



2021 Annual Report
Camp Tuhsmehta



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Please Note: The data in this report covers events held between October 1, 2020 and July 1, 2021



Jill Teegardin, Camp T Director



Patti Ensing, Camp T Office Assistant



Dan Giese, Camp T Maintenance

Introduction

Camp Tuhsmeheeta (Camp T) is an outdoor education facility for youth, especially those who are Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI). It is located in Greenville on Flannigan Lake, along the Morgan Mills chain of lakes. Camp T encompasses 301 acres of land and includes seven miles of hiking trails, a waterfront area for swimming and boating, a climbing tower, a low ropes course, a sports field, a recreation center, and an archery range. The camp was established in 1974 by Dr. Robert Thompson, a former superintendent of the Michigan School for the Blind. Dr. Thompson wanted to establish an outdoor learning environment for students who are BVI. We continue to follow Dr. Thompson's vision by engaging youth in the natural world. At camp, youth have an opportunity to learn about the environment, participate in leisure activities, practice independent living skills, engage in hands-on learning, and make new friends, all while enjoying Camp T's natural surroundings.

Although Camp T operated differently this year, our focus was on campers. A new entrance was completed, adding a warm welcome for campers. A new recreation center was constructed to encourage a variety of health and fitness routines. Programs continued virtually and through distance learning. The Family Nature Club engaged families with hands-on activities and virtual meetings each month. The Summer Family Challenge program offered a way for families to stay connected and active during the summer months. A program for teens encouraged them to meet weekly online to have fun, engage socially, and form friendships.

This past year was a challenge for all of us, but Camp T continued to make connections and build relationships from a distance. We also expanded opportunities for campers by building the new recreation center and making facility improvements.

In the fall, Camp T will offer in-person camps. We will follow guidelines from Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that campers return to a safe environment. Three Family Nature Club events are planned for fall 2021, and Camp T is collaborating with other organizations on programs for the fall and beyond. It is exciting to have outside groups working with Camp T to educate and connect with children who are BVI. We look forward to welcoming back campers soon!

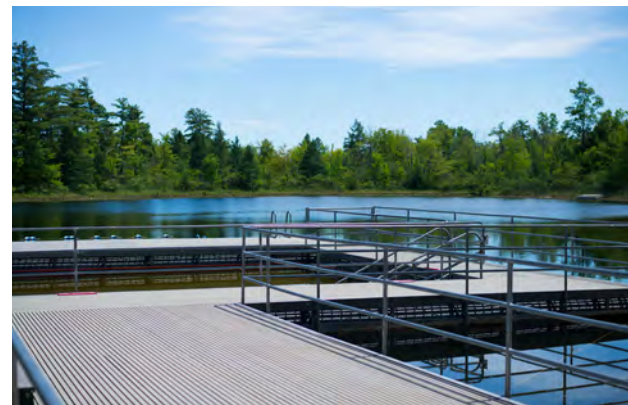
-Jill Teegardin, Camp T Director

New Position at Camp T

Camp T will soon announce a high-adventure camp consultant to lead all of Camp T's high-adventure activities, including the climbing wall, waterfront, archery, low ropes course, and other recreation activities. This staff member will also assist with general camp operations. This position will allow for more flexibility with programming and will help the day-to-day camp operations run smoothly.



Climbing Wall



Waterfront



Low Ropes



Archery

Camp T Events



October 1, 2020 - July 1, 2021



Over the past year, Camp T continued with virtual and distance-learning programs. At-home kits with detailed labels and instructions worked well for campers last year, so Camp T offered Family Nature Club programs in this format, with themes ranging from birds to winter. Each program included a kit with a recipe, an outdoor adventure activity, a craft, and a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) challenge. Supplies were also included for each activity.

Kits were adapted to meet campers' needs, including braille and large-print instructions and labels, tactile graphics and charts, supplies for adapting home microwaves, and other tactile items.

For each program, families received their kit about a week and a half before attending a virtual follow-up event. During the virtual event, families had fun sharing their experiences with the kit activities, participating in games, and getting to know each other. Each program was full of adventure and excitement!

