

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Tuesday 8:30 - 9:30AM			
Tuesday 8:30 - 9:30AM	Angry and Unreasonable Parents: Boundaries, Legal Obligations, and Practical Responses	Every camp director has faced the parent who crosses the line—from custody disputes and refund demands to threats of lawsuits, social media campaigns, or demands that staff or campers be dismissed. This session provides a roadmap for navigating these high-stress encounters. We'll unpack your true legal obligations, explore diffusion strategies that calm tensions, and highlight the contract language you can use in enrollment and staff agreements to establish clear boundaries before problems arise. Attendees should leave with practical talking points, policy tools, and a clearer understanding of where your responsibility begins and ends.	Alan Cooper
	From Counselor to Captain: Growing Leaders Season After Season	At BBYO, summer staff aren't just seasonal hires, they're the foundation of a thriving leadership pipeline. Through intentional training, mentorship, and multi-year growth opportunities, BBYO equips staff with the tools to lead not only during the summer but well beyond. This session will share practical strategies for investing in seasonal staff as long-term assets: building strong onboarding, creating pathways for returning staff to take on greater responsibility, and fostering a culture of feedback, reflection, and engagement year-round. Join us to learn how BBYO's proven approach turns summer staff into committed leaders who return summer after summer and strengthen the future of our organizations.	Ariel Rosen
	Your Camp's Culture Is Stronger Than This Climate: Navigating Sensitive Topics with Clarity and Care	In an increasingly polarized world, camp professionals are often challenged to navigate sensitive social, political, and cultural conversations while maintaining an inclusive, mission-aligned environment for staff and campers. This session explores how to distinguish between organizational culture and external climate, and how to protect the former while compassionately managing the latter. Participants will learn practical tools and sample language to guide difficult conversations, set clear boundaries, and reinforce shared norms that center the camper experience. This interactive workshop will help leaders prepare for the realities of summer 2026 by strengthening their ability to uphold culture, foster cohesion, and sustain psychological safety across their teams.	Briana Michele Mitchell
	From Stops to Stats: Analyzing Data from Transportation	Explores camp transportation as a dynamic system that can be measured, understood, and optimized. This session will guide camp leaders in turning complex data-covering routes, bus capacities, arrival and dismissal timing, staff deployment, car seat counts, and communication patterns into actionable insights. Attendees will learn how to use these insights to enhance operational efficiency, streamline staff assignments, improve parent and camper experiences, and make strategic decisions that scale across their programs. By the end of the session, participants will leave with a framework for analyzing transportation data in a way that transforms everyday logistics into a powerful tool for leadership and program excellence.	Cameron Bock
	<i>Give 'em the Pickle</i> : A Lesson in Customer Service	Customer service is important because it drives loyalty, increases registration, and builds a positive brand reputation. How we treat our families can make the difference between us and our competitors, and foster a positive word-of-mouth reputation. This is customer service training using the philosophy of Bob Farrells, <i>Give 'em the Pickle</i> . We will identify the pickles to make our staff, our campers, and communities happy and coming back for years to come.	Deidra Clark
	From "I Can't Even" to "I've Got This": Coaching Staff Through Camper Burnout	Care fatigue, empathy erosion, compassion crash - whatever you call it, we've all seen that "I'm done with this camper" look. Even the most dedicated staff hit a point where patience fades, frustration rises, and they feel emotionally tapped out. Join Emily to delve into why staff hit this wall - physiologically, emotionally, and relationally - and how leaders can help them regain balance. We'll explore ways to acknowledge and normalize these moments (without shame!) and discuss practical tools to help staff successfully reset and re-engage. You'll walk away with clear strategies for keeping staff grounded and effective when their patience runs out...but the camper is still very much there.	Emily Golinsky
	Running a Successful Ninja Program at Camp: From Safety to Fun	Are you looking for ways to introduce the growing sport of ninja warrior to your camp without a big investment? Or do you have a ninja course that is under-utilized? Ninja Warrior programs are exploding in popularity - offering campers a mix of fitness, fun, and confidence building - learn how to elevate your programming and create unforgettable camper experiences through the sport of ninja warrior. Led by the CEO & Founder of The Grit Ninja—a lifelong camper with deep experience building camp programs—alongside a professional ninja athlete who has competed in multiple seasons of NBC's American Ninja Warrior, this session breaks down how to design and deliver a safe, engaging, and sustainable ninja program for all ages. Program directors of both day camps and overnight camps will gain practical strategies to improve programming, supervise obstacles safely, and build a scalable structure that	Eric Meltzer

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Tuesday 8:30 - 9:30AM	Edible Weather: Turning Stormy Days into STEM Days	<p>When the weather changes, camp doesn't have to stop - it can transform. In this lively, hands-on workshop, meteorologist Jason Frazer introduces Edible Weather, a creative STEM-based activity that helps campers understand how weather affects their lives using food as a teaching tool.</p> <p>Participants will explore simple, no-heat experiments like the Tornado Trail Mix and Rain in a Cup, designed for rainy-day programming or weather delay periods. These interactive lessons not only engage campers in STEM learning but also reduce anxiety around storms and reinforce weather safety concepts.</p>	Jason Frazer
	Choosing the Right Channel for the Right Message	Your families are bombarded with information in weekly emails, reminder texts, social posts, app notifications, and more. From time-sensitive alerts to driving excitement for re-enrollment, let's explore how to deliver each message in the right place at the right time, instead of posting everything everywhere. We'll cover subject line strategies, image choices, how to keep recurring messages fresh, and how to communicate with staff, many of whom prefer text and Snapchat to email. After small group conversations and workshoping, you'll leave with a fresh matrix for deciding what goes where, plus tips for leveraging underused tools like apps, countdown clocks, and content "takeovers" during the off-season.	Laurie Ehrlich
	Strengthen Your Grant Writing Skills by Applying for a Character at Camp Grant	The purpose of this session is to equip participants with the skills to successfully apply for grants to support their camp mission. With a specific focus on the Character at Camp grant program, participants will learn the steps and skills necessary for applying for basic grants, including how to find grants, how to tell if they're aligned with your needs, components of a basic grant application, and what happens next if you do or do not receive a grant. Participants will also get an inside look at the Character at Camp program and the proposals that were selected in the first round of funding.	Laurie Pearson
	From Whiteboard to Wakeboard: Building Individualized Camper Schedules	In this session, Stacy shares strategies and processes for designing individualized activity schedules that honor camper choices for skills-based fun. Follow the process from the whiteboard to the wakeboard as Stacy walks through how the programming team works at Beber Camp, where 3 out of 5 activity periods a day are choice-based. Stacy will draw from case studies at her camp, showing how even as technology and AI become more integrated into our scheduling process, human involvement remains critical. Participants will leave inspired with intentionality behind activity choices and an understanding of the importance of camper feedback while creating customized camper schedules.	Stacy Jordan Greenberg
	What We Know: A Conversation with Department of State Bridge USA J-1 Program Experts	International and cultural exchange has recently been impacted by our changing world. What have we learned from the past, and what can we do to better prepare for 2026?	Diane Culkin
	Running an Exemplary Camp Inclusion Program	20% of our campers receive support for additional needs from their school districts. What does your camp do to support and assimilate these children into your program successfully? As a start-up camp, Liberty Lake embraced children of all abilities, but when the number of children needing support became significant, they sought out best practices from other programs to create their "Success Program" with accompanying protocols for children with needs in a neurotypical camp environment. Terri and Andy will take you through their process from the camp application to the camp season, explaining how a high level of intentionality and acceptance adds to the culture and reputation of Liberty Lake.	Andy Pritikin Terri Southerland
	The Bias You Don't See: Creating Space for Everyone at Camp	Unconscious bias can quietly shape our interactions, decisions, and the camp culture in ways we may not even realize. This interactive training will help camp professionals recognize the "hidden" biases that influence behavior, relationships, and camper experiences. Together, we will explore practical strategies to interrupt bias, foster belonging, and create intentional spaces where every camper and staff member feels valued, included, and supported. Participants will engage in reflection, discussion, and scenario-based activities that highlight how even small shifts in awareness and practice can transform camp into a place where everyone can thrive.	Bridgette Barbera-Byrne Erin Lacotta
	Say It, Mean It, Move Forward: Accountability That Works	Giving feedback and having accountability conversations with staff can be challenging, especially when emotions run high, shame creeps in, and motivation takes a hit. In this session, participants will explore strategies for making feedback more objective, actionable, and empowering. Through practical tools and real-world examples, camp professionals will learn how to navigate tough conversations with clarity and confidence, fostering a culture of growth and responsibility among their counselor teams.	Clayton Dodson Jackie Brethel

