



SUMMER 2024

# CAMP TALES NEWSLETTER

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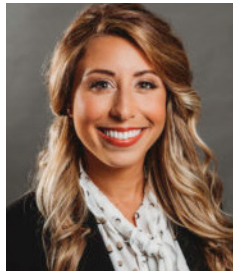
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Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe we are in our 130th year as an organization! This milestone is a true testament to all the support Camp has received over the years from countless volunteers, dedicated staff, incredible donors, and our board of directors. This celebration comes after a milestone year that changed the trajectory of camp for many years to come.

In 2023, we achieved the milestone of opening Camp's doors outside of the summer season for the first time EVER, thanks to our winterized facility. We welcomed 200 children during Hartford's spring vacation and cannot wait to continue this program for many years to come! In addition to expanding in this capacity, we were able to secure a brand-new store for our 'Finance is Fun' program, which not only allows our campers to learn the fundamentals of financial literacy, but also allows them to put those skills to use by running and operating the store themselves. Our programming team worked tirelessly to expand each program's offerings to find exciting, fun new ways to reach our campers.

In 2024, we will be taking on another new endeavor, where individuals, groups and organizations can rent out Camp's beautiful 36-acre facility where all proceeds directly support our mission. Funding from this

expansion will go directly back into the ever-rising costs of transportation, food and program expenses to keep our camp free for Hartford children for years to come.

As you read through, I hope you feel the pride that I feel when I think back on the history of our organization and how far we have come in 130 years. The generational pride that beams throughout our organization is second to none, and we are so excited to see what the future holds. This would not be possible without the support from our community. Thank you for both your time and your treasure. It is because of your support, camp has been a safe, fun place for our children for 130 years, and we want to ensure that it continues to be a safe space for 130 more- thank you!

Before I let you go, I would be remiss not to mention that we not only welcome visitors, we encourage them! We would love to have you come and see the powerful impact your support makes each day - please reach out any time to schedule a time to come by for a tour and to learn about all the exciting plans for 2024.

Thank you for supporting our children through all the latest transformations, and we hope you will continue to support us as we expand in this historical year to come!

Kindly,

*Corianne Chipello*

Corianne Chipello  
Executive Director & CEO





# Make an Impact by Volunteering

Camp thrives through the dedication of its volunteers! The sprawling grounds demand ongoing attention and care, ensuring a safe and vibrant environment for all who attend and visit. From nurturing the blooming gardens and colorful flowers that extend a warm invitation to our nature programs, to the meticulous task of painting and enhancing our buildings, our volunteers play a vital role in making Camp a second home for everyone. These efforts even extend to engaging in camper programs, assisting with events, and many other essential tasks. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who generously donate their time and energy to Camp! Without your unwavering support, we simply wouldn't be here, providing these cherished experiences to the youth of Hartford. Thank you!

We extend a warm welcome to companies of all sizes and capabilities from the entire region. Partnering with Camp not only provides invaluable

support for our mission but also presents an excellent opportunity for team building within your organization. It's a chance to step away from the office, breathe in the fresh air, and simultaneously make a meaningful impact on the Hartford community.



Here are some ways you can get involved with Camp:

- 1. Trail Maintenance:** Take on the responsibility of maintaining our nature trails, ensuring they remain accessible and enjoyable for all campers.
- 2. Gardening and Landscaping:** Help beautify our surroundings by tending to gardens, planting flowers, and creating a vibrant, welcoming atmosphere.
- 3. Building Projects:** Contribute your team's skills to undertake construction or renovation projects, enhancing our facilities and infrastructure.

- 4. Teaching Workshops:** Share your expertise and mentor campers through workshops, allowing them to learn new skills or gain valuable insights.
- 5. Event Assistance:** Assist in organizing and executing Camp events, adding your company's flair and support to our gatherings.
- 6. Themed Fridays:** Work the concession stands for the campers: face painting, tattoos, cotton candy, popcorn, water slide, games and more!

The benefits are twofold: your organization gains valuable team-building experiences, and together we foster a stronger, more vibrant Hartford community. Join us in making a difference, and let's embrace the great outdoors while leaving a positive mark on the world around us. We can't wait to have you!



# Staff Spotlight: Emerging Leader

## Dyanises Sanders

### Assistant Unit-C Director; former camper & Junior Leader



The Camp Courant staff is truly second-to-none, and is a group that spans generations of Camp's history. Many counselors, program directors, and unit directors have all been with us since they were 5-years-old – growing up right before our eyes.