Fall Frenzy

OCT
24

16
Participants

About:

Autumn at Camp Tuhsmeheeta is a beautiful time of year. It is a time when you smell the crisp, cool air as leaves crunch beneath your feet, geese honk and chatter on their way south for warmer temperatures, and squirrels scurry about while collecting food for the winter. Unfortunately, families were not able to visit Camp T in the fall, so Camp T created an at-home camp experience for them.

Activities:

Cooking

Campers practiced using a microwave and learned how to make an omelet.

STEM Activity

Families worked together to design, construct, test, and modify a candy pumpkin catapult using popsicle sticks and rubber bands.

Crafting

Families used their sense of touch to identify various items in fall-themed “feely bags.”

Outdoor Adventure:

Families were encouraged to take a fall nature hike, gather natural items, and build enchanted homes for mythical creatures.



Giving Thanks

NOV
21

41
Participants

About:

Despite the unusual fall of 2020, Camp T encouraged families to think about all that they were thankful for. During November's Family Nature Club program, families had an opportunity to reflect on and show gratitude for the big things and little things in their lives.

Activities:

Cooking

Families made cinnamon-sugar toast with homemade butter.

STEM Activity

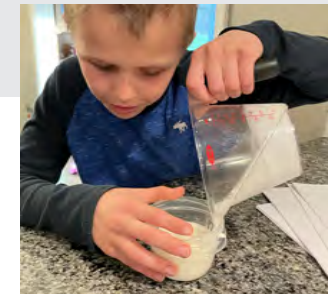
To help the squirrels at Camp T prepare for winter, families were challenged to design chutes that would help squirrels gather acorns.

Crafting

Families made no-sew blankets to give to someone for whom they were thankful.

Outdoor Adventure:

Campers received strategies for raking leaves at their home or for someone else.



Winter Wonderland

DEC
12

12
Participants

About:

Winter at Camp Tuhsmeheeta is full of beautiful scenery, from white blankets of snow to singing winter birds. Families were not able to enjoy winter at Camp T this year, but they were able to experience some winter adventures at home.

Activities:

Cooking

Campers received materials and instructions to make popcorn in the microwave.

STEM Activity

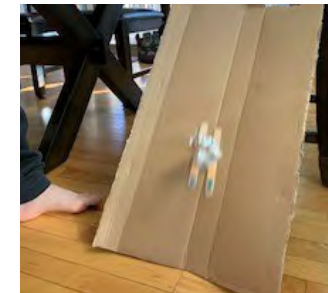
Family members worked together to design and test a downhill skier and ramp using aluminum foil and popsicle sticks.

Crafting

Families received molds to make frozen bird treats using bird seed and water.

Outdoor Adventure:

Families were encouraged to get outside and build snow sculptures or participate in other outdoor snow adventures.



Bird Bash

MAR
20

15
Participants

About:

As spring arrived, bird songs increased around Michigan. For this program, families participated in a variety of bird-related activities throughout March. The virtual event included a birding-by-ear expert.

Activities:

Cooking

Families received a recipe and materials to make “bird nest” snacks with chow mein noodles and chocolate.

STEM Activity

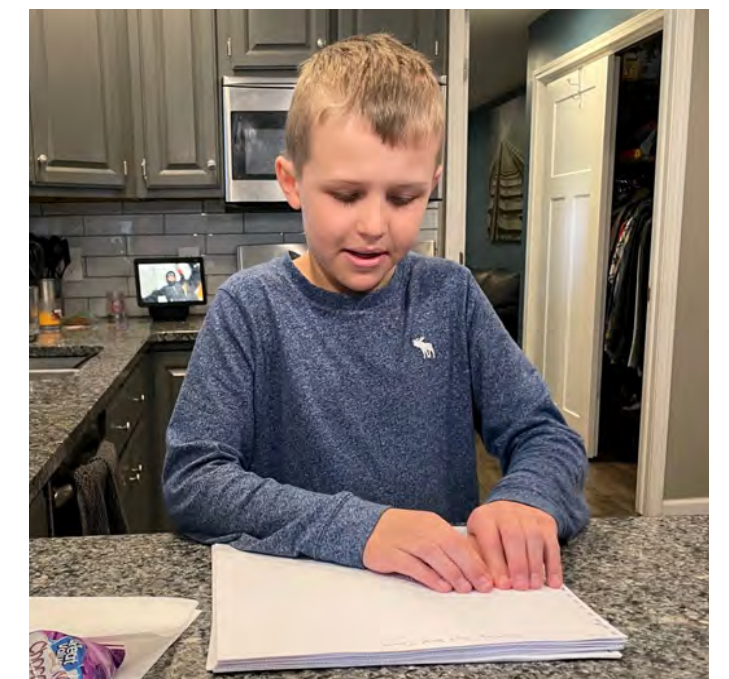
Families took on a challenge to design and build a bird nest that could hold a clutch of eggs.