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Tuesday 8:30 - 9:30AM	The Guided Prompt Experience: Using AI to Create All-Camp Games	<p>Capture the Flag and Color War are the quintessential all-camp games at summer camp. Most likely, your camp has a spin on it that makes your version different from all other camps. But do you have a "signature program"?</p> <p>Attendees will start with a quick overview of the components required for a successful all-camp game. Then we will go through a guided, structured AI prompting session. You will leave this session with an interesting, unique game and a rich understanding of different prompting techniques. *Please bring a device with you, laptops are preferred for the best experience.</p>	Dave Ghidui Aaron Proietti
	Transform Your Training with Activities that Make Your Messages Stick	Do you have important training messages that need to stick with your staff long after your pre-camp training ends? This interactive session includes a fresh collection of training activities to help you transform your training and make your messages stick. All activities are low or no-cost and easy to integrate into your pre-camp staff training plans.	Jed Buck Roz Buck
	Taming the Beast: How to Simplify Inventory and Ordering for Day Camps	<p>Let's face it, inventory and ordering are rarely anyone's favorite part of camp operations. But what if the process could actually be organized, efficient, and dare we say, a little fun? In this session, the Operations team from Kids in the Game will share how they transformed the "dreaded" inventory season into a year-round, team-driven system that saves time, money, and stress.</p> <p>Whether your "supply closet" is a full warehouse or a few bins in a school gym, you'll walk away with a clear framework-and some tested tricks-to help your team stay ahead of the curve instead of buried under boxes.</p>	Jenn Scarano Pranav Mohan-Derkay
	Micro-Trainings & Safety Huddles: Fast, Focused, and Impactful Staff Engagement	Summer camp moves fast, and keeping staff consistently focused on safety can feel like a full-time job. This session is designed for camp leaders who want to keep safety top-of-mind without adding a 2-hour lecture to the schedule using micro-trainings and safety huddles. Learn creative, time-efficient strategies that reinforce protocols, build accountability, and fit seamlessly into your camp's daily rhythm. No long lectures, just real talk and tools that will resonate.	Katie Johnson Carissa Chipman
Dining Hall - Tuesday 12:30-1:30PM			
Dining Hall - Tuesday 12:30-1:30PM	Veteran Voices: Leading Camp Orientation	Too often, summer camp orientation is led by the camp director and assistant or associate directors. However, orientation can be even better when incorporating veteran voices from your experienced camp leadership and staff. This session highlights the unique strengths veteran staff bring to summer camp leadership and how to effectively incorporate them into orientation and training. Attendees will explore strategies for leveraging veterans' experience, discipline, and leadership skills to enhance staff development and camp culture. Topics include creating roles that maximize veteran contributions, fostering mentorship opportunities, and blending leadership styles with camp values. Participants will gain practical tools for designing inclusive orientation programs that engage veterans and inspire all staff members. Leave ready to build a cohesive, skilled team that benefits from the proven leadership of veterans.	Adam Grundfast
	Red Cross Instructor Roundtable	Join fellow camp professionals who are also certified Red Cross instructors for a dynamic networking and learning session focused on the latest updates in Red Cross training services. This interactive roundtable will provide a space to share best practices, discuss challenges unique to camp settings, and explore new resources and curriculum updates from the American Red Cross. Whether you're teaching lifeguarding, CPR/First Aid, or other safety courses, this session will help you stay current, strengthen your instructional impact, and build connections with peers who understand the unique demands of seasonal and youth-focused programming. Come ready to collaborate, ask questions, and leave with actionable insights to enhance your camp's safety and training initiatives.	Cait Waxler
	Creativity is a Superpower! Discuss Unique Activities for Your Camp	Summer camp is fueled by s'mores, glitter, and of course, creativity. Join us in this round table discussion to hear about and share your ideas for evening activity shenanigans, staff activities to help with the mid-summer blues, fun, low-cost activities that are trending online, and more! Come ready to share and ready to learn so we can all add a little more personality to our programs. Step out of the box and see where creativity can take you. The opportunities are limitless!	Mattie Bryant
	2, 4, 6, 8, Who DO We Appreciate?! (And How Do We Appreciate Them?)	Camp staff work HARD. They pour tons of effort, energy, and enthusiasm into camp, and dedicate so much time to making camp the special place that it is. And for better or worse, their compensation for doing so is... lacking. Because of this, developing an intentional, meaningful, and tangible staff appreciation program is a critically important aspect of running a successful camp. During this hands-on and interactive workshop, participants will have the opportunity to discuss and ideate with fellow camp professionals about staff appreciation best practices, including things they can consider for Summer 2026.	Max Claman

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
	There is No Off-Season: Engaging Families in Your Camp Community Year-Round	When camps focus on building a strong community in the "off-season," families will feel more tied to your camp year-round, and are more likely to continue to send their children to your camp year after year, improving your camper retention. Campers whose family members feel connected to the camp community are also more likely to return as staff members, helping to improve staff retention as well. This session will offer camp leadership teams new ideas, tips, and practices for engaging their camp families in the camp community year-round, helping to build a strong, proud, and committed community and improve camper and staff retention rates.	Shoshi Rothschild
Dining Hall - Tuesday 12:30-1:30PM	Lunch with a Lawyer: Legal Questions Answered	As we plan for each summer, camp professionals run into daily legal questions. Should we update our contracts with families? Should parents sign a waiver? What does the ADA require of us? What are the best practices for hiring? The list goes on and on. This session provides an open forum to discuss your legal questions with a camp attorney and camp founder. Participants will hear from colleagues to understand what legal considerations are most pressing in the industry right now, and they will receive concrete guidance in response to their legal questions.	Isaac Mamaysky
	ACA Accreditation Volunteer Gathering	Calling all ACA Visitors! Join us for a roundtable hosted by the ACA, NY & NJ Standards Committee that will focus on saying "Thank You" to our amazing volunteers. We'll have tips, tricks, camaraderie, and door prizes, so you're guaranteed to leave with something good (besides the satisfaction of being an integral part of the standards program). Bring your lunch and help us celebrate and support our amazing community of visitors!	
	The Other Full-Time Job: Parenting at Camp	Running camp is a 24/7 job, and so is parenting. For many of us, those worlds collide every summer as we strive to be fully present for our campers, our staff, and our own children. This roundtable is a space to be seen, heard, and supported by others who live the same unique experience. Join fellow camp professionals for an open discussion about parenting at camp. The joys, the guilt, the boundaries, and the lessons learned along the way. Together, we'll share strategies, stories, and small wins while exploring topics such as setting healthy boundaries between "camp parent" and "camp professional", hiring and managing staff while parenting in the same environment, acknowledging and navigating the hard days, and communicating with your partner when camp consumes your world. This session isn't about having all the answers; it's about connection, laughter, and learning from one another. Whether you're a camp director raising kids at camp or thinking about having kids at camp.	Dana Miller Dan Emmons Lolo Castro
	Fast Friends: Speed Networking for Camp Leaders and Innovators	Ever attend a conference and wish you could meet more people and learn about their programs? This fun and fast-paced session will make it happen! Expect to foster connections, share ideas, and build partnerships through meaningful interactions with a variety of camp professionals. Be sure to bring business cards!	Kristina Woznicki Jennifer Reid
	Urban Day Camp Roundtable	Running a camp in the heart of a city comes with its own unique joys and challenges, from limited outdoor space to complex partnerships and ever-changing logistics. But urban camps also have incredible opportunities for creativity, diversity, and innovation. This is your chance to connect with other camp professionals who "get it", those navigating bus routes instead of trails, school gyms instead of pavilions, and neighborhoods instead of lakes. Together, we'll brainstorm creative solutions, celebrate wins, and strengthen the network of urban day camp leaders. Come ready to share, learn, and leave inspired by what's possible when we make camp magic happen right in the middle of the city.	Pranav Mohan-Derkay Jenn Scarano Cara Hudson
Tuesday 2:00-3:00PM			
	What to Do When the Sky Falls: Lesson from a Microburst Tornado	What happens when 200 camp professionals arrive for a tour and a microburst tornado shows up too? At the ACA, NY & NJ Resident Camp Conference tour of Berkshire Lake Camp, that very scenario became an unexpected crash course in extreme weather preparedness. This session tells the story of what unfolded in real time and the lessons it revealed for every camp leader. We'll dive into how to assess and protect your facilities, strengthen infrastructure, and train staff so they know how to act when the sky really does fall. From trees down to power out to reopening safely, this is a practical, candid look at what camps can do now to be ready for whatever weather blows their way.	Brent Osborne

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
	13 Lessons from the Field: Five Years of LGBTQ+ Equity in Camping	What has five years of queer and trans equity work in camping taught us? These 13 lessons shine with joy, resilience, and real talk about systems, solidarity, and sustainability. Come ready to reflect, laugh, nod along, and take away fresh insights you can apply to your own leadership and organizational growth.	Chris Rehs-Dupin
Tuesday 2:00-3:00PM	The Ultimate Interview	<p>Interviewing can feel overwhelming, but with the right approach, it becomes a powerful tool for building strong and effective teams. This session will walk participants through the who, what, and how of interviewing potential camp staff.</p> <p>Key focus areas will include how to structure an effective interview process, practical techniques to uncover both strengths and challenges in candidates, and strategies for identifying the right fit to support your camp community.</p> <p>By the end of the session, participants will have concrete skills and tools to approach interviews with confidence and clarity.</p>	Corrie Sirota
	Ready or Not? The Power of Succession Planning	Only 27% of organizations are truly prepared for leadership transitions, are you one of them? Whether it's a planned handoff or an unexpected shift, the difference between readiness and chaos can define your organization's future. In this session, we'll explore what "ready" really means, uncover the risks of ignoring succession planning, and identify the steps to build a clear, confident path forward. You'll learn how to engage key players - from board members to donors - and use a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) lens to find allies who can champion the process. Succession planning isn't optional anymore; it's your insurance policy that helps guarantee stability, continuity, and long-term success.	David Phillips
	The Psychosocial Cascade: When One Camper's Sparks Light a Group Fire	It starts with one camper's impulsive outburst or social misstep. Friction ripples through the group: there are eye rolls, teasing, exclusion, and, before long, low-level bullying. Staff do what they can, but they aren't effective in quelling the drama or the behaviors. Left unchecked, this "psychosocial cascade" drains staff energy, heightens tension, and destabilizes the group dynamic. Leadership is frustrated with staff, staff are frustrated with campers and leadership, and oh yes, here come the parents who can't understand what went wrong and definitely blame someone else's kiddo, your staff, and you! Join Emily as we confidently address this frustrating situation, breaking down why these dynamics unfold so quickly, then turning to what staff can do to prevent escalation and rebuild group connections. You'll leave with strategies to help you check the sparks, equip staff to constructively address all campers' needs, and navigate the often-tricky parent conversations that follow.	Emily Golinsky
	From Hire to Higher Retention: Building a Staff Experience that Works	Returning staff are the heart of a thriving camp. They know your culture, connect with campers and families, and grow into leadership roles year after year. But how do you keep them coming back? We can all agree it is not the paycheck. Drawing on Mid Island Day Camp's own staff retention journey, this session explores practical strategies and actionable steps to enhance staff engagement and satisfaction. We will take a deep dive into what's working, what's holding you back, and the practices you might already be using that are more important than you realize. With a few small tweaks, you can make your camp the hot place to work this summer and for years to come.	Gayle Meigel
	Move, Laugh, Connect: Ten Staff Orientation Activities that Work	The best orientations balance learning and laughter. In this interactive workshop, you'll take part in ten activities that help staff connect, internalize camp values, and feel ready for summer. Come ready to play, reflect, and bring fresh ideas back to your team.	Gregg Licht
	From Bored to Bought In: How to Train Staff Who Actually Care	<p>Let's be honest. Most staff training sessions are boring. You have a ton to cover, and here's the truth: no matter how perfectly you deliver the important stuff, if it's boring, your staff are going to suck. Engaged training equals engaged staff equals happy kids.</p> <p>This session is all about fixing that. We will focus on one thing: making training so engaging that staff cannot tune out. You will move, laugh, and practice activities you can steal for your own camp. You will see how to take the topics you already have to teach and make them land. Our job is not to pile on more content. Our job is to tap into what staff already care about and make the important stuff stick.</p> <p>This will not feel like a lecture. It will feel like camp.</p>	Jack Schott