A prime example of this is our Assistant Unit-C Director, Dyanises Sanders – a true superstar on our staff. First coming to Camp at the age of five, she spent seven summers as a camper before becoming a Junior Leader and, ultimately, a counselor in 2021. Now a first-year student at Morgan State University, she says her time at Camp has put her in a position to succeed.

*“Overall, playing a leadership role at Camp Courant has helped me become the person I am today, I've learned how to work with others effectively. I've gained leadership skills. Through Camp, I've made a lot of great connections.”*

When Sanders was first approached about a potential promotion from

counselor to key staffer, she initially wasn't sure she was the right person for the job. After lots of dialogue and encouragement from Program Manager and Unit-C Director Ms. Nicole, she settled right into the role.

During the season, Sanders helped facilitate numerous unit-wide competitions and team-building activities, while also chaperoning multiple field trips and overseeing the day-to-day assignments of Unit-C counselors.



“I was nervous at first. But then I realized I was mature enough and responsible enough to be responsible for others,” Sanders said. “That shows that after all these years, my hard work paid off.”

At Morgan State, Sanders is a nursing student with aspirations of becoming a traveling OB/GYN nurse. While she will still be coming back to us for Camp, Sanders has made it very clear that Camp Courant is a part of who she is.



“One thing I'll always remember about Camp is this: I was just a 5-year-old girl coming to Camp for a good time in the summer,” said Sanders, “but as the years went on, I began to move up and ultimately became something great in my community.

“It's important for folks in our community to give back,” she added. “You never know how you might just change someone's life by just being generous.”

# 2023 Junior Leaders of the Year!

It was a busy year for our Junior Leaders in 2023! From being the first group in the program's history to work a spring camp session, to traveling downstate to Deep River for a week-end-long, team building retreat. This group of 50 certainly did it all last year, and we are so proud of their growth, teamwork and leadership at Camp!

At the end of each year, each Junior Leader votes for a peer – who they feel went above and beyond for the group – to be named JL of the Year. In 2023, not only did we have two award winners, but both were in their first year in the program. Meet our 2023 JLs of the Year: Vincent and Makai!



## Vincent V.

Vincent, 13, has spent his summers at Camp Courant since he was 6-years-old. Now an eighth-grade student, he has become a strong voice at Camp. No matter what was asked of him, whether it was working the kitchen with Ms. Gail in the kitchen the entire spring week or being a helping hand to our lifeguards, Vincent always had a can-do, positive attitude.

While his memories of Camp when he was very young aren't as clear, he

remembers seeing the Junior Leaders around the campsite and looking up to them. However, he didn't always believe he had what it takes to join the program himself.

"At first, I didn't really want to [be a Junior Leader], but come around, maybe 10-ish, I started thinking, 'Wow, that looks fun! It looks pretty cool what they're doing, helping out the other kids [at Camp]', when I turned 12, I asked [Unit D Director] Mr. Jason to hand me an application. And here I am."

While Vincent is not necessarily the loudest voice in the room, as program directors Ms. Nicole and Mr. Alondre will tell you, he leads by example and ensures everyone's voice is heard. For Vincent, it's not about winning an award – an award he never even knew about, no less. It's only about doing the right thing.

*"I didn't even know [the award] was a thing until someone told me. I'm happy I got it, but I was just doing my job, it was exciting, though. I was really happy to go home and tell my parents, 'Hey, I got JL of the Year!' They were really proud of me."*

Vincent has become a reliable and steady presence at Camp, one our staff and campers alike greatly enjoy seeing each day. He has grown up here, and over the years he has developed here into the young leader he is today. From his core memories as a young child to his experiences now, he has one message for those who make it all possible each year: thank you.

"I have a lot of great, fun memories here. I've made a lot of friends here," said Vincent. "Staying home over the

whole summer – you know, you're not doing much, just sitting on your bed. But coming here was a really fun experience. And without [our donors], it wouldn't be free to come here. Even donating a few dollars still helps, thank you to everyone. Camp wouldn't exist like this without your help!"

## Makai C.

Makai, 14, has been coming to Camp Courant since the first summer he was eligible at the age of 5. In addition to being with us all these years as a camper, he is the grandson of Foundation Services Manager, Ms. Samantha.

