



COVID19 COMMUNITY DAYS 2020 REPORT

YMCA CAMP CONISTON—CROYDON, NH



“

First time I've seen
my child smile
this summer.

— CONISTON COMMUNITY DAYS PARTICIPANT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



As YMCA Camp Coniston was deciding whether to run traditional summer programs time became surreal. Days felt like weeks and weeks felt like months. Ideas that were relevant in the morning seemed completely out of touch by the afternoon. Our concepts generally fell into three categories: smaller programs, camps for regional children, and camps for children of local essential workers. In light of the dire regional COVID19 situation in the Greater Boston Area during April and May, we chose a “day camp” style program open to families. Leveraging Coniston’s beautiful lake and 1500 acres, children could run, swim, and explore; multiple generations could safely see each other for the first time in months; and families could envelop themselves in normalcy.

Coniston met its mission by providing families access to a psychologically beneficial outdoor setting. Almost 3500 individuals participated in Community Day programs throughout the summer, far surpassing our minimum stated goal of 2000 participants. YMCA Camp Coniston convened groups, representatives, and funders from 32 identified organizations to make this summer a success. In addition to meeting the measurable goals of the grant, the following qualitative goals were met:

- Strengthened connections to other organizations
- Opened our program and facility to local residents and visitors
- Provided space for family respite
- Served as a location to reconnect
- Hosted important conversations regarding race and the outdoors
- Provided camping expertise and facilities for local recreation departments
- Ensured underserved populations had a chance to participate by focusing on specific groups representing childhood cancer patients, essential workers, New Americans, local towns, and more

Our actions during COVID19 have raised the profile of Coniston in the eyes of funders, neighbors, and policy makers. Coniston is now acknowledged as an organization that actively improves the quality of life in our region.

PARTICIPANTS

3429

TOTAL NUMBER INCLUDING REGISTRANTS & WALK-INS



HIGH LEVEL METRICS

**TOP 10
ZIP CODES**

NEWPORT, GRANTHAM, NEW LONDON,
CROYDON, SUNAPEE, LEBANON, CONCORD,
WILMOT, HANOVER, NEWBURY

**=56% OF
PARTICIPANTS**

**SULLIVAN COUNTY,
NH RESIDENTS**

**=37% OF
PARTICIPANTS**

11% OF RESIDENTS LIVE
BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

**1 OF EVERY 10
PARTICIPANTS**



FROM NEWPORT, NH



330

DAY CAMPERS
FROM LOCAL RECREATION DEPTS



CAROLYN FINNEY, RENOWNED NATIONAL SPEAKER
AND AUTHOR OF *BLACK FACES, WHITE
SPACES*, SPOKE ABOUT THE BLACK EXPERIENCE
IN THE OUTDOORS TO DRAW ATTENTION AND
CRITICAL THOUGHT TO THE NATION'S RACIAL
STRIFE THIS SUMMER.

60
PARTICIPANTS



243

**ESSENTIAL WORKER
AND NURSES DAYS
REGISTRANTS**

32

**LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND BUSINESSES**

ENGAGED TO MAKE THE SUMMER A SUCCESS

**COLBY
SAWYER
COLLEGE**

RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION
STAFF TRAINED IN
PREPARATION FOR THE
UPCOMING ACADEMIC YEAR



JOHN TILLEY DISCUSSED *YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT DURING COVID19*
IN KEYNOTE PRESENTATION AS
GRANTHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
STAFF MET IN PREPARATION
FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR

**CHILDHOOD
CANCER
LIFELINE**

EXCLUSIVE DAY TO
MINIMIZE EXPOSURE
FOR COMPROMISED
PEDIATRIC CANCER
PATIENTS



**NORTHERN NEW
ENGLAND K-9
SEARCH & RESCUE**

TRAINED ON OUR GROUNDS IN
PREPARATION FOR A HEAVIER THAN
NORMAL SEASON OF OUTDOOR USE
BROUGHT ABOUT BY COVID-19



GRANDPARENTS

156

PARTICIPANTS REPORTED BEING OLDER THAN 60



You've saved
my family's summer.