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
	Should You Even Send That Email? Parent Communication in the Tough Moments	We've all had that moment, hovering over "send" or debating a phone call. This interactive session explores how to engage families when concerns arise about behavior, safety, or expectations. Learn from a camp public relations expert as Jeff discusses real-world scenarios. Be ready to bring your questions to the session to get real-time answers! Through relatable scenarios, you'll learn how to communicate clearly, preserve relationships, and keep parents on your team, even when conversations get tough.	Jeff Jubelirer
Tuesday 2:00-3:00PM	The Campfire Effect: What Camp Teaches Us About How Humans Thrive	What if the traditions of camp life reveal how humans are meant to live, learn, and connect? This session explores how the rhythms of camp naturally balance key brain chemicals - dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, endorphins, and cortisol - to create happier, more resilient children and staff. Drawing on psychology, neuroscience, and decades of camp experience, participants will examine how communal living, shared rituals, play, and face-to-face connection foster deep belonging and personal growth. The session will also highlight lessons camps can share with schools, families, and workplaces about designing environments that promote well-being, purpose, and human connection.	Matt Kaufman
	Unique Camp Superpowers: Maximizing How Camp Grows Great People	Join us to learn Michael's new, creative "theory of everything" to describe in a fresh, exciting way, exactly how we can use the highly practical, fundamental elements of camp that make it a uniquely powerful tool for change. And of course, this comes with Michael's trademark "tons of immediately usable examples" approach. These are the specific, terrific tools for your most world-changing summer ever. Boost the way we keep the most powerful promise of the camp experience: making sure that we are using camp for its greatest and most marketable purpose. Michael, the author of the bestselling "Intentional Camp: Putting More Muscle in the Mission of Character & Youth Development," will show a laser-like focus on mission, demonstrating both new and essential ways to train, motivate, supervise, support, and coach every member of our team to use our fun and engaging camp activities to build confidence, caring, cooperation, respect, responsibility, and much more.	Michael Brandwein
	Jump Rope Made Fun & EASY!	Participants will uncover the secret sauce for breaking down jump rope skills, building up campers' confidence with slick progressions, and rolling out fun games that keep the energy high and the kids jumping for joy! We'll zero in on single rope skills and games, perfect for all ages and skill levels, making every jump a blast!	Nick Woodard
	Preventing Camper-to-Camper Abuse: A Scenario-Based Roadmap for Training and Response	Dealing with an allegation of abuse in camp is every director's worst-case scenario, and when the alleged abuser is another camper, the complexity multiplies. Camper-to-camper abuse is one of the most challenging and least understood issues camps face today, requiring nuanced prevention strategies, staff training, and a camp-wide culture of awareness and accountability. This session will guide participants through a scenario-based, multi-step framework for both preventing and responding to camper-to-camper abuse. Using realistic examples drawn from camp life, we will explore how early identification of boundary-testing behaviors, effective supervision, and clear communication can dramatically reduce risk. Participants will learn how to implement staff training that moves beyond policy review to create confident, proactive counselors who know what to look for, how to intervene, and how to escalate concerns.	Rahel Bayar
	Color War!	This is the mother-load. The Big-Kahuna. The Big Whopper. The Grand-Daddy of them all! We all participated in Color War. But this is the one you've been waiting for. Walk away with a 92-page document on how to run Color War, from start to finish. Take away hundreds of ideas on how to run your Color War and how to make your Color War better than ever. There are plenty of ways to run it, and we are going to show them all to you!	Sam Bloom
	Evaluation Strategies that Speak to Gen-Z	This session will challenge participants to reimagine what staff evaluations can look like. This generation of staff members is focused on what experiences can do for them. With this in mind, how can camp owners and directors update their evaluation strategies while still ensuring that staff are upholding camp values and fulfilling all of their responsibilities? Evaluations that are rooted in individual goals will allow opportunity to celebrate growth and skill development, and offer support where staff are lacking. This session will offer practical strategies for reimagining staff evaluations that will lead to an improved staff experience and help to increase staff retention.	Shoshi Rothschild
	How Thoughtful AI Use Strengthens Camp's Core Mission	AI is changing how families find, evaluate, and choose camps, and the pace isn't slowing down. This session gives you practical, experience-backed guidance on building AI policies, adopting tools safely, and making the operational changes worth your time right now. We'll also break down the bigger shifts ahead: why traditional SEO is losing ground, what GEO (Generative Engine Optimization) means for your camp's visibility, and how generative technology will shape family expectations before they ever reach your website.	Spencer Mroczek
	The "Day Camp Pod" Roundtable	Come on out to share day camp best practices with each other. Topics will be based on conversations and feedback from this season's Day Camp Podcast episodes, including customer service, staffing, operations, weather, buses, programming, special events, and more! Let's get in the weeds and share!	Andy Pritikin Jordanna Grossinger Sandra "Sam" Thompson

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
	Technology & Operations at Camp	From paper to computers, behind every smooth camp day is a hundred moving parts: bunks, activities, meals, staff breaks, and last-minute changes. In this session, Eyal Abadi, founder of Campify, shares practical strategies for running camp operations more efficiently. Attendees will learn tips for automating workflows, simplifying scheduling, and reducing day-to-day chaos. The session also includes a hands-on DIY component, giving participants the chance to implement these ideas at their own camps and walk away with actionable solutions ready to use. Bring your laptop!	Eyal Abadi Joseph Levy
Tuesday 3:15-4:15PM			
Tuesday 3:15-4:15PM	Camp is Intersectional: Are Your Staff Training Sessions Meeting the Moment?	We all want to ensure that our camp team is equipped to handle anything that comes their way during the camp season. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility training is imperative for fostering both safe and brave spaces for campers and for your team. We are experiencing a challenging world where the perpetual gloom and doom of the news brings challenges many may not, and cannot, understand. This workshop will dissect how we can further set ourselves up for success by looking at our trainings through the multi-layer lenses that come with intersectionality, power, and privilege, particularly for our LGBTQ+ and BIPOC campers and staff members. This session will provide both a toolkit of ideas to bring back to your team, as well as a real-life simulation on how to use the tools provided for both in-person and virtual training sessions.	Justine Saliski Brielle Winslow-Majette
	Fresh Twists for Staff Orientation (Without Starting From Scratch!)	Is your staff orientation feeling a little "same old, same old"? This session is all about those small but mighty tweaks that can breathe new life into your training without tossing out what already works. We'll start by looking at how to evaluate last summer's successes (and flops!) to figure out what's worth keeping and what needs a refresh. You'll discover how to layer in new, engaging elements that connect with today's Gen Z staff, while also learning when to recognize that tried-and-true traditions may no longer hit the mark. This isn't a one-size-fits-all overhaul; every camp is different and your orientation should reflect that! Instead, you'll walk away with 3-5 ready-to-use ideas, activities, and session outlines that you can plug directly into your existing orientation. Join us for a fun, practical workshop that will help you keep your orientation fresh, exciting, and effective, year after year!	Adam Baranker
	When Bad Things Happen to Good Campers	This session offers camp staff an essential foundation in understanding grief and bereavement: what it is, how it shows up, and how to support both themselves and their campers through it. Led by Corrie Sirota, MSW, PSW, and author of <i>Someone Died...Now What? A Personal and Professional Perspective on Coping with Grief and Loss</i> , the workshop draws on over 25 years of experience helping individuals and communities navigate crisis. Participants will gain practical coping strategies to use when faced with the difficult reality of a death impacting the camp community, whether a camper, staff member, or family member. Special attention will be given to tailoring debriefings to the developmental needs of different age groups, ensuring that communication and support are both age-appropriate and compassionate. This session will leave staff better prepared to respond with confidence, care, and resilience when loss touches their camp environment.	Corrie Sirota
	Leading from the Middle	Middle management can be a funny place. Senior enough to make big decisions and lead teams, but not have the power to make organizational change. In this session, Diana Bloom will address the challenges of "Leading From the Middle" and offer ideas and tools for middle managers to succeed. We will explore what "managing up" means and doesn't, why it matters, and guidelines to follow. Come to discuss strategies to proactively build productive relationships with supervisors and colleagues, to obtain the best possible results for your manager, their boss, and your organization.	Diana Bloom
	Hiring in Real Life: Managing Late Hires Without Lowering the Bar	Even the most organized camps can find themselves hiring in June or scrambling mid-season when someone backs out. This session offers realistic systems to help leaders manage late hires strategically, not desperately. We'll unpack what's truly essential in screening, reference checks, and onboarding when time is tight, and how to design condensed training plans that still reinforce culture, safety, and professionalism. Participants will learn how to communicate expectations clearly, document effectively, and build quick-connect strategies that help new staff feel part of the team within days. Whether you're filling a counselor role or a leadership gap, you'll leave with practical templates, communication tools, and HR-informed guidance that keep standards high, even when the clock is not on your side.	Donna Johns-Thomas