Now a high schooler, Makai looks back on his years as a camper with a deep appreciation for the experiences Camp brought him from a very young age, but also with an appreciation for the leaders before him.

"Every day as a camper when I'd get dropped off in the morning, I'd drop everything and run to the playground, have fun with my friends," Makai said. "But the Junior Leaders, they seemed really nice. They seemed respectful, and I thought to myself, 'one day, that will be me.'"

Not only does Makai have family members on our full-time administrative staff, he also has an older brother, Dayshawn, a current counselor and graduate of the JL program himself. Makai says his brother further reinforced his interest in joining the program.

"He would always let me know all the fun things they did during their meetings and that it was overall a really fun program," he said, "but he also told me it's a big commitment."

Makai is a leader in the making but

# Tackling the Kitchen!



is also quiet. Whether he's doing his absolute favorite job at Camp or his least favorite, he's not going to say much. He's going to do his job, first and foremost. Last summer, Makai took a big hand in assisting the staff in Unit A, our youngest campers. Despite not being a loud voice, he is a strong voice."

*"I feel like my voice is needed. When the kids are having a bad day, I would take them aside to the bench and have a talk with them, tell them it will be okay, and I would ask them to tell me what it's about, just try to calm them down."*

Having been at Camp since the age of five and having family members at Camp full time, Makai knows there is a lot of work that goes into it all. As Makai continues to grow as a leader, he encourages you all to join in and support Camp, so there are more success stories in the future.

"Camp Courant is a great place to be. You'll make new friends, you'll meet new people," said Makai. "You should donate to this Camp because a lot of kids will have a ton of fun if you do. Kids are going to have great memories when they leave."

If you haven't been able to tell already, 2023 was a big year for change and development at Camp – and that includes our facility! After taking on the basketball courts and winterization in 2022, it was finally time to tackle the kitchen.

One of the most essential services we offer each year is food service – every day a healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack are made available for all campers. However, based on family feedback as well as staff observation, we felt we needed to do more for our campers, to ensure they were getting the best meals possible.

One thing Camp has never done is serve hot lunch due to limitations of kitchen appliances and authorization. However, opening up the option for a hot breakfast and lunch both ensured that the quality of food increased, and campers could enjoy more variety each week.

With that, a major renovation of our kitchen was underway! In its original state, Camp's kitchen was at a level one status, appropriate for serving a bagged meal of cold deli meat and chips, but



not much else. To get to the level needed, Camp's kitchen needed to take the big leap from level one to level three.

With renovation beginning just after our spring enrichment week and concluding a mere days before opening for summer camp, our team spent many long days and nights putting up metal plates, installing appliances, and keeping inventory organized in the transition. Throughout the process, Camp added an all new three-bay-sink, a preparation sink, combination oven, steamers, and food warmers to its line-up of kitchen appliances, making Camp fully compliant to serve hot meals.

Once summer camp began, our campers ate well each day. Introduced to Camp's menu this year were pancakes, French toast, chicken nuggets, pizza, and much more – with a whole lot of steamed green beans in between!

Thanks to the efforts of our diligent team of staff and donors, Camp was able to reinvigorate its breakfast and lunch offerings. Now, rather than a cold, bagged lunch each day, campers can enjoy more nutritious and exciting hot meals for years to come!



# Alumni Spotlight: Phylicia Lilly



Being a presence in Hartford for 130 years, one of the things that stands out about Camp is its longevity. Whether it be alumni who span all different age ranges or staff members who move on elsewhere throughout the state or country. You never know where you'll find a product of Camp Courant!

An alumna who epitomizes that truth is Phylicia Lilly, a former camper, staff member and a current flight attendant with American Airlines. Now an adult with a busy travel and work schedule, Lilly says she still thinks about her days at Camp Courant quite often.

"I always looked forward to summertime. Getting out of school, I always knew I had Camp next," said Lilly. "Even though we did educational stuff, it was fun. Camp was a turnaround point for a lot of kids. It was always a safe place."

Lilly first came to Camp as a 9-year-old and spent the next four

summers as a camper in Units C and D before becoming a Junior Leader. Still in touch with many of her Camp friends to this day, she says she tries to be a steward of Camp's mission anywhere she can.