Crafting

Campers received materials to paint and decorate small bird houses.

Outdoor Adventure:

Families were encouraged to take a hike and listen to spring bird calls.



Around the World Adventure

APR
12

31
Participants

About:

For this event, families were invited to break out their passports for a virtual adventure. Participants explored the language, foods, traditions, and wildlife of four countries.

Activities:

Food

Families received treats to taste-test from different countries.

STEM Activity

Families explored flight by assembling and launching a helicopter toy.

Crafting

Campers received materials to make their own mancala game.

Family Activity

Families were encouraged to play a variety of games from around the world.



Muffins With Mom

MAY
03

About:

This program encouraged campers to spend time with their mom, grandmother, aunt, or another motherly figure in the kitchen. Each kit contained muffin pouches, a mug, and some sample poetry.

Participant Goals:

- Learn how to use an adapted microwave
- Use a microwave to make muffins
- Spend one-on-one time with a loved one in the kitchen

18
Participants



Popsicles With Pop

JUN
14

About:

This program encouraged campers to spend time with their dad, grandfather, uncle, or another fatherly figure in the kitchen. Each kit contained supplies for two popsicle recipes, a popsicle mold set, and some sample "dad" jokes.

Participant Goals:

- Use a popsicle mold to make popsicles in the freezer
- Spend one-on-one time with a loved one in the kitchen

8
Participants



BVI Summer Family Challenge

JUL
1

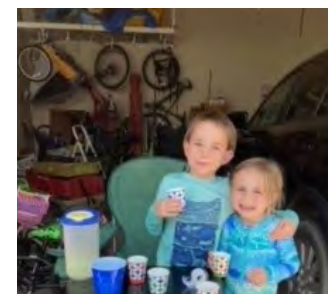
27
Participants

About:

Summer is a time to bask in the sunshine, explore parks, cool off in the water, and go on adventures. Camp T's Summer Family Challenge program was designed to keep families active and engaged. Throughout the month of July, families were challenged to spend 100 hours doing outdoor- and summer-related activities. Each family received a kit with instructions and materials for participating in the program. At the end the program, families turned in their logs and were eligible to earn summer themed prizes during a virtual event in August.

Participant goals:

- Set a target goal for the family
- Take part in a variety of outdoor activities
- Spend quality time together and make memories



DHH Camps

91
Participants

October 1, 2020 - July 1, 2021

Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) Winter Escape

Number of Participants: 28

Winter at Camp Tuhsmeheeta is full of beautiful scenery, from white blankets of snow to singing winter birds. Families were not able to enjoy winter at Camp T this year, but they were able to experience some fun winter adventures at home.

DHH Around the World Adventure

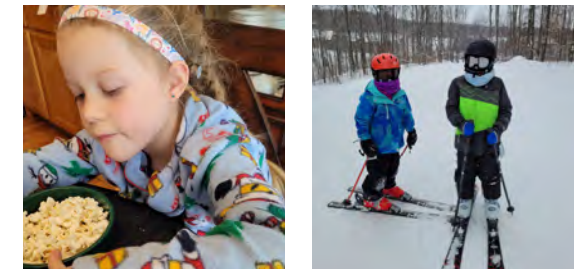
Number of Participants: 39

This program offered an opportunity for campers who are DHH and their families to virtually travel to new lands. Participants explored different climates, tried new food, and learned different signs from around the world.

