

THE BIRCHBARK 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

A Camp Sloane Newsletter



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CAMP SLOANE YMCA

124 Indian Mtn Rd, Lakeville, CT 06039

The Birchbark Newsletter

March 2025

www.campsloane.org



A MESSAGE FROM BEAR



Paul "Bear" Bryant
Executive Director / CEO

Dear Friends,

I am always the first in the office in the morning – it gives me an hour to get my day set and, if I am honest, a chance to blast some tunes and plow through all the email which has accumulated overnight. Lately, the first thing I do right after getting my coffee and sitting down to work (read: plow through emails and rock) is to read the daily passage from a book called *The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations On Wisdom, Perseverance, and the Art of Living* by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman. I turn to it every day. It's my own kind of "page a day" calendar. One of the daily readings is entitled, "How to Have a Good Day." It quotes Epictetus' Discourses. "God laid down this law, saying: if you want some good, Get it from yourself." The author of the *Daily Stoic* goes on to say, "Here is how you guarantee you have a good day: do good things." That hit hard. In my job, opportunities abound to do good, from providing financial assistance to a family who are unable to afford camp to writing grants which will help our camp be more inclusive, equitable and accessible. I am surrounded by opportunities to do good. It's why I love my work.

In this Birchbark you will find an extensive list of people and entities who have done good by supporting the work we do here at camp with their donations.

(con't on next page)

UPCOMING EVENTS

VOLUNTEER WEEKEND APRIL 25-27

Help us put up all the tents, get the bunks out, clean up program areas, get camp ready for summer! Register [here](#).

OPEN HOUSE APRIL 27 & JUNE 1, 12PM-3PM

Take a tour of camp, meet the staff and try our famous cookies!



SPRING ASK

\$25,000

Can you help send more kids to Camp Sloane?

Our Spring Fundraiser starts April 1st. Our goal is to raise \$25,000 between April and June 22nd, the first day of summer 2025.

Make your donation [here](#)

\$0



A MESSAGE FROM BEAR... (con't.)

However, it should be noted that there are a whole host of other generous folks not listed: staff members who have volunteered to work at camp in the summer (yes, we have some every year), campers and their families and alumni who return to camp for volunteer weekend to help us put up the tents and ready the camp for the season and, lest we forget, our policy volunteers – camp board members and folks who serve on camp board committees – giving of their time, talent and treasure to make camp the great place that it is. And yes, there is always some crossover on that list of do-gooders.

So, I would encourage you to have a good day by doing some good too. Join us for [volunteer weekend](#) on April 25th – 27th, make your own [donation to camp](#) so that everyone can afford the transformational experience of camp or reach out to someone or some organization in your own neighborhood and do some good. Trust me, you are going to feel great about doing good.

For The Love of Camp,



A LOOK BACK AT 2024



**DONATE
HERE**

**784 OVERNIGHT CAMPERS
328 DAY CAMPERS**

**325 TIER 2, 3, & 4
FINANCIAL AID CAMPERS**



**\$317,381 PROVIDED IN
FINANCIAL AID**

**\$332,612 RAISED IN
2024**



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

As I begin my role as Board Chair, I reflect on my journey with Camp Sloane. Compared to the many who've been connected to camp since its founding in 1928, my introduction feels so recent—yet the magic of Sloane is undeniable. The stories I've heard of lifelong friendships, marriages, and transformative experiences are a testament to the incredible community we're all part of.

For me, it all began in 2018 when my 9-year-old started their first summer as a Pio. That first full summer—four unforgettable sessions—sparked a love for Camp Sloane that has continued for seven years (minus the unique challenges of 2020). Though my time here feels short compared to others, my passion for this camp, its mission, and its traditions runs deep. What makes Sloane truly extraordinary is its balance: rooted in nearly a century of tradition while embracing growth, inclusion, and innovation.

Following in the footsteps of Mary Vines, I'm inspired by her fun, positive spirit, tireless dedication, and impressive fundraising efforts. Mary's leadership left a lasting impact, and I'm honored to build on her legacy. My focus is on strengthening the systems and structures that underpin the Board's responsibilities to ensure Camp Sloane's success for years to come. By creating a rock-solid framework for all Board processes—from governance and fundraising to succession planning and onboarding new members—we can limit the learning curve during transitions and provide continuity for future leaders. These streamlined systems will not only empower new members to contribute more effectively but will also create a foundation that supports strategic growth and operational excellence.