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Tuesday 3:15-4:15PM	Let's Keep Our Hands to Ourselves	The camp experience is all about building relationships, meeting new people, making friends, and finding oneself. But what happens when lines are blurred and boundaries are crossed? How do camps navigate what is appropriate and inappropriate, and manage and respond to boundary violations and peer conflict? Using real examples from camp, this session will dive into what happens when campers cross lines, how Counselors and Directors respond, how to assess and manage risk, and what happens next.	Drew Fidler
	Culture by Design: Developing Staff Through a Pyramid of Success	<p>Legendary coach John Wooden built one of the most successful dynasties in sports history not by focusing on winning, but by defining and living his Pyramid of Success, a framework of values, habits, and character traits that guided every player and coach in his program. What if your camp had its own version of that?</p> <p>In this session, we'll explore how to intentionally design and reinforce a camp culture that reflects your core values at every level, from your directors to your newest counselors. Using Wooden's Pyramid as a model, participants will learn how to identify their camp's "building blocks," align daily actions and traditions with guiding principles, and communicate those values so that everyone - campers, staff, and families - feels part of something meaningful. The result could be a camp that doesn't just say what it stands for, but rather, it lives it every single day.</p>	Jared Gelb
	Firm, Kind, and Effective: Navigating Tough Parent Conversations	<p>Today's parents are more involved than ever, and sometimes, that involvement crosses boundaries or escalates into conflict. Whether you're addressing a complaint, clarifying expectations, or de-escalating an emotional conversation, the way you communicate matters.</p> <p>This session will provide practical strategies and a clear communication framework to help camp professionals engage confidently and respectfully with difficult parents. Drawing from real-world experience and a simple, memorable model, you'll learn how to approach even the hardest conversations with professionalism, empathy, and consistency, without sacrificing clarity or authority.</p>	Jon Bisset
	Understanding LARP: the What, How, and Why (or Why Not)	<p>Live Action Role Playing (LARP) has become more mainstream over the past few years; but what exactly is it? Most people think of it as a bunch of people in full costume running around and hitting each other with swords (which it totally can be, and that is very fun). But at its core, LARP is a story-telling medium. Come learn about LARP and how it can be integrated into your camp programming; either as an enhancement to what already exists, or as a completely new activity. Let The Wayfinder Experience bring you along on the journey from no budget and no space to elaborate costumes and rituals, with all the steps in between. Figure out how LARP can fit into your camp programming in the capacity that works best for you. Come listen, learn, and go back ready to play!</p> <p>Following this session will be an additional session running a mini LARP for all levels to gain the full LARP experience.</p>	Judson Packard
	Building Bridges: Partnering with Families for Successful Disability Inclusion	<p>Building trust with families of children with disabilities is key to successful inclusion. This session offers practical strategies to create welcoming messaging, improve intake processes, and navigate challenging conversations with empathy. Participants will hear compelling family testimonials about the impact of true inclusion and explore ways to reduce non-disclosure by shifting the narrative from "Why didn't they tell us?" to "How can we create the trust needed for families to share?"</p> <p>Attendees will gain tools to foster stronger partnerships with families, empowering staff to better understand and support all participants. By focusing on communication, collaboration, and inclusive practices from the start, camp professionals can ensure every camper feels seen, supported, and able to thrive in their programs. This session equips staff with the mindset and methods needed to build meaningful bridges with families and create environments where all children truly belong.</p>	Lisa Drennan
	The Game Design Lab: Forge Your Next Camp Classic	<p>Is your special event calendar in need of a creative spark? Move beyond the traditional and learn to engineer unforgettable moments for your campers. This highly interactive session is a hands-on design lab where you won't just learn theory, you'll build a new game from the ground up.</p> <p>As a facilitator, Luis will share his proven Experience Design process, challenging you to think outside the box and rapidly develop a unique activity in real-time. You'll collaborate with peers in a dynamic, creative sprint. Participants will leave this session with a step-by-step creative framework to design impactful activities, the skills and confidence to facilitate this process with your own staff, and a brand-new, ready-to-play game designed by YOU for the summer!</p>	Luis Rivero

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Tuesday 3:15-4:15PM	Universal Values: How Camps Can Evaluate and Elevate Their Entire Staffing Cycle	As the staff experience continues to be put under a microscope, are camps doing enough to ensure that the expectations they set align with the realities their staff face? This session shares a new model camps can adopt to reshape their entire staffing process and provides tangible tips and tools camps can use to evaluate and level-up their interviews, onboarding/orientation, feedback systems, and how they can integrate each of these pieces of the puzzle into their overall staff culture. This session will focus on restructuring a camp's entire staffing cycle, and will focus on what camps can do AFTER summer 2026, and how they can utilize their 2026 staff to help set the stage for the future, helping create buy-in and accountability for the summer ahead.	Max Claman
	Mosquitoes at Camp: Prevention, Protection, and Peace of Mind	Mosquitoes are more than just a nuisance; they're a public health concern that every camp should take seriously. In this session, Michael Hoban from New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Mosquito Control Coordination will discuss practical strategies to reduce mosquito presence and protect campers and staff. Drawing on his experience in statewide mosquito surveillance and control, he will cover prevention techniques, how to identify common breeding sites, and the science behind effective control methods. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of how to work with local mosquito control programs to create a safer, more enjoyable camp experience. All in all, offering prevention, protection, and peace of mind.	Michael Hoban
	Energize Your Orientation	Every year it's the same challenge: with everything else going on, how do you plan and implement an orientation or kickoff event that sets the tone for a successful season and inspires your staff? We've got you covered. Get ready to channel your inner child and play like you're back at camp! Since 1996, Playworks has been the leading national organization leveraging the power of play to build staff capacity, promote community, and shape organizational culture. Through engaging activities, we will teach you actionable strategies and systems to manage large groups, resolve conflict, and build valuable social and emotional skills for the kids you work with. You'll walk away with tangible skills that can be immediately applied to your orientation plans. Let's get everyone at your camp sharing laughs, ideas, and unforgettable experiences that will prepare them for the best season yet.	Niya Santiago
	It's Not Laziness, It's Development: Understanding the Needs of Young Staff	Camp staff are still developing the executive functioning skills that help adults stay organized, flexible, and emotionally regulated. What may look like laziness, defiance, or carelessness is often a skill gap, not a character flaw. In this session, Rachel Hoffman reframes common staff challenges through a developmental lens and helps camp leadership move from frustration to understanding. Participants will learn how to coach instead of criticize-unlocking potential, building accountability, and strengthening camp culture.	Rachel Hoffman
	What is ACA Doing in Washington DC, and How Can My Camp Benefit?	Come hear about ACA's ongoing and ever-increasing work in DC and how you can support our advocacy efforts! Current hot topics include protecting the Bridge USA J-1 Visa programs, maintaining our federal wage and overtime exemptions, the tax deductibility of staff meals, ensuring access to federal lands, insurance availability and affordability, and other important federal matters. We will also discuss ACA's work to build a Camp Caucus on Capitol Hill, as well as our upcoming Hill Days from April 28-30.	Scott Brody
	Discussion of Camp Referral Service Commissions & Suggested Best Practices: Follow-Up from Tri-State 2025	An open meeting of Camp Directors and top leadership staff for a positive, constructive conversation about how to handle requests for increases in referral service fees, along with suggestions for best practices to recommend to the referral services for consideration. Camp Directors and top camp leadership staff only, please.	
	Infusing Character into Camp: It Starts with the Staff	This workshop explores the magic that happens when character is infused throughout camp with intentionality and within a structured framework that supports everyone's leadership, seasonal staff, campers, and parents. The School Culture and Climate Initiative team will guide you through the benefits of integrating a character focus throughout camp, what intentionality truly means, and how to make this a reality. You'll see specific examples of applying an intentional framework, including the best ways to ensure seasonal staff and camp leadership are on the same page and walking the talk consistently. Leave with a clear picture of what this looks like at your camp and practical tools to implement immediately.	Elizabeth Hansen Warner Patricia Heindel

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Tuesday 3:15-4:15PM	Write the Story of Camp: Great Newsletters Driving Enrollment and Connection	<p>Most camps send newsletters because they feel they have to. But for many families, those emails go unopened, or even worse, ignored.</p> <p>Parents don't tend to buy "magic" or "home." They buy the stories and details that make camp feel real for them and for their camper.</p> <p>In this interactive workshop, we'll show you how to turn small camp moments into stories that families actually read and remember. You'll see how we transform moments at camp into polished newsletter drafts in real time and then practice doing it yourself.</p> <p>By the end, you'll leave with the bones of at least one draft ready to send, plus a framework you can use all year to grow enrollment, deepen family connection, trust, and bring the stories of your camp to inboxes everywhere.</p>	Jack Schott Doug Norrie
	Big Magic in Small Spaces: Creating Collective Effervescence at Urban Day Camps	<p>You don't need a ropes course, fireworks show, or camp-wide color war to create unforgettable energy and community at day camp. In this session, we'll explore how urban day camps can foster collective effervescence, that electric feeling of shared joy and connection that makes campers feel part of something bigger, using limited space, time, and resources.</p> <p>Participants will learn how to design special events and camp moments that capture that same magic typically found at sleepaway camps through intentional planning, storytelling, rituals, and playful design. We'll share strategies and examples from Kids in the Game's NYC-based programs, where schools, rooftops, and playgrounds transform into spaces of pure camp spirit.</p>	Jenn Scarano Jordana Elias
	Steal These Ideas to Level Up Your Camp	Great camps don't reinvent the wheel, they learn from what's working elsewhere, adapt it to their own context, and make it part of their culture. In this session, two camp pros from differently sized organizations will share 10 high-impact, field-tested ideas that spark results across camps of all shapes and stages. From purposeful program design and staff retention strategies to parent communication, community-based marketing, and smart operational systems, each idea is designed to be stolen, stretched, and scaled. Walk away with practical, adaptable strategies you can put into action this summer and beyond.	Mario Del Cueto Jordanna Grossinger
Tuesday 4:30 - 5:45PM			
Tuesday 4:30 - 5:45PM	Fast Solutions, Fun Process: Solve Your Challenges Now with a Great Group Problem-Solving Method	Please join us for our annual blast of learning and fun connection! Tri-State is delighted to continue this unique way to learn at Conference and meet other people. Top camp expert and staff trainer Michael Brandwein leads this special hands-on session in which he will teach you the Consultative Problem-Solving Process. This is an enjoyable, highly effective, incredibly efficient group learning technique that you can learn immediately and helps you get great ideas today, right in this session, working with colleagues to solve the greatest camp challenges you're facing at your specific camp. You'll walk out with lots of notes on how to handle a challenge of your choice. And Michael will show you how you can use this same process back at your camp, not only with staff but with campers, too. And wait-there's more! You'll meet lots of new camp friends at Conference, so this is a great way to build your own community of supportive folks you can hang with and learn from throughout Tri-State.	Michael Brandwein
	Swords & Shields: A Wayfinder mini LARP for all level	No experience necessary. Come experience an immersive LARP for yourself! We will lead a mini version of what you would experience at our camps as we take you through the character creation process of a classic Fantasy LARP. You will don a costume, take on a new persona, and meet characters presenting you with challenges! Should you complete all three, you will have an opportunity to request a boon from the local monarchs! But that can't be all, oh no, stay to the end for the twist and try to help your comrades save the day!	Trine Boode-Petersen
Wednesday 8:30-9:30AM			
30AM	Foundations of a Strong Camp Marketing Plan	Creating an effective camp marketing plan starts with mastering the fundamentals. This session will guide participants through the step-by-step process of building a comprehensive marketing strategy from scratch. We'll cover how to define your target audience, craft engaging messaging, select the most effective marketing channels, and build a year-round marketing calendar. This session covers the fundamentals to drive engagement and get campers into your camp.	Dan Weir