— CONISTON COMMUNITY DAYS PARTICIPANT



CASE STUDY: A THANK YOU NOTE

When Coniston called to invite our camp to visit this summer there was no hesitation in my response. At the time of the call we weren't sure how we were going to conduct our camp and I was searching for activities to do with our kids. Ordinarily we would travel across the state to various attractions, but those trips were canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

I was ecstatic to learn that our campers would get the opportunity to experience what Coniston had to offer. I have lived in neighboring Newport for most of my life and have never had the opportunity to visit Camp. I worked in the same school with one of the camp nurses and the horseback director. Both of them rave about their summer jobs and frankly I was a little jealous.

This "hidden gem" in Croydon with the rustic cabins and the pristine lake is breathtaking. Our campers loved every minute of their visit. Of course the swimming, tie dye shirts and field games were nice, but the kayaking and archery were our campers favorites. Many had never done either activity before.

Each time I looked at our campers participating in the various activities, I kept thinking how lucky these kids are to be able to enjoy this facility and the many different outdoor adventures it has in one location. Our days at Coniston pale in comparison to anything we would have done at our camp this summer. One camper even asked if we could go back to Coniston next year. Hopefully (for your sake), this won't be possible, but if it was, I would put you on our calendar right now. This would easily replace our trips to Weir's Beach or Chunky's Movie Theatre.

Our campers live in a town without a lot of opportunity and we were grateful that they were able to get the chance to use the Coniston facility. Additionally, we were beyond grateful to have the Coniston staff available to instruct our campers without any cost to us.

Your generosity has made it possible for our campers to create memories that they will cherish for a lifetime and in a time when our campers didn't have much to be thankful for, I want to thank you for making our campers believe in the kindness of strangers.

— Becky Merrow, Day Camp Director Newport, NH Recreation Dept.

330

**LOCAL DAY CAMPER VISITS FROM
NEWPORT & NEW LONDON REC DEPTS**

EVERY THURSDAY WAS SET ASIDE TO EXCLUSIVELY PROVIDE LOCAL CHILDREN FROM TOWN RECREATION DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS FREE ACCESS TO CONISTON'S STAFF AND FACILITY.



GOALS & KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

GOAL

#1 2000-3000 participants

SUCCESS

3429 Grand Total

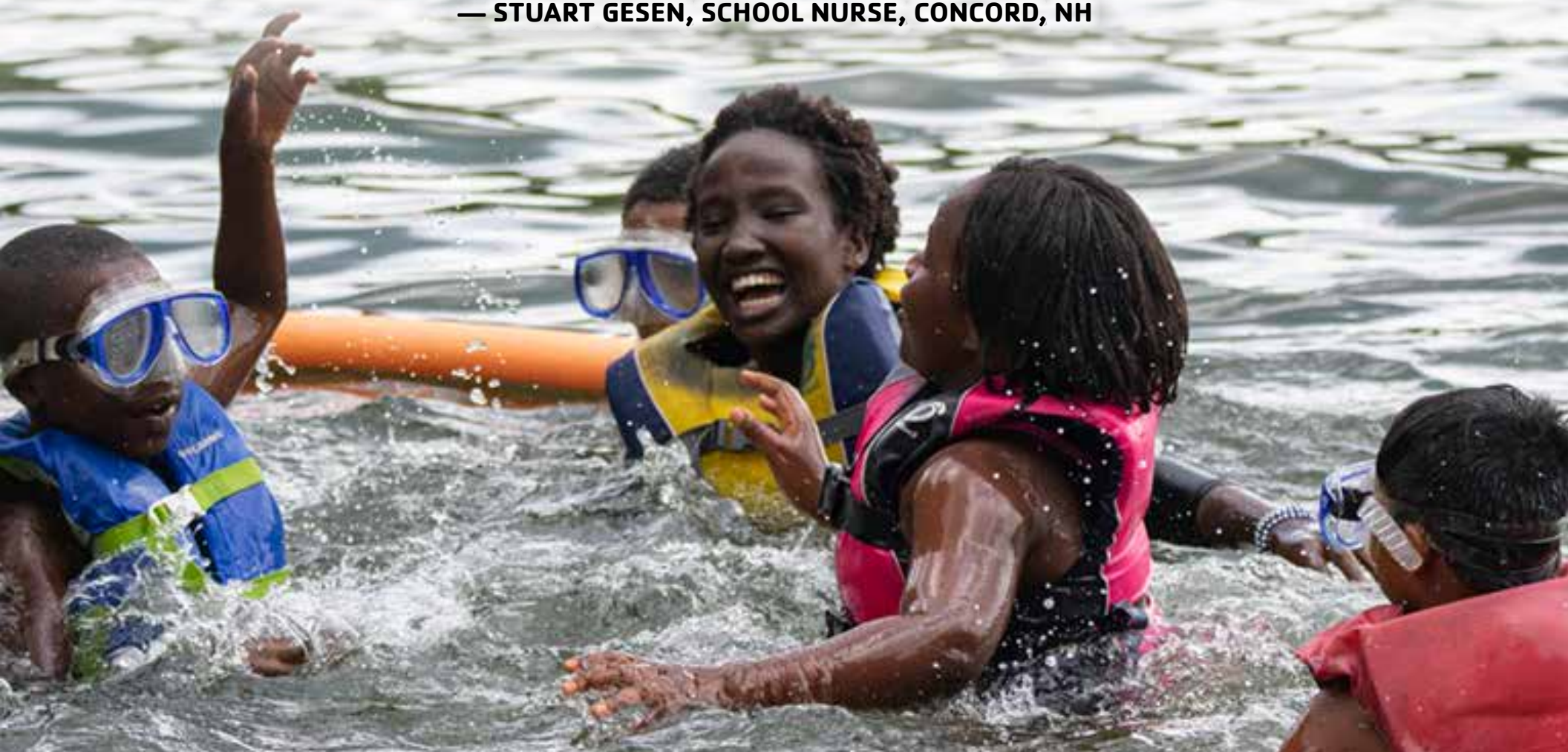
#2 30% of participants come from underserved groups and communities

