offices across the country participate in and partner with programs that impact awareness and delivery of nature experiences: state parks and recreation departments, the National Wildlife Federation, outdoor experience programs, Outdoor Afro, Leave No Trace, ecoAmerica, Children and Nature Network, state environmental literacy plans, and more.
Forming friendships with peers and learning to rely on adults other than one’s parents are critical to a child’s social success. That’s why ACA camps emphasize individual and group skills such as confidence, discipline, understanding, and control.

A huge component of the ACA, Southeastern and ACA, Southern California/Hawaii field offices’ Camp Staff Training Day events (reaching over 850 camp counselors in 2013) is to teach social-skill building to the young adults working directly with kids. This year’s topics included:

- The Perks of Playing Together
- Group Building Made Fun and Easy
- Connecting Kids through Special Events
- Relating to Your Campers
- Fostering Cooperation through Unique Games

Building social skills, while critical, is not always easily measured and evaluated. In 2013, ACA developed a statistically tested learning scale for camp staff and parents to measure campers’ critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication skills.

**CAMP IS THE CONNECTOR**  Two skills deemed critical for success in tomorrow’s workforce are communication and collaboration, which include the ability to: listen effectively; articulate thoughts in verbal, written, and nonverbal forms; work effectively with diverse teams; and assume shared responsibility for projects.

- **CONSIDER:** By the time a boy is twenty-one, he will have played over 10,000 hours of video games. Compare that to the 4,800 hours of study and class time it takes to earn a bachelor’s degree. *(Source: Zimbardo and Duncan, 2012, *The Demise of Guys)*

- **RE:CONSIDER:** Camp is a unique opportunity to unplug and interact with nature, peers, and role models on a deeper level.
The ACA camp community annually provides nearly $216 million in camp scholarships.

ACA business affiliates have become strong supporters of the Send a Child to Camp Fund. Contributions from just four businesses (Chaco, Colorado Yurt, Late July, and Rocky Mountain Sunscreen) totaled $27,000.

ACA partners with UltraCamp Foundation and SCOPE to distribute funds to deserving campers nationwide.

The ACA, New England affiliate office’s annual Camp Champions Celebration raises money for their camp scholarship fund. This year more than 150 campers ranging between the ages of six and sixteen from all six New England states received financial assistance—a 50 percent increase from last year.

**OPERATION SUMMER CAMP**

When a parent serving in the National Guard is suddenly deployed, the financial, emotional, and logistical impact on a family is enormous. The ACA, Keystone field office, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Air National Guard 111th Fighter Wing, created Operation Summer Camp (OSC) to give military children the gift of a summer camp experience. Each year, between ten and twenty day and overnight ACA-accredited camps contribute camp slots (ranging from one to eight weeks) to deserving military kids.

- In fiscal year 2013, 18 boys and girls attended camp on OSC scholarships.
- Since 2004, approximately 250 military children have been given the gift of camp.
- ACA camps have donated more than $450,000 in scholarships since the program started.

**HEAL THE CHILDREN PROGRAM**

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, day and resident camps in the ACA, New York and New Jersey affiliate office provided scholarships to children whose families suffered from the storm through the Heal the Children scholarship program. The goal was to give these children the opportunity to have something to look forward to in the immediate future, provide a positive camp experience, and also give families the time and energy to focus on rebuilding their lives.

- Over 100 day and resident camp participants.
- Over 500 scholarships awarded.

**ACA’S 20/20 VISION**

ACA has committed to serve 20 million children by the year 2020. This is ACA’s 20/20 Vision. Camps across the country are reaching out to campers from all cultural, economic, and geographic backgrounds to enrich their lives through the camp experience.
In 2013, ACA’s Find a Camp database received 1.5 million page views from parents and families looking for the perfect camp experience for their child. Find a Camp allows families to search for camps based on session length, price range, location, activities offered, and more.
PROVIDING HEALTHY, ENRICHING EXPERIENCES

CAMPS’ #1 PRIORITY IS KEEPING KIDS SAFE AND HEALTHY WHILE HELPING THEM LEARN, GROW, AND HAVE FUN

The healthiest, most developmentally appropriate camp experiences start with well-trained staff. Camp and youth professionals take advantage of ACA in-person and online training to provide the highest standards of excellence in camp programming and operations.

ACA’S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Since its launch in 2011, ACA’s Professional Development Center (PDC) has welcomed 8,955 learners. The PDC provides online and in-person courses and local, regional, and national training events. In fiscal year 2013, the PDC:

• Offered 1,972 eligible hours of continuing education.
• Awarded over 20,000 continuing education credits.
• Provided 27 online courses, 26 live webinars, 49 recorded webinars, and 4 comprehensive staff training certificates of added qualification.
• Topics include risk management, health and safety, quality programming and assessment, connecting children with nature, and more.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

• ACA-accredited camps meet up to 280 health, safety, and quality programming standards.
• 849 camps were visited in fiscal year 2013. ACA visits approximately one-third of all accredited camps on a yearly basis, as camps must have a visit at least every three years.

“I enjoy the diversity of opportunities ACA has for ongoing educational learning. Participating in conferences, webinars, and online courses through ACA are some of the important things that I do to keep current as a camping professional.”

—Becky Gilles from Mass Audubon/Drumlin Farm Camp
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Janice Adams

Carl Andersen

Althea Ballentine

Ralston Bauer

Allen Beavers, Jr

Barbara Braxdale

Max & Marion Caldwell

Reynold Carlson

Ruth Carlson

Ann Chamberlain

Betty Cobb

Judy Cote

R. F. “Brownie” Cote

Dorothy Curtin

Tom Curtin

Elizabeth Danforth

Louise Davis

S. Cooper Dawson

Karl Dowd

Jack & Jacqueline Ellena

Jesse Farrow

Paul Frisbie

Grant Gerson

Howard Gibbs

Len Gordon

June Gray

Libby Halpern

Ted Halpern

Catherine “Kit” Hammett

Helen Haskell

Dan Hemphill

John L. Holden

James “Pop” Hollandsworth

Ruth T. Howe

Ruth Isserman

Dorothy Jean Kerr

Edie Klein

Millie Kriebel

Wilbur Kriebel

Frances Kruger

Joseph Kruger

Charles Kujaava

James LeMonn

John MacBean

Roderick MacRae

Tom Manison

Judy Miller

Stanford Miller

Frank “Scotty” Washburn

Salem, Oregon

Sheeri Weidman

Naples, Florida

Susan Welch

Boone, Iowa

Scott Whipple

San Francisco, California

Douglas Wilk

Upper Holland, Pennsylvania

Bobbi Wittenberg

White Plains, New York

Judith Myers

Edna Newman

Irving Newman

Alan Ordway

Howard Patton

Jack Pearse

Charles Pooleos

Herman Popkin

Glenn Poulter

Rusty Poulter

Barbara Rankin

Fred Rogers

Marlys Rogers

Martha Lou Schove

Allen Sigoloff

Sonya Staff

Karen Stager

Marly Stein

George Sudduth

Betty van der Smissen

Robert Watkins

Jack Weiner

Nelson Wieters

Barbara Winslow
FINANCIAL ANALYSIS
FINANCIAL POSITION ANALYSIS

2013

9,972,300
2,723,698
2,540,258
7,248,602
1,951,852
2,756,492
1,596,434
2,555,692
2,470,530

2012

9,216,292
2,593,636
2,540,258
6,622,656
1,596,434
2,555,692

Unrestricted
Temporarily Restricted
Permanantly Restricted

Assets Liabilities Net Assets Assets Liabilities Net Assets