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
<div>Wednesday 8:30-9:30AM</div> <div>Wednesday 8:30-9:30AM</div>	How Green Teams Create a Culture of Sustainability	Sustainability doesn't stick without shared ownership. This session explores how forming a Green Team - with staff, leadership, and campers - can create a lasting culture of sustainability. Drawing from Green Camps' national research on the motivators and barriers to sustainability, participants will learn why an inclusive, team-based approach is key to real progress. The session introduces a flexible framework for launching or strengthening a Green Team, featuring approachable project ideas like food waste reduction, energy and water conservation, and camper-led education. Attendees will leave with a Green Team launch toolkit, facilitation prompts, and inspiration to take action.	Danny Sudman Michael Wolf
	The New Staff Reaction Training: Don't Miss the Obvious Moment!	Many people fail to realize how critical their initial reaction to campers in various moments is to the likelihood of being effective with them. More often than not, staff reactions are a determining factor in whether a child opens up or shuts down. A mediocre or poor initial reaction also leads to missed opportunities to make a positive breakthrough. This often overlooked aspect of camp counseling can be trained! Teach this concept and train your staff to react appropriately, and they will be far more effective at creating positive, even transformational moments with campers. Rather than react poorly and have to try and reset things, they will be ready, recognize the opportunity, and react like a true professional. A skill for camp and a skill for life!	Jeffrey Leiken
	How to Convince Your Staff to Put Their Phones Away and Have the Best Summer of Their Lives	In this session, social media expert Kara Alaimo, PhD, will explain how to convince your staff to put away their phones while they're at camp. She'll start by outlining how we can convince counselors why it's simply unsafe to be on their phones when they're responsible for children. Then she'll tell you how to make the case for why a summer without smartphones is good for staff themselves: they'll practice the art of being fully present in their surroundings, getting comfortable with their thoughts, and even experiencing boredom. Nixing phones will also allow them to invest more in relationships with the humans around them. She'll explain why doing so will be good for their physical and mental health and even fun, leaving them with skills and relationships that will serve them throughout their lives.	Kara Alaimo
	Beyond Diversity: Building Brave and Inclusive Camp Spaces for Black and Brown Youth	Creating inclusive camp spaces for Black and Brown youth requires more than good intentions. It demands self-reflection, cultural humility, and active redesign of camp culture. This interactive workshop will guide camp professionals through an honest exploration of how camp norms, traditions, and leadership structures can unintentionally exclude or alienate campers of color. Participants will identify common barriers to belonging, unpack their own implicit biases, and learn practical strategies for building camp environments that affirm every child's identity. Using storytelling, reflection, and design activities, participants will leave with tangible tools and an actionable plan to foster belonging and trust with campers, families, and staff of color.	Kaya Henderson
	Exceptional Thinkers, Exceptional Revenue: Inclusive STEM Programming that Grows Enrollment	Discover how inclusive STEM can transform your camp into a destination for all campers, including exceptional thinkers-gifted, twice-exceptional, and neurodiverse children who thrive through creativity and challenge. Explore hands-on design activities that build confidence, problem-solving, and collaboration while creating a powerful return on investment. Learn how accessible tech, adaptive kits, and flexible instruction make STEM meaningful for all campers and easy to run year-round. Inclusive STEM not only boosts engagement and revenue, but it also attracts families who might never consider a traditional camp environment. Build programs that expand your reach, reputation, and impact where every child feels inspired, capable, and proud to belong.	Leslie Watnik
	Fast and Furious FUN with Your Campers!	Join former Physical Education Teacher of the Year and Camp4Real founder Scotty Williams and Omnikin international trainer PJ Hamel in this fast-paced, action-packed 60 minutes of FUN that will leave your campers begging for more! With everything from intense fitness games to hilarious partner tag activities to non-traditional cooperative team sports, this session will have it all! This wide range of games appeal to all types of campers and will leave them begging for more! Come get Fast and Furious today and blow your campers away!	Scotty Williams PJ Hamel
	Dump the Dissing: How to Pulverize Put-Downs and Help People Communicate with Respect and Civility in Conflict	It's one of the challenges that current camp leaders are talking about most: in situations of conflict or disagreement, or when anxious or upset, both campers and staff are having increasing difficulties talking to each other with respect and kindness. It's not their "fault." We are all living in a world where the models around us use name-calling, taunting, and even refusing to communicate. And this is important: unless camp is a safe and respectful environment, people are less willing to try new or challenging things. This blocks our mission of learning and growth. Our friend Michael from Chicago is on the case! This session demonstrates specific, original, and practical staff training tools and techniques to teach how to confidently handle name-calling and similar negative behaviors and how to support campers in learning how to disagree without being disagreeable. Staff will be able to use these techniques in their own communication and teamwork.	Michael Brandwein

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 8:30-9:30AM	What's Next? Translating Camp Skills Into Real-World Opportunities	Camp work builds some of the most valuable skills in the modern workforce, including leadership, creativity, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. Yet many staff members struggle to explain their experience beyond saying they worked at a camp. In this session, Nelson Strickland helps participants bridge that gap. Through clear frameworks, real examples, and actionable tools, he shows how to translate the work done in camp into language that resonates in interviews, resumes, and professional settings. Whether you are preparing staff to launch their next chapter or seeking to articulate your own value, this session is about turning seasonal experience into lasting career momentum.	Nelson Strickland
	Maintaining a Financially Healthy Camp While Ensuring Your Mission and Goals are Met	Most of us get into camp directing because of our love of camp, not because we are businesspeople or accountants. With expenses on the rise, it can be difficult to maintain a clear road to continued financial health. In this session, we'll dive into how to look at your camp goals, your books, and your general operations to guide decision-making about what and how to add, edit, and/or subtract to keep your camp at its best. This session will cover both private and non-profit camps of all types. Some examples of what we'll be looking at include how to calculate your true cost-per-camper, determining if your camper tuition is up to date, how many extra staff you can support, and how to incorporate planning for unforeseen maintenance issues and future facilities improvements.	Nick Teich
	Universal Design for Camps: Proactively Adapting Activities to Include ALL Campers	<p>Many campers with disabilities, or those who are considered "outside the box", are left on the fringes of camp activities. They often have to sit out of certain activities or may not fully understand what's going on, leading to feelings of disconnection, unworthiness, and despair. How can we as camp professionals create a seat at the table for ALL our campers?</p> <p>Attendees will gain an understanding of the need to proactively prepare and adapt camp activities to include ALL campers, especially those who identify as disabled or differently abled. Using specific examples of campers who are deaf or hard of hearing, session attendees will work to proactively include these "outside of the box" campers by adapting current popular camp activities. Learn how to declare, "YOU MATTER," to those who are traditionally left out.</p> <p>*This is a repeat session from last year.</p>	Sarah Martin
	Advocacy 101: How to Be an Effective Local, State, and Federal Advocate for Camps	In the old days, camp professionals could afford to just keep their heads down and do the work. In recent years, we have learned that one way or another, federal, state, and local authorities can deeply impact our ability to run our camps, for better or worse. Wage and Hour Laws, public health regulations, permissible hiring practices, building codes, fire codes, disaster preparation, insurance regulations, and the ability to host international exchange visitors have all emerged as hot-button issues for camps across the country in the last few years. This session will help you learn the core skills of effective advocacy so that you can join with other camp leaders and engage with your state and local representatives and regulators to advocate for workable solutions. Plus, advocacy is a skill set that will serve you well with your boards, funders, camp families, and others. Come join the fun!	Scott Brody
	Smarter Recruiting on a Realistic Camp Budget	<p>Let's face it, camp directors are experts at stretching a dollar. But when it comes to hiring, being overly frugal can backfire. This session is about getting smarter with your recruitment dollars. We'll unpack how small, intentional investments can make all the difference. From setting realistic recruiting budgets to choosing where (and where not) to post jobs, you'll learn how to build a plan that's lean and effective.</p> <p>Using real-world examples from camps we've supported, we'll cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How much to spend (and where) to get visibility on platforms like Indeed - Why promoted jobs outperform free listings, and when it's worth the spend - Entry-level tools and automations under \$25 that can save you hours each week - Smart ways to use AI and scheduling tools like Cally to simplify your recruiting process - The hidden costs of staying "cheap" - lost candidates, wasted time, and burnout <p>By the end of the session, you'll walk away with a practical playbook for how to get more from less.</p> <p>*Note, this is only for domestic hiring.</p>	Aaron Lyon Esther Eisenhard