37% of total participants were residents of Sullivan County, NH where more than 1 in 10 families live below the poverty line.

#3 **Specific days target underserved groups** **1224 participants** (36% of total participants)
7 days for Newport and New London Day Camps; 3 days for Essential Workers; individual days set aside for families of pediatric cancer patients and the Concord New American Community; an evening set aside to discuss racism and the outdoors; days for residents of Croydon, Newport, Goshen, Claremont, Unity, and Lebanon.

“With public pools closed, it has been a treat for our New American friends to enjoy the lake!”

— STUART GESEN, SCHOOL NURSE, CONCORD, NH



46

**MEMBERS OF CONCORD'S
NEW AMERICAN COMMUNITY
ENJOYED THEIR TIME AT CAMP.**

CHALLENGES



TESTING

72 separate COVID-19 tests were administered to 30 staff in three rounds. 1 positive case occurred prior to arrival at camp, demonstrating the importance of testing.



PROMOTION

As is the case with camping in general, word of mouth drove attendance. Early days had as few as 18 registrants, with later days having more than 200. Creating word of mouth in targeted communities via social media proved critical.



FEAR

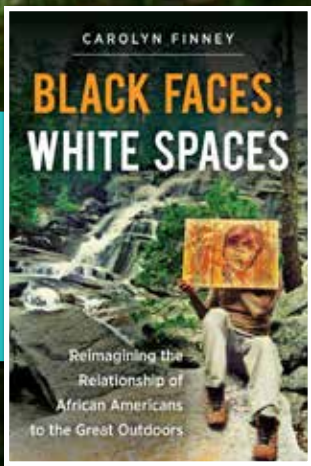
Organizations proved to be risk averse with perceived liability issues taking precedence over sponsoring attendance. As a result, most groups came "on their own" and not in an official capacity. i.e. A group of staff from Valley Regional Hospital, Claremont attended even though the institution never formally engaged with YMCA Camp Coniston. In an effort to recruit participants we solicited local religious organizations, hospitals, and businesses.



CLEANING ROUTINE

EQUIPMENT DISINFECTION AFTER EACH USE, RESTROOM DISINFECTION EVERY TWO HOURS,
DAILY CABIN DISINFECTION, DAILY PICNIC TABLE & SEATING DISINFECTION

STAFF MEMBER PICTURED WITH CLEANING CART



CONISTON PARENTS, BOARD, AND STAFF MEMBERS, WERE JOINED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF COLBY-SAWYER COLLEGE, NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE, CONCORD YMCA, NH SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS, MERCK FOREST AND FARMLAND CENTER, AND THE US NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FOR CAROLYN FINNEY'S AUGUST 7TH PRESENTATION ON RACE AND THE OUTDOORS.