DHH Summer Family Challenge

Number of Participants: 24

Summer is a time to bask in the sunshine, explore parks, cool off in the water, and go on adventures. Camp T's Summer Family Challenge program was designed to keep families active and engaged. Throughout the month of July, families were challenged to spend 100 hours doing outdoor- and summer-related activities. Each family received a kit with instructions and materials for participating in the program. At the end the program, families turned in their logs and were eligible to earn summer-themed prizes during a virtual event in August.



Parent Experiences

This past year brought many challenges to families in Michigan. Students switched to remote and distance learning, while many parents navigated working, parenting, and teaching at home.

Three parents who regularly participated in Camp T programs in the past year shared the challenges they have faced, what they enjoy about Camp T, and the hopes they have for their children.



Dahlem Family

Gina Dahlem's family has participated in several Camp T programs in the past year, including activity kits her family has completed at home. Each kit contained instructions and materials for completing themed projects.

"The boxes have been helpful," she said. "The fact that they include materials that allow children to be independent is what is unique and distinct about the program."

Dahlem has participated in both in-person and distance Camp T programming with her son, who is Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI). Dahlem said she has noticed that these programs have helped him become more independent.

Ultimately, Dahlem wants her son to take "safe" risks. She wants him to feel confident in his ability to complete certain tasks, but she also wants him to feel comfortable saying when he needs help.

"I would like to see him advocate for himself and for others," she said.



Akutsu Family

After watching her son participate in several Camp T programs, Sachiko Akutsu said she has noticed the most improvement in his independent living skills.

"My son had never touched a microwave before, but through the camp he can practice and do it by himself," she said.

During each at-home Camp T program, Akutsu took photos and videos documenting her son's experiences. He enjoyed creating a pumpkin candy catapult, constructing a miniature ski slope, and planting seeds for a butterfly garden at home, she says, but he is ready to get back to Camp T for in-person events.



Smallegan Family

When programs and activities were canceled last year, Hannah Smallegan's children were excited to open Camp T's at-home activity kits when they arrived. The kits "gave the kids something to look forward to," she said.

Smallegan's son, who is BVI, was especially excited to read the materials in braille. His sisters usually have to read printed instructions to him, so being able to read them himself boosts his confidence and independence, Smallegan said.

Smallegan's son is good at math and enjoys playing hockey, and she is excited to see what occupation he will choose in the future. She also wants to make sure he is as independent as possible, and she said taking part in Camp T programs helps him work toward this goal.

Virtual Ribbon-Cutting Celebration



Dan Giese, Jill Teegardin, and Michigan Department of Education - Low Incidence Outreach Director Roxanne Balfour

At the end of June, Camp T held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate a new and improved entryway and the new Oak Recreation Center.

The celebration included two pre-recorded ribbon-cutting events, one at the front gate and the other at the rec center entrance. A yellow ribbon stretched across each entrance as the construction team, design team, and Camp T staff members gathered around. Everyone cheered as Camp T Director Jill Teegardin cut each ribbon with a pair of scissors.

More than 50 people joined the celebration online to learn about the exciting updates:

- The Camp T entryway now features a new gate, lighting, signage, and landscaping. This update ensures campers' safety and provides a welcoming presence for Camp T.
- Oak Recreation Center will house indoor activities such as goalball, soccer, basketball, and volleyball. John Kusku, a Paralympic goalball medalist, consulted on the project to ensure that the facility meets the needs of students and athletes who are Blind/Visually Impaired.

Special Guests

During the ribbon-cutting event, special guests from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Office of Special Education (OSE), and State Board of Education (SBE) spoke about the importance of Camp T for students.



Scott Koenigsnecht

MDE Deputy Superintendent.

"As a father of a son with a disability, it's important for my son to be accepted, and it's even more important for my son to be included."



Nikki Snyder

SBE Member and Camp T Trustee

"Keeping students active in a safe environment is essential. It brings me great delight to encourage and empower students to learn and grow through their experience and relationship to the great outdoors."