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 8:30-9:30AM	Bridging Generations: How Millennials and Gen Z Thrive as Co-Leaders	Camps are on the cusp of a generational shift. For years, Millennials have been the rising leaders shaping camp culture, but now Gen Z is stepping into the spotlight, ready to take on top leadership roles. In this lively and insightful session, you'll hear directly from a Millennial and a Gen Z facilitator who teamed up at their camp to bridge the gap, moving beyond the traditional mentor-mentee model to form a true partnership where each generation both teaches and learns. Together, they'll share their stories, strategies, and surprising lessons, what the Millennial gained from working with Gen Z, what the Gen-Zer discovered from collaborating with a Millennial, and how this dynamic can create thriving leadership for the future of camps. Come ready to laugh, learn, and leave inspired with new tools to strengthen your team and ensure your camp stays vibrant, adaptable, and future-ready.	Adam Baranker Justin Jones
	Ability in Action: Creating Camp Jobs for All	Want to take your camp's inclusivity to the next level? This session explores how summer camps can serve as powerful platforms for vocational development and meaningful employment experiences for adults with developmental disabilities. By showcasing inclusive, strengths-based programming, the session will highlight how camp environments offer unique opportunities for skill-building. Attendees will gain practical tools for designing or enhancing vocational programs within their own camps, along with strategies for creating individualized work plans and adapting tasks. Participants will walk away with a clear framework for implementing camp-based vocational initiatives, real-life examples of success, and ideas for measuring progress and fostering long-term outcomes. This session is ideal for camp professionals looking to expand inclusive opportunities in their camps. This session will provide fresh insights into how camp can be a launchpad for lifelong vocational success.	Aryn Barer Lori Zlotoff
	What Would You Do? Responding to Peer-to-Peer Abuse at Camp	Every camp season brings complex moments that test your judgment and compassion. When campers cross physical or emotional boundaries with one another, how do you know what counts as peer-to-peer abuse and when to report it? This interactive, scenario-based workshop will help you recognize when behavior crosses the line, determine appropriate follow-up and reporting, and navigate the difficult conversations that follow. Together, we'll explore what behavioral health supports may be needed, when sending a camper home is appropriate, and how to communicate transparently and effectively with parents, staff, and other stakeholders. Through realistic camp-based case studies, participants will practice making tough calls and develop strategies for supporting both victims and alleged perpetrators while maintaining trust and safety across your camp community.	Cathi Fischer Jeff Jubelirer
	Bringing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to Life at Camp: Lessons from the Field	Creating a positive environment where everyone feels belonging and connectedness is crucial for a successful camp experience. Many elements that make or break camp - communication and interpersonal skills, civil discourse, managing parental expectations, staff and camper mental health and well-being, leadership, setting boundaries - are rooted in social-emotional learning. In this interactive session, camp leader Andy Pritikin teams up with the School Culture and Climate Initiative to explore the five-domain SEL framework: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. You'll get tangible examples of practical ways to support the development of these skills in camp settings that benefit staff, campers, and families. Expect opportunity for meaningful discussion as we combine theory and practice to provide a roadmap to intentionality, helping your camp walk the talk!	Elizabeth Hansen Warner Patricia Heindel Andy Pritikin
	Community Wellness Initiatives at Summer Camp: Creative Approaches to Support Campers and Staff	A major focus of our Wellness Program at Camp Chi is providing a whole-camp framing of mental and social wellness. Our approach is guided by seven core program principles, which are rooted in: (1) a camp-first approach, (2) wellness as a continuum, (3) integration into camp, (4) empowering the community, (5) building belonging, (6) adopting a short-term, strengths-based approach, and (7) acting as guides not fixers. These principles informed camp-wide initiatives intended to elevate and reinforce the joy, meaning, and belonging that make summer camp special. Example initiatives included Wellness Wednesdays, The Magic Shop, Staff Tea Time and Conversation Hour, communal reflection opportunities on character and wellness, and team-building activities focused on promoting connection among campers. This presentation will outline our approach, from conception to implementation, and offer attendees hands-on tools to adapt and bring these activities to their camps.	Jason Frydman Laura Wood Kyle Kolling
	SO Fun City: Importance of Improv	This session, designed by a BCBA, explores the crucial role of improvisation and gamification in effective camp leadership. Attendees will learn how to adapt and engage children in real-time by creating dynamic, game-like experiences that enhance motivation, increase participation, and build essential skills. By incorporating spontaneous, game-based strategies, attendees can foster a more interactive and flexible camp environment, making camp both fun and impactful. Attendees will gain practical techniques for applying improv principles and gamification to better address the diverse needs of their campers and staff.	Josh Seiden Harrison Chad

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 9:45 - 10:45AM			
Wednesday 9:45 - 10:45AM	Adaptive Recreation: All Ages, All Abilities, One Camp	Creating a truly inclusive camp doesn't require unlimited resources, it requires creativity, compassion, and the right tools. In this training, staff will learn how to design and adapt activities so that campers of all ages and all abilities can participate together in meaningful ways. From the youngest campers to the oldest, participants will explore strategies for tailoring programs to individual strengths while maintaining a shared camp experience. Practical tips for adapting activities on any budget will be highlighted, giving staff the confidence to make inclusion not only possible, but seamless. By the end of the session, staff will leave with actionable ideas to foster a camp culture where everyone belongs, and every camper can shine.	Caitlin Kehoe
	Camp in the Palm of Your Hand: Building Systems that Keep You One Step Ahead	What if you could turn the data you already have into a simple, app-style tool that puts real-time schedules, rosters, and program info right in the palm of your hand? In this hands-on session, you'll learn how to transform your existing camper, staff, and activity data into smart spreadsheets that feed into mobile-friendly dashboards, no coding required. Whether you're a spreadsheet skeptic or a formula fanatic, you'll walk away with real camp examples, a practical build-it-yourself framework, and a plan to streamline operations while keeping screens out of sight for campers and staff.	Dennis Gordon
	Mind the Gap: Bridging the Staff Skills/Camper Needs Divide	Staff say campers aren't listening. Campers don't like how staff talk to them. The gap between them may be only about 10 years, but it spans two generations shaped by vastly different norms, expectations, and emotional languages. Staff assume campers "should know better," while campers are navigating a world that's more anxious, overstimulated, and socially complex than ever. The mismatch leaves kids frustrated and staff unsure how to connect, motivate, and redirect effectively. Join Emily to dive into what's behind the disconnect and how to bridge it through practical, teachable skills. You may still not know what skibidi ohio rizz means or why kids laugh every time you say "6-7," (this session won't be explaining that brain rot!), but you will return to camp ready to train staff to connect more effectively, engage less reactively, and support the campers in their care with less frustration and more joy.	Emily Golinsky
	Creating and Executing Great "Color War" Breakouts for ALL Camps	Traditionally, the culminating end-of-summer "Color War" kicks off with "a bang", an exciting, surprise event designed to start the week of activities. Creating and pulling off a successful Breakout is no easy task. While Breakouts can be elaborate AND expensive, they don't have to be! This session will focus on the creative aspects and the logistical challenges, providing ideas for both more costly and inexpensive Breakouts. Expect a fun session that will leave you with ideas to bring to your camp, along with a roadmap for making your events a success.	Jay Jacobs
	Make It W.I.S.E.: Crafting That's More than Just Glitter and Glue	Too often, camp crafts and activities end up as "one-and-done" projects-something kids make, leave behind, or toss away. The W.I.S.E. (Wearable, Interactive/Physical, Skill, Elevated) Method offers a fresh framework to help camp professionals design projects that kids truly love and remember. In this interactive session, participants will explore each element of the Kids in the Game W.I.S.E. Method through real examples from camp settings, practice evaluating sample projects with the framework, and brainstorm how to apply it back at their own programs. You'll walk away with a practical tool and new ideas to raise the bar on camper art.	Jenn Scarano
	Don't Pop the Camp Bubble	This session will equip camp leaders with effective strategies for training staff to foster a safe, positive environment free from hot topic discussions such as politics, social media, religion, and relationships. We'll begin by exploring the concept of the camp bubble, what it means for your camp community, how to maintain it, and how to respond if it pops. Participants will leave with practical training tools and techniques to help staff manage sensitive situations and preserve the fun, stress-free, and silly atmosphere that makes camp such a special place for kids.	Lauren Tanen
	Started from the Bottom: Building a Camp Career that Lasts	Many people begin their camp journey thinking it's just a summer job, but it can become so much more. In this session, Nelson Strickland explores how to turn seasonal staff work into a sustainable, purpose-driven career that shapes communities and changes lives. Drawing on over a decade of experience building programs and leading teams from coast to coast, he shares honest lessons, practical strategies, and real-world examples that help professionals define their legacy. Attendees will walk away with tools to map their next steps, build credibility, and expand their impact far beyond a single season.	Nelson Strickland
	Orientation Overload: Rethinking Timing and Training through Executive Functioning	Orientation sets the tone for the whole summer, but when it's crammed into a few exhausting days, staff forget more than they retain. That's an executive functioning issue: too much information, not enough building blocks and scaffolding. This session shows how to structure orientation so that staff actually absorb and apply what matters. The result: more confident staff, less mid-summer chaos, and smoother camper experiences.	Rachel Hoffman

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 9:45 - 10:45AM	Why Families Choose You (and Not the Camp Down the Road)	Families don't just choose a camp, they choose a story they believe in. When every brochure promises fun and friendship, what sets your camp apart is how clearly you communicate its identity. This session will introduce a simple, practical framework to transform everyday camp features into brand-defining meaning that families remember. You'll leave with tools to help parents quickly see why your camp is "the one" and feel confident choosing you over the competition.	Sharon Ullom
	Rearview Mirror: A Look at 2025 Camp Practices, Themes, and Claims	This session will dive into insurance data and themes from 2025, including claims, incidents, and close calls, as well as common risk management questions. Case studies will be shared and discussed to highlight positive examples of crisis management, as well as common missteps and learnings regarding the incident. The world of risk management is ever-changing, as are society's expectations of camps. Let's talk about what is happening and how we are mitigating risk.	Teresa Tucker
	Creating LGBTQ+ Gender Inclusive Out-of-School Programs	Out-of-school programs can lead the way on inclusion by creating spaces where all youth feel seen, safe, and supported. This session offers practical tools to build affirming programs for LGBTQ+ and gender-diverse young people. Participants will gain confidence discussing LGBTQ+ topics, practice responding to bias, and learn how to interrupt gender stereotypes in everyday interactions. Through activities, scenarios, and real examples from programs nationwide, facilitators will model ways to create affirming environments for youth, families, and staff. Walk away with strategies, sample language, and resources to strengthen belonging across your organization.	Rebby Kern
	Just Eat It: Navigating Picky, Restrictive, and Disordered Eating at Camp	Is your camper picky? Does the food just stink? Or is it possible that something more serious is going on? Atypical eating behaviors at camp are often a concern for staff, and there are so many reasons why a camper might not eat enough. In this session, social workers Chrissy and Elizabeth will explore a variety of challenging eating behaviors in campers, from pickiness and unfamiliarity to more significant disordered eating. They will examine contributing factors, mental health implications, and approaches for supporting campers and staff. Chrissy and Elizabeth will examine the importance of including family voice and, when indicated, a collaborative approach with treatment teams. They will also discuss factors to consider to ensure that staff are prepared and equipped to assess and support their campers who present with eating concerns.	Christine Mohle Elizabeth Mangum
	Aquatic In-Service Escape Room	Dive into a unique training experience that combines problem-solving with lifesaving skills! The Aquatic In-Service Escape Room Challenge emphasizes teamwork, quick thinking, and critical decision-making as you overcome obstacles and decipher riddles to unlock the equipment needed to properly assist your VIC (Vulnerable Individual in Crisis). Set in an aquatic environment, this dynamic and innovative challenge strengthens your lifesaving skill set while sharpening your critical eye. It's an engaging way to reinforce essential rescue techniques, promote collaboration, and make ongoing training both educational and fun!	Deidra Clark David Kotz
	Best Practices and Bold Opinions: A Director Throwdown	Join Justin Pritikin (Liberty Lake Day Camp, NJ) and Andy Shlensky (North Star Camp for Boys, WI), for an engaging conversation on what's working, and what's changing, in modern camp leadership. Through stories, strategies, and honest reflections, Justin and Andy will explore how today's directors can balance innovation with tradition, maintain excellence through chaos, and lead with both empathy and edge. This session isn't about right answers, it's about shared wisdom, practical takeaways, and the power of evolving together.	Justin Pritikin Andy Shlensky
	Unleash the Power of Play: Designing Summer Camp Experiences that Drive Learning	Get ready to roll up your sleeves and dive into a highly interactive professional development session where fun meets function. Through engaging games and hands-on activities, you'll explore how traditional camp fun can be transformed into powerful opportunities for academic and social-emotional learning. Led by the SummerCollab team, this session isn't just about ideas, it's about doing. You'll actively participate in playful learning experiences that model how to spark curiosity, build confidence, and foster growth in young learners. Along the way, you'll gain practical strategies for program planning, activity design, and creating a camp culture that naturally weaves learning into every moment. Come ready to play, laugh, and learn, because when you do, your campers will too!	Kristina Woznicki Jennifer Reid
	Attract, Recruit, and Retain International Staff	Are you looking to step up your camp's international staff recruitment game? Learn from former participants, turned camp directors, who now work with hundreds of camps each year on how best to attract, recruit, and retain international staff. In this session, you'll find out what attracts international applicants to camps based on a survey from our 2025 placed applicants. Learn the tactics and tools to best approach potential international staff members during the recruitment process. Explore unique ways that camps are minimizing staff cancellations and engaging with hired staff members prior to arrival.	Kylie Baker Conor Murray