*"I talk about Camp Courant all the time, just the other day, my mom's friend was looking to put her kids in a summer camp and she asked me if I still worked at Camp Courant. I told her no, but told her that Camp is still around!"*

Indeed, after graduating from the Junior Leadership program, Lilly remained at Camp as a counselor for multiple summers before working her way up to a program director and, ultimately, a unit director.

Having experienced Camp in just about every facet, Lilly encourages all parents in the city to consider enrolling their children for the summer months.

"Camp is a safe place, it's inviting. Your kids are well taken care of, they'll eat there," she said. "There's a fun part, there's an educational part. [The staff] always tries to make it well balanced. Camp does a great job, even though it's the summertime, of instilling education but in a fun way. The kids are loose, but on track still, for when they go back to school."

In her downtime, Lilly now lives in Miami, Fla. As she travels across the country, she credits Camp not only for helping her get to where she is to-

day, but also for priming her to be able to handle any situation presented to her.

"Camp gave me that push, gave me that drive to be dedicated and to stick to my goals," said Lilly. "At Camp, I always had somebody pushing me, I always had my counselors pushing me to do good. To be the best version of myself. And when I'm on the plane, I can have some trying passengers and I think to myself, 'Phylicia, push yourself. Be that better person. Remember, when you were at Camp, [staff members] always pushed you to be the better person and never stoop down. I use that every day."

"Camp is making a difference in our children's lives," she added. "Please support Camp, because every child deserves a chance."





# Magic Soul Drumline

In 2023, Camp connected with Magic Soul Drumline, a percussion and dance group of over 40 Hartford students. This talented group brought an incredible sense of excitement and energy to Camp's events! The group's participation in our Opening Day Celebration in June was nothing short of extraordinary; captivating both campers and our dedicated supporters, even getting featured on the renowned FOX61 network. The drumline's infectious rhythm and powerful beats struck a chord with everyone present. Their return to Camp later in the season for a special performance and to

record a news story was a true highlight, leaving a lasting impression on all campers and staff alike. The demand for these electrifying performances was so high that they were invited to perform at our main fundraiser: Buddy Bash! As they weaved their magic through the Camp's walkways, they effortlessly gathered a crowd, leading them to the grand presenting pavilion, where their performance got everyone pumped up for the evening's celebration. Magic Soul Drumline's presence at Camp in 2023 was nothing short of magical, and we can't wait for more performances and outings to come!



## Hartford's Camp Courant Board of Directors

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## STAY IN TOUCH!

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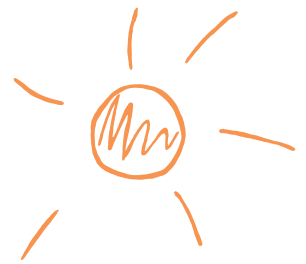
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# HOPE GROWS HERE ♡



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FIELD DAY  
EXCITEMENT  
ADVENTURE  
BONDING  
LAUGHTER  
CAMPER

ONE HUNDRED THIRTY  
ARTS & CRAFTS  
HOPE GROWS  
SPIRIT WEEK  
TEAMWORK  
SUNSHINE

COUNSELORS  
ACTIVITIES  
SWIMMING LESSONS  
FINANCE IS FUN  
HEALTHY CHOICES  
NATURE TRAIL



## Hidden Veggie Meatballs

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb ground beef
- ½ cup carrot grated fine
- ½ cup zucchini grated fine
- ½ cup spinach or kale cut fine
- 1 egg
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- Salt to season
- 1 tsp fresh ground pepper
- 1 tsp Italian spice seasoning



### Directions:

The secret to the hidden veggies is to grate and/or chop them as finely as you can. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Then, form two-inch balls and place onto a baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes, rotating a couple times during that time. Enjoy with your favorite dipping sauce or with spaghetti!



## Introducing 'The Pavilions' at Camp Courant

Camp Courant is excited to bring you something we've never done before! We will be renting our grand outdoor pavilions, cozy indoor rooms, and full facility throughout the year while campers are back in school. Whether you are planning a corporate retreat, staff appreciation picnic, children's birthday party, baby showers, holiday cocktail parties and more, you'll find the areas around Camp Courant to fit your needs perfectly. With 36-acres of nature, plenty of recreational activities, pool, nature trail, playscape and many other activities, your guests will have a memorable experience. The best part is each rental directly supports our mission of providing a fun, enriching, safe summer experience for Hartford's youth!