Janis Weckstein

OSE Deputy Director

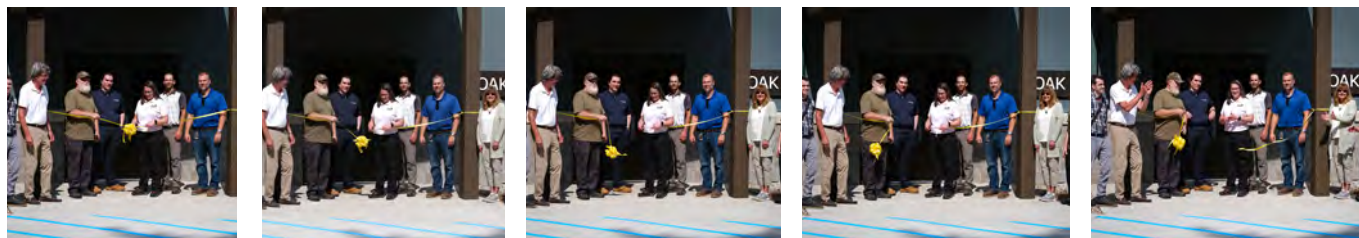
"These new changes that have been made are a reflection of the importance we place on providing children an opportunity to come and enjoy outdoor activities, as well as indoor physical activities."



Teri Rink

OSE Director

"I know what camp experiences mean to children and their families. In the world of technology we live in, being able to just have fun together in an environment that is healthy, supportive, and safe is ideal for children."



Design and Construction Team



Adam Droste
Project Field Representative
Department of Technology,
Management, and Budget (DTMB)



Scott DeKorte
Project Director
DTMB



James Beckering
Project Manager
44th Street Construction



Craig Nicely
Senior Architect
Century A&E



Spencer Gafa
Architectural Designer
Century A&E



Jacob Jones
Electrical Engineer
Century A&E



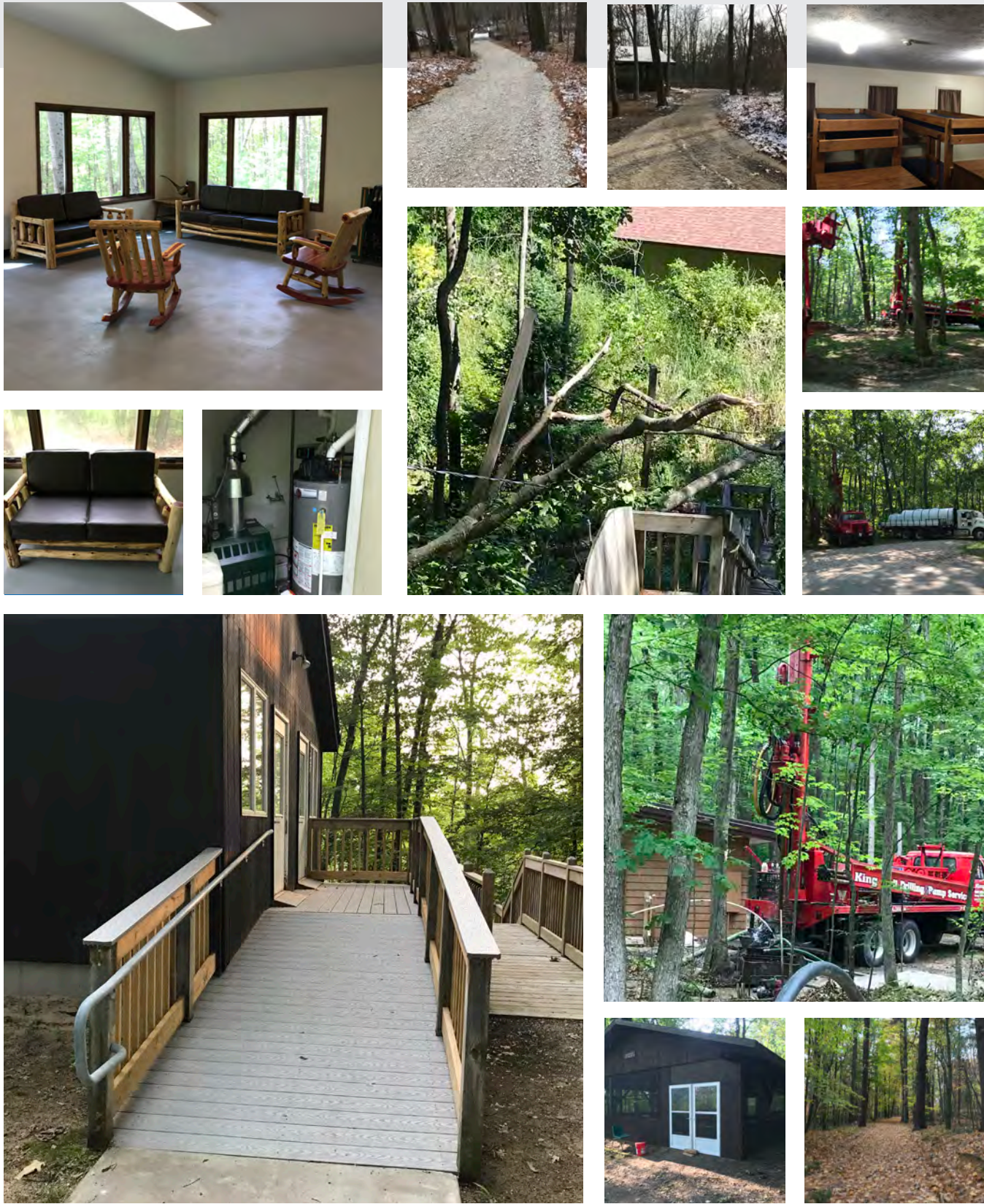
Sarah Tyler
Mechanical Engineer
Century A&E