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 9:45 - 10:45AM	How Creating an Environment of Hospitality Can Shape the Summer Camp Experience	In today's competitive youth development landscape, hospitality is far more than a customer-service buzzword is a powerful strategy that can elevate every aspect of the camp experience. As presenters, Henry Skier, Marc Honigfeld, and John Kiesendahl, will emphasize, service is what people expect, hospitality is going above and beyond. This session will explore how that distinction can profoundly shape how camps serve their communities. Participants will dive into what hospitality truly means in the camp context and discover practical ways to infuse it into daily operations. The discussion will highlight how staff, campers, and parents all serve as recipients of your hospitality efforts, and how empathy-driven practices, what the presenters call creating a "Product of Empathy" can transform routine interactions into meaningful moments of care. The session will also uncover how well-handled mistakes can become opportunities to build stronger relationships, deepen loyalty, and create memorable moments of hospitality. This session aims to offer fresh perspectives, real-world examples, and actionable strategies for making hospitality a core cultural value that drives connection, satisfaction, and long-term camp success for campers, their families, and staff alike.	Marc Honigfeld Henry Skier John Kiesendahl
	The 2026 Camp A.I. Census: How Camp Operations, Marketing, and Programming are Actually Using AI	Every camp leader is being flooded with AI tools promising to "revolutionize" the summer—but how do you tell the difference between a high-value asset and a generic commodity? Drawing on a specialized survey of the camp industry, this session reveals the results of the first-ever "Camp AI Census." We break down usage by role (Operations, Marketing, and Programming) to identify where AI is truly overdelivering and which is just a flavor of the day. You will learn to identify "Sticky" tools—those that integrate deeply into your camp's unique DNA—versus "Commoditized" tools that are easily replaced by free alternatives. Attendees will leave with a clear roadmap to prioritize their tech spend and a blueprint of the 2026 "Must-Have" Camp AI Stack.	Eric Wittenberg
	When Parents Push the Limits: Human-Centered Communication and Risk Management in Camp	Parents today are more anxious, vocal, and involved than ever, and camp leaders are often caught in the middle. In this interactive session, an experienced camp director and trauma-informed attorney explore how to navigate challenging parent interactions with clarity, empathy, and professionalism. Together, they'll unpack the roots of heightened parent behavior, share communication frameworks that de-escalate tension, and outline practical risk-management strategies that protect relationships, reputation, and camper well-being. Participants will leave with tools to transform difficult conversations into opportunities for trust and partnership.	Miryam Seid Rena Paul
Dining Hall - Wednesday 12:30 - 1:30PM			
Dining Hall - Wednesday 12:30 - 1:30PM	Cracking the Alumni Development Code: What Camps Can Learn from University Alumni Models	Summer camps have deep alumni roots, yet many of us are still guessing at how to build lasting and structured alumni associations. This session explores how camps can apply the proven strategies that universities use to create lifelong supporters. Drawing from conversations with the CEO of the Clemson University Alumni Association, we'll uncover how higher education builds engagement that lasts well beyond graduation. Participants will gain practical insights on how to adapt these methods to the camp setting, including how to track and use alumni data, create meaningful events that connect generations, and build fundraising models that sustain mission-driven work. This session moves beyond nostalgia, offering a roadmap for camps ready to strengthen relationships with former campers and staff, grow their reach, and develop a lasting culture of belonging and support.	Cory Harrison
	The Backward Plan: A Camp Staff Training Roundtable	Join fellow camp professionals in an interactive roundtable discussion focused on mastering the "backward planning" approach for designing dynamic and effective camp staff training schedules. This session moves beyond a standard presentation, offering a collaborative forum for you to share challenges, swap strategies, and brainstorm solutions with peers. We will tackle key questions in an open dialogue format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you prioritize the most crucial skills staff need by Opening Day? What are innovative ways to integrate essential components like health/safety and camper development into engaging, hands-on activities? How do we ensure every piece of training content aligns deeply with our unique camp's mission, vision, and values? Whether you lead a resident camp or a day camp, bring your experiences and your toughest questions. Walk away with fresh perspectives, shared resources, and a ready-to-implement strategy for transforming your staff training into an empowering experience that fosters a positive, ready-to-lead team. Active participation and shared expertise are the cornerstones of this session. To get the conversation started, come ready to share and discuss a few of your best (or worst!) ideas. You'll have the opportunity to explore the ones you're most excited or proudest to discuss.	John James Hickey
	The Kids Are Ready: Using Play as a Tool for Social Change	In this workshop, participants will explore how play can be used as a powerful tool in youth programs to spark conversations about identity, power, and the wider world, while fostering positive social change. They will gain strategies and practical approaches to embed these discussions into their programs, helping young people build foundational language around social change and develop the skills to become changemakers. Finally, participants will engage in hands-on activities that demonstrate how play can be used intentionally as a strategic method to support young people in navigating and responding to today's sociopolitical context.	Simone Gamble

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Dining Hall - Wednesday 12:30 - 1:30PM	Day Camp Admins Roundtable	Come join other Day Camp Administrators and Office Managers to network and collaborate on best practices. All topics will be specific to the role of Camp Administrators in the day camp setting.	Peter Goldberg
	How to Adapt Marketing and Sales Strategies to Attract and Enroll Children from Non-Traditional Camp Families	In this Dining Hall, we will lead a conversation focused on how to market and sell camp to non-traditional camp families. Non-traditional camp families are made up of families with parents who did NOT attend camp, families who come from areas in the United States or abroad that do not have camp at all, and/or families who live in neighborhoods where it may not be the norm or part of the culture to send children to camp. We will discuss aspects of the marketing plan, inquiry follow ups and the camp tour that must be adapted if we wish to communicate effectively with families new to the camp world.	Heath Levine
	4-H Camp Roundtable	<p>Step into a dynamic session designed for 4-H camp professionals! Whether you're a seasoned camp director or new to the team, this round table is your chance to connect with peers from across the region, exchange ideas, and spark inspiration.</p> <p>Discover what's working in other state 4-H camp programs, share your own success stories, and gather fresh programming ideas and resources to take back to your camp. Bring your staff training agendas, emergency management plans, program evaluations, and any tools you use. This is a space for open sharing and collective growth.</p> <p>Expect lively discussion, practical takeaways, and new connections that will strengthen your camp community. Come ready to contribute, learn, and leave energized for the season ahead!</p>	Paul McFarland Jr.
	EPIC Dining Hall	Anyone who identifies as an EPIC (Emerging Professional in Camping) is invited to join this session of networking and casual conversation that is relevant to our community. Bring your challenges, hot topics, and lunch!	
	Programming Share Out	<p>There is a ton of wisdom at this conference, let's take advantage of it! Share your favorite programming ideas and gain some new ones from fellow camp professionals.</p> <p>Topics may include sensory-friendly evening programs, connecting your existing programming to your mission AND what the kiddos want, staff bonding activities, and so much more.</p>	Sophia Hastings Ty Kitchen Max Filipoff
Wednesday 2:00 - 3:00PM			
Wednesday 2:00 - 3:00PM	Developing Future Camp Leaders with CIT Programs	Finding the staff who want to work with kids and be part of your camp's culture can be challenging. A high-quality CIT or leadership program will cultivate campers into staff. Programs must be based on providing mentorship and developing future leaders beyond just giving an opportunity to be at camp for another summer. We will explore characteristics of a successful program, pitfalls to avoid, and tips for transforming a program into a robust leadership pipeline. We will cover best practices and share real examples.	Dan Weir
	How to Do What You Said You Would Do: Being Accountable to Yourself and Others, with Less Stress	Wouldn't it be great if we were judged by our intentions instead of our actions or lack of action? Do you struggle to manage your task list, or wish you even had a task list? Would you like to raise accountability for yourself and those you collaborate with? In this session with Diana Bloom, we will learn actionable steps that can be implemented to achieve high productivity and efficiency and to bridge the gap between our intentions and our actions. Together, we will discover systems and processes to prioritize, track, and complete tasks with less stress. We will learn techniques for better clarity in task management, how to prevent tasks from falling through the cracks, and how to track work to completion.	Diana Bloom
	The Perks, Privileges, and Pitfalls of Hiring and Managing Staff Parents	Parents of current campers are valuable assets in many camp programs. However, they also come with challenges, including feelings of entitlement, supervising one's peers, discretion, being an ambassador of your brand inside and outside of camp, and the inability to separate their job as a staff member from their role as a parent when their children are "at work" with them. This session will help the people who hire, train, and manage staff parents understand the importance of setting clear expectations from the start and recognize the value in having targeted training for staff parents during orientation. This session will focus on positive ways supervisors can convey to staff parents that they were hired to do a job, and that while at camp, their parental role comes second. When/if staff parents overstep that boundary, their behaviors not only reflect poorly on the job that they do, but can negatively impact their own children's camp experience. Don't let it!	Jackie Port