HIGHLIGHTS

A decorative graphic consisting of a vertical line of 15 small orange dots on the left, which then turns 90 degrees clockwise to become a horizontal line of 15 small orange dots at the bottom.

2020 was a transformational summer and continues to present Camp with opportunities we could never have imagined would come from solely running a non-traditional program. For the first time in Coniston's history, we operated solely on donations with all summer programming and access offered at no charge. Financial support for Coniston increased dramatically in response to our actions. Donors are witnessing that we have capacity to pivot and serve the community in ways they were not aware. As a result, we have had conversations with organization that we never have had before, including providing childcare at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, providing class space for local schools, and tutoring middle and high school aged New American students in Concord.

This summer showcased Coniston's capacity as a vibrant regional resource and asset. By demonstrating our commitment to the community in which we reside, we emphasized our mission of building community among our campers. The sense of connection in our normally young campers is the type of social and emotional learning that social research has proven to add years to a person's life and helps build protective factors against Adverse Childhood Experiences.

407

NEWPORT PARTICIPANTS

THE MOST FREQUENT
ADDRESS FOR THE
SUMMER WAS NEWPORT.

THE SECOND MOST FREQUENT
WAS GRANTHAM WITH 272.



“

Community Days is
the best lemonade
from lemons I've seen
during COVID19.

— CONISTON COMMUNITY DAYS PARTICIPANT





88

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM
NH CHILDHOOD CANCER LIFELINE



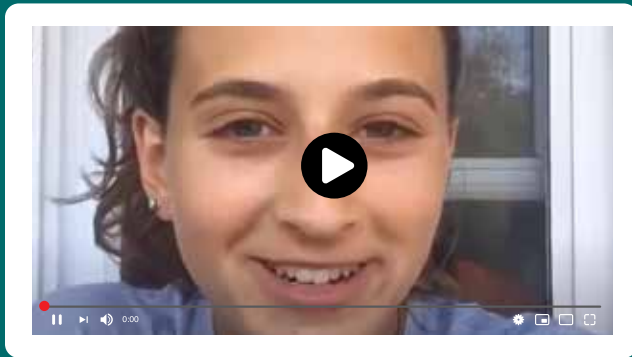
This is the first time
we've felt comfortable
enough to leave our house
as a family since March.

— PARENT OF CHILDHOOD CANCER LIFELINE PARTICIPANT
CONISTON COMMUNITY DAYS



STAFF TESTIMONIAL

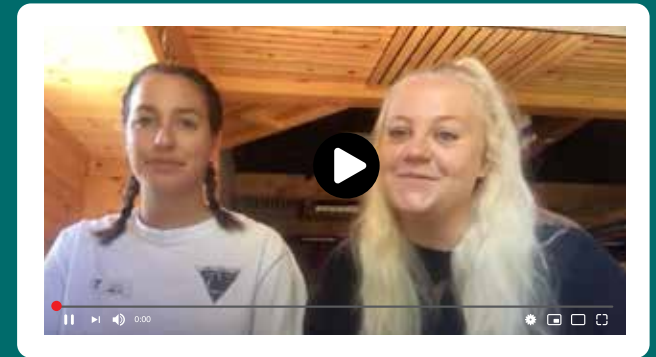
[CLICK TO VIEW VIDEO CLIP](#)



TALIA HEARD THE WORD NEVER



BONNIE WAS GLAD TO SEE FAMILIES HAPPY



JESSE AND LILY DESCRIBE WHAT SUMMER MEANT AS STAFF

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIAL

[CLICK TO READ BLOG POST](#)



ALUMNUS HELPS SHAPE COMMUNITY DAYS

We know it is obvious that there is a need to ease the anguish of isolation by providing ample, safe

[READ MORE »](#)



CAMP WINNING SPIRIT COMMUNITY DAY

First of all, I need to tell you how grateful I am to YMCA Camp Coniston for its continued efforts

[READ MORE »](#)



ALUMNI COMMUNITY DAY — AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE

The Horton Family always takes advantage of visiting Coniston – our favorite place – whenever we can. Lynn and Sherm

[READ MORE »](#)



... I want to thank you
for making our campers
believe in the kindness
of strangers.

— NEWPORT, NH RECREATION DEPT.
CONISTON COMMUNITY DAYS



YMCA CAMP CONISTON

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