John Kusku
Consultant
Team USA Paralympian

Camp T would like to thank Scott Koenigsknecht, Nikki Snyder, Janis Weckstein, and Teri Rink for their words of encouragement, as well as members of the design, architecture, and engineering team who worked on the project.

Facility Updates



Completed in 2021

- New furniture, salad bar, and ice machine in White Pine Lodge
- New entrance (gate, overhead signage, fencing with signage, and plants)
- New Oak Recreation Center to house indoor sports such as goalball, basketball, floor hockey, and volleyball
- New wells at White Pine Lodge and Tamarack Lodge (which supplies water for Tamarack, Maple, and Birch cabins)
- Removed platforms near climbing tower
- Replaced screens and added new screened doors in Red Pine Pavilion
- New decking at Tamarack Lodge
- New boiler, hot water heater, and circulation pump in Maple Cabin
- New privacy curtains on windows in Maple and Birch cabins
- Bulbs replaced to improve lighting in Maple and Birch cabins
- Ceiling and floor repaired in Maple Cabin
- Continued cleanup from storm, including tree removal
- Crushed concrete used to help with washouts and erosion on roads

Planned for 2022

- Update doors around camp
- Convert Elm Hall into a nature center
- Build new pole barn and maintenance area
- Install generator in main part of camp
- Add ceiling to Jack Pine Pavilion restroom and improve showers
- Convert Roth Cabin into a museum
- Replace shingles and repair roof on Roth Cabin and Red Pine Pavilion
- New drinking fountains and water dispensers at Maple and Birch cabins, and White Pine Lodge

Did You Know?

There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work when it comes to operating Camp Tuhsmeheeta. Inspections, certifications, program planning, and routine maintenance activities occur throughout the year. Although Camp T was not open to campers this year, day-to-day operations continued as usual to keep the camp in compliance with the State of Michigan's rules and regulations.

Licensing Inspections

- Camp license: annual
- Environmental inspection: annual
- Climbing tower and low ropes: annual
- Independent fire safety: annual
- Fire systems: bi-annual
- Kitchen hood: bi-annual
- Kitchen blowers: annual
- Septic tank pumping and pump card: annual
- Hot water tanks: bi-annual
- Volunteer screenings and background checks: annual
- Boiler outside maintenance check: annual
- Boiler internal checks: quarterly
- Fire alarm tests: quarterly
- Water tests: quarterly
- Defibrillator batteries: every 5 years
- Fire alarm batteries: every 3 years
- Boiler reduced pressure zone (RZP) check: every 3 years

General Upkeep

- Exterminators: monthly
- Climbing tower and low ropes: monthly
- Generators: monthly
- Propane gas levels: monthly
- Water softeners: monthly
- Defibrillator checks: monthly
- Bills/invoices: monthly