Since joining the board in 2022 as Board Development Chair, I've had the privilege of welcoming talented, passionate new members who are already driving our 2023 strategic plan into action. With fresh perspectives paired with the wisdom of our long-standing members, we are building a Board and a camp culture that will thrive for generations.

In 2024, we bid farewell to Chris Wadsworth after an incredible 43 years of service and celebrated Dave Wright's promotion to Director of Facilities. Dave's recent marriage to Kira at Camp Sloane beautifully adds to the ever-growing Sloane family. Ru's (Assistant Camp Director) family—Aaron and their young son, Leo—brings joy and energy to our community.

Camp Sloane isn't just a summer destination; it's a home, a legacy, and a place where generations are built. Staff members don't just work here—they raise families, form deep roots, and pass down their love for Sloane to the next generation. This unique mix of youthful energy and experienced guidance allows Camp Sloane to stand apart. Few camps offer the richness of tradition and multigenerational connection that we do, making Sloane a beacon for those seeking something truly special.



Looking ahead to 2025, I'm filled with excitement for what's to come: strengthening traditions, achieving ambitious goals, and fostering the spirit of connection and growth that defines Camp Sloane.

Thank you all for your unwavering commitment to this extraordinary place. Here's to a fantastic summer of 2025!

Warmly,
Lindsay Birch
Board Chair, Camp Sloane YMCA



ALUMNI PROFILE: TOM EGLETON

Hello, my name is Tom Egleton, also known as “Teacher Tommy T.” My journey in education began in primary schools, where I started as a teaching assistant, providing special education support and managing the sports programs. From early on, I was driven to become an educator. Seeking to build my confidence and broaden my experiences, a friend suggested that I apply for a summer camp program to step outside my comfort zone.

I applied through the agency Bunac and was incredibly fortunate to be placed at the exceptional Camp Sloane YMCA. My first few weeks were challenging, as I was young and new to traveling independently. Fortunately, I was welcomed by Mr. Stephen Orova and several dedicated camp leaders — Kieran Collings, Anna Beck & Daniel Little — who provided invaluable support as I found my footing. Under the guidance of directors Andrew Keener and Bear Bryant, I worked in the Pioneer section and Adventure High Ropes area, gaining valuable skills and connections along the way.

During my three years at Camp Sloane, I progressed to Pioneer Section Head, a role that confirmed my calling to become a teacher. Alongside professional growth, I formed lasting friendships, including with Adam Janaway, who would later stand as my best man. My time at Camp Sloane truly transformed me, making me a confident, driven young man, and I can honestly say that without it, I wouldn't be who I am today. To this day one of my biggest achievements was receiving the 'Best of the Best Award' I still wear my shirt today!

I returned to Camp Sloane repeatedly because of the strong friendships I formed and the opportunity to witness the growth of the younger campers. Some of my fondest memories include the square dances, overnight camping trips, endless campfires, and the unforgettable chaos that ensued. A standout moment was the thrilling soccer match against Hi-Rock, where we emerged victorious. Above all, Camp Sloane gave me lifelong friendships that I continue to cherish.

After returning to England, I completed a teaching qualification and was fortunate to secure a role at a special educational provision in Norwich. My dedication was recently recognized when I was honored as Teacher of the Year. Today, I lead a specialized course supporting young people who lack confidence, struggle with self-esteem, and face multiple learning challenges. The program's goal is to provide them with a pathway — whether vocational or academic — to help them find purpose and direction. Camp Sloane's values of personal growth and helping others shine continue to influence my approach to teaching.



In 2020, I joined TikTok, like many educators, to share insights on teaching, student life, and school nostalgia. My account quickly resonated with viewers, and since then, I've built a combined audience of 2.5 million followers on TikTok, 1.5 million subscribers on YouTube, and 235,000 followers on Instagram. Through these platforms, I've been able to extend my impact well beyond the classroom. The skits I performed on stage at Camp Sloane served as the foundation for the content I create today. They played a pivotal role in shaping the direction of my TikTok videos, inspiring me to develop and refine my approach to content creation.

I am immensely grateful to my family, my friends from Camp Sloane, my best man Adam Janaway, and my wife and children for their unwavering support. Each of them has contributed to the person I am today: a dedicated teacher, husband, father, and social media influencer.

Camp Sloane was truly a place of transformation for me. It helped me grow, develop meaningful relationships, and gain the confidence that now allows me to inspire young people every day. Thanks to the lessons I learned there, I can offer my students the same encouragement and opportunity to thrive that I was given as a young person.

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIALS



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Register as an Alumni [here](#).

Join our [Alumni Facebook group](#) and connect with fellow Sloanies!

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