**To schedule a tour, book your event, or get more information,  
contact Tricia Rowold at [trowold@campcourant.org](mailto:trowold@campcourant.org)  
or visit [campcourant.org](http://campcourant.org)**



# Mark Your Calendars!

## 130th Opening Day Celebration **Mon. June 24, 8:30-9:30am**

Without a doubt, the BEST day of the year! Please join us at Camp for a light breakfast, ceremony, and celebration as we welcome over 750 campers back for our 130th year of summer camp! Start off your summer by joining in on this monumental celebration!

## Buddy Bash 'Garden Party' **Fri. Sept. 20 – 6:00-10:00pm**

Our biggest fundraiser of the year! What better way to honor our theme of 'Hope Grows Here' than to host a garden party?! Join us for one of the best parties of the year in the MetroHartford region and celebrate all things Camp! From delicious hors d'oeuvres from local restaurants, beverages from area bars, breweries & distilleries, and a loaded silent auction, it will be an incredible night of highlighting Camp Courant and all its happenings and developments during our 130th anniversary year!

## Johnson Brunetti Nature Walk to benefit Camp Courant **Sun. Oct. 20, 8:00am-12:00pm**

We're changing it up a bit this year, but we're still ready to be up and active with our friends from Johnson Brunetti Retirement & Investment Specialists in support of our campers! Join us at Camp on a beautiful, crisp autumn day and enjoy a beautiful walk throughout our 36-acre campgrounds. We'll meet you at the end with some refreshments!



## NO COOK MOON SAND RECIPE

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 CUPS FLOUR
- ½ CUP VEGETABLE OIL
- OIL BASED FOOD COLORING (OPTIONAL)

### DIRECTIONS

IF USING FOOD COLORING, MIX THIS WITH THE OIL FIRST. THEN, COMBINE ALL INGREDIENTS INTO A LARGE ZIPLOCK BAG. SMOOSH THE BAG UNTIL EVERYTHING IS COMBINED. YOU MAY HAVE TO USE YOUR HANDS FOR ANY REMAINING CLUMPS. HAVE FUN! SMOOSH, MOLD, SMASH, PLAY!



# Community Partner Spotlight

It truly takes a village to make Camp come together year-after-year. While our staff is tremendous, we simply would not be able to make it all happen without the support of Greater Hartford's companies and organizations.

Coming into our fold in 2023 was Talcott Resolution, a life insurance and annuity company based right here in Hartford as part of Talcott Financial Group. Looking for a way to give back to our city, the team at Talcott reached out to Camp staff, hoping to get involved. Members of their staff visited our campsite for a tour and to get a sense of our mission. After spending a few hours at Camp, no further words were needed – they were hooked.

The involvement Talcott had with Camp throughout the fourth quarter of 2023 was nothing short of amazing. The company quickly committed to being a Program Director sponsor of Buddy Bash, and members from across their team were emphatic about wanting to volunteer their time as well.

With Halloween fast approaching, the Talcott team stepped up to volunteer their time and services to ensure Camp had plenty of treats to hand out to its campers at Dunkin Donuts Park. Impressively, this group put together over 2,000 bags of candy for Camp's trick-or-treat event. Over TWO THOUSAND bags of candy – all pur-



## TALCOTT FINANCIAL GROUP

chased and assembled by Talcott. How incredible is that?!

Needless to say, Camp is fortunate enough to call the phenomenal people at this company partners. And our

entire staff is beyond appreciative and thankful to have them in the fold.

“We cannot thank their entire team



enough for connecting with us and supporting our mission,” said Camp Courant Executive Director & CEO Corrienne Chipello. “What we do at Camp could not happen without the support from community organizations throughout our region, and we are so thankful to have Talcott Resolution in the Camp Courant family this year and beyond!”

## Did you know?

Camp turns 130 this year, and our Pavilions turn 24! In 2000, thanks to the generosity of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Hartford Mayor Michael P. Peters broke ground with supporters and staff on a \$2M pavilion project at Camp Courant. Prior to the building of these pavilions, Camp was forced to close during rainy weather. Now, these pavilions offer a variety of opportunities for programming and event planning! 😊





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## Support 'The Pavilions' Start-Up Venture NOW!

As Hartford's Camp Courant expands and grows programming to further its mission, seeking new funding sources is critical. Support the startup funding needed for 'The Pavilions' rental venue today!

**Scan to learn more and invest in the youth of Hartford!**



**SCAN ME!**