Programs

- Developing programs and schedules
- Holding marketing meetings with staff
- Creating flyers for programs and events
- Arranging website and Facebook posts
- Arranging printed materials: braille, large print, regular print
- Processing registrations
- Purchasing program materials
- Preparing for programs
- Planning meals
- Leading and executing programs
- Cleaning up after programs

Staff Certifications

- USA Archery certification: every 3 years
- Climbing tower and low ropes certification: annual
- Health officer certification: every 2 years (CPR, AED, and First Aid training)
- Lifeguard certification: every 2 years
- Teaching certification: renew every 5 years
- Food safety certification for Greenville Public Schools kitchen staff: renew every 5 years
- Food allergen certification for Greenville Public Schools kitchen staff: renew every 5 years

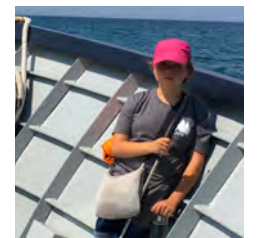
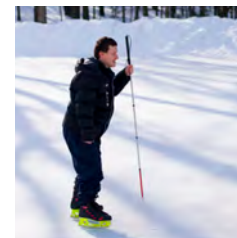
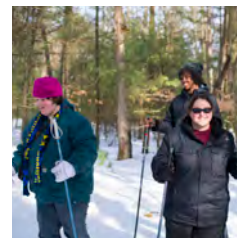
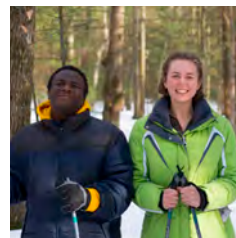
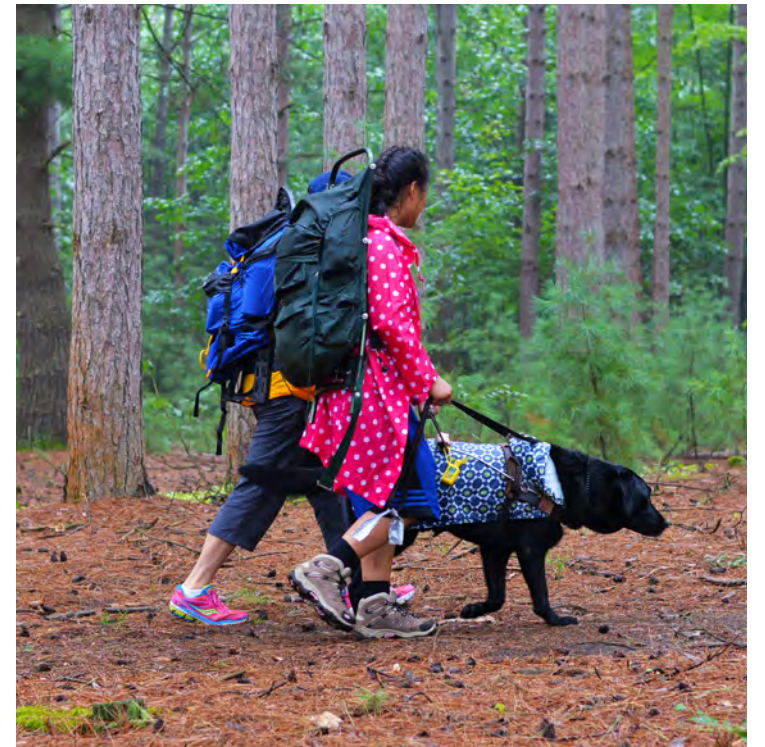
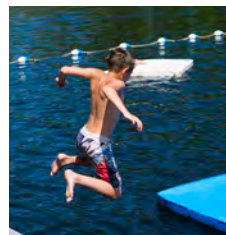
Environmental Education Programs

- Project Wildlife in Learning Design (WILD)
- Project WILD Aquatic
- Project Learning Tree
- Aldo Leopold Project

Other Trainings

- Water Sampling
- Unified English Braille (UEB) Class
- Beginner American Sign Language Class

Campers Will Be Back This Fall





Low Incidence Outreach
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