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 2:00 - 3:00PM	A Strengths-Based Approach to Working with Tough Boys	<p>The 13- and 14-year-old hotshots who are causing headaches for your instructors; the second-year counsellors who are disrupting your staff culture. These aren't just problems to be fixed-they're leadership opportunities waiting to be channeled.</p> <p>This session equips camp leaders with practical strategies to work with the boys and young men who naturally emerge as influential figures within their camp culture. We will begin by exploring how precarious masculinity the constant pressure boys feel to prove their manhood drives attention-seeking, risk-taking, defiance, and disconnection in camp settings. From there, participants will learn proven strategies for aligning with, challenging, and empowering boys that can be implemented at the camp leadership level as well as taught to camp staff. Transform your most challenging campers into your greatest assets for building a camp culture where everyone, not just the loudest voices, can thrive.</p>	Jonathon Reed
	Encouraging Intentional Dialogue in an Age of Division	In an era defined by polarization and fear of saying the wrong thing, camps have a unique opportunity to model what productive disagreement looks like. This session examines how leaning into hard conversations, rather than avoiding or canceling them, builds communities rooted in trust and empathy. Drawing from research in restorative practices, social-emotional learning, and self-determination theory, participants will explore how structured dialogue and shared responsibility help young people develop resilience and perspective-taking. Through case studies and interactive reflection from Camp Stomping Ground, we'll analyze how adult discomfort can reinforce division, and how intentional dialogue creates belonging across difference. Participants will leave with concrete frameworks and facilitation tools for transforming conflict into connection in today's fractured cultural landscape.	Laura Kriegel
	The No-Sweat Marketing Plan	You already sweat enough at camp, let's not add to it in the off-season! Stop overthinking and start marketing smarter. In this interactive, fast-moving session, you'll learn how to create a clear, values-driven, actionable marketing plan in minutes, not months. Together, we'll map out realistic goals, define your target audiences (and the people who influence them), and build a customer-centered strategy that drives enrollment and engagement. Whether you're a seasoned pro or new to marketing, you'll walk away with a practical plan you can put to work the moment you return home.	Laurie Ehrlich
	Building Bus Community: The Human Approach to a Better Transportation Experience	<p>This presentation will explore how a focus on human connection and community-building can transform the bus experience for day campers. While logistics like efficiency and safety are paramount, we often overlook the social dynamics that shape a child's daily commute. By shifting our approach from simply transporting campers to fostering a sense of community on board, we can significantly improve the overall experience of not just our campers, but also our bus staff and drivers.</p> <p>Our focus will be centered not only on how community building makes the bus ride more enjoyable but also helps reduce behavioral issues and reinforces a sense of belonging among campers, bus staff, and drivers, creating a lasting positive impact that extends far beyond the bus ride and camp season.</p>	Michael Greenstein
	Balance Beam Management: A New Approach to Keeping Team and Campers Happy	<p>The ability to manage our team and their ability to do their jobs well is central to creating incredible camp experiences for campers and families. Balance Beam Management is a new approach to team leadership that builds trust, fosters open conversation, and helps staff regulate emotions in real time rather than reacting to stress. The same techniques can also be used to support campers more effectively.</p> <p>This approach centers joy and care, helping leaders and staff develop meaningful relationships and healthy communication. By promoting emotional regulation, co-regulation, and play-based techniques, we create environments where everyone feels seen, safe, and supported.</p>	Mike Callahan
	The Complexities of Medication Management: Understanding the Regulations and Responsibilities	Medication management continues to be the most litigated activity that happens at camp. Understanding the many steps that medications need to take (intake, screening, securement, dispensing, documentation, error management) is essential for the safety of your full camp population. This session will discuss the components of medication management and steps your camp can take to create a healthy protocol for care.	Tracey Gaslin
	A Conversation with Department of State Bridge USA J-1 Program Experts: Best Practices	Join us for a lively and interactive discussion of ways camps can enhance the Bridge USA J-1 cultural exchange experience for participants and host camps. Share your ideas and ask your questions. Your input is important!	Diane Culkin

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 2:00 - 3:00PM	Introducing Activities with Rhythm, Drumming, and Movement to Your Camp	<p>Get inspired! This hands-on, interactive session will expose you to the possibilities of incorporating rhythm into your offerings and activities in camp.</p> <p>Featuring demonstrations from Adam and his team from Path To Rhythm, participants will be a part of the high energy and connection created by rhythm making.</p> <p>Adam will break down easy ways to lead and facilitate group activities that you can take to your campers and staff. Come learn specific techniques to be able to lead activities, be inspired to incorporate rhythm activities into your programming, and expand upon your music program offerings.</p>	Adam Issadore Yahya Kamate
	Accounting Strategies to Increase Profits and Reduce Taxes	Running a camp comes with unique financial challenges and opportunities. This session provides camp professionals, owners, and executives with essential accounting insights tailored to the camp industry. Learn how to maximize tax deductions, navigate new tax law changes, especially around depreciation and the employee retention credit, and manage key accounting issues for both for-profit and non-profit camps. Experts will also explore how to strengthen bank relationships and financing options, structure the purchase or sale of a camp, and develop a sound succession plan for long-term sustainability. Participants will leave with practical strategies to overcome financial obstacles, improve profitability, and ensure their camps fiscal health in changing economic times.	Andrew Zwerman Shekhar Basnet
	DEI Status Report: A Fishbowl on Inclusion in Camping	We've been talking about DEI for years, so where are we now? In this candid, in-the-round conversation, four practitioners drop the script and speak honestly about the state of inclusion in camps: the progress, the fatigue, the wins that keep us going, and the barriers that still hold us back. No slides. No Q&A. Just real talk about what it means to keep doing this work when the world is pushing back. Attendees will leave with a new perspective on inclusion work, renewed clarity, and the courage and insight to advocate for inclusion in youth spaces.	Chris Hudson Lisa Drennan Simone Gamble Chris Rehs-Dupin
	Intentionally Designed, Large-Scale, CHEAP Games	<p>This session will bring participants along on a journey that transformed the programming paradigm at YMCA Camp Cory. Budgetary constraints led to the emergence of high-quality all-camp games. And we are sharing them with you. For free! Come learn about game design and all the things that make all-camp games exquisite (Dramatis Personae, epic music, engaging costumes, pacing, prop building and storage, coopetition, and engagement strategies).</p> <p>We will share design standards and other strategies we've used at YMCA Camp Cory to develop original, all-camp games on a shoestring budget. We'll introduce some game examples, show the creation process, and provide resources that other camps can use.</p>	Dave Ghidui Aaron Proietti
	Fearless Feedback: Building Confidence in Camp Supervisors	Many seasonal staff can find it uncomfortable or intimidating to give difficult feedback to staff during the summer. In this session, we will explore three different feedback models that will help camp staff grow and leave leadership feeling confident. Through role-playing common camp scenarios, you will practice giving and receiving feedback. This roundtable will provide you with a ready-to-use session that will prepare your leadership team for summer 2026.	Gregg Licht Lauren Dermody Brittany Marcus

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 2:00 - 3:00PM	Ditching Walkie-Talkies for Discord	Crackling static, dead batteries, and endless "can you hear me?" moments sound familiar? In 2024, Camp Jamison, led by Executive Director Jacqueline McDonough, ditched walkie-talkies and switched to Discord. Now, after two summers of testing it, Jacqueline shares how the change cut costs, boosted staff buy-in, and improved communication from whole-camp coordination to one-on-one check-ins. This session covers the benefits and (of course) the challenges, including those 2 a.m. emotional staff messages, so participants can decide if Discord is right for their camp. Attendees will leave with practical guidance for setup, staff onboarding, and communication norms that make modern tech work for even the most untechy of camp cultures.	Jacqueline McDonough Lana Gray
	Creating Calm in Uncertain Times: Supporting Staff, Children, and Families	<p>Camp is often a safe and joyful space where kids and staff can grow, connect, and build lasting memories. Yet times of uncertainty, whether in the world or within the camp community itself, can bring up stress, fear, and big emotions. Counselors and camp leaders are in a powerful position to offer stability, consistency, and connection when things feel unpredictable.</p> <p>This interactive workshop helps camp staff understand how uncertainty and stress affect both the mind and body, drawing on research in resilience and emotional regulation. Participants will practice clear and compassionate communication, stress-management tools, and strategies for building a supportive team culture where everyone feels grounded and cared for.</p> <p>The session also focuses on staff wellness-recognizing signs of burnout and using regulation skills to sustain energy and empathy throughout the season.</p>	Janine Domingues
	Finish Strong: Inspiring Ideas to Close Your Staff Training	Whether you are planning staff orientation for a day camp or a resident camp, you always want to end your training strong. How do you close each session, each full day, and your entire week or more of staff orientation in a meaningful and inspiring way? You will experience a variety of impactful endings that you can quickly and easily integrate into your staff training for this summer.	Jed Buck Roz Buck
	Beyond the Sales Pitch: Communicating the True Camp Experience to Today's Staff	<p>More staff than ever are arriving at camp feeling misled about what the job truly entails. Some leave early in the season, or never show up at all, because what they were "sold" during recruitment doesn't match the reality once they're on site. We see international staff requesting transfers and domestic staff ghosting before or during orientation, or quitting once campers arrive.</p> <p>Discover strategies to close this expectation gap through intentional communication during the hiring and onboarding processes. Learn how to clearly convey the full camp experience, from daily rhythms to real challenges, so staff arrive prepared, engaged, and ready to fulfill their commitments. These actionable approaches will help reduce early turnover, build trust, and strengthen both short- and long-term staff retention.</p>	Kim Aycok Jolly Corley
	Camp Unpeeled: What the Savannah Bananas Can Teach Us About Change	Camp operations often repeat the same routines year after year, even when they no longer reflect how parents and staff want to engage. Like old-school baseball, they can feel rigid and outdated. The Savannah Bananas reimagined the game by keeping what fans loved and reinventing what they didn't. In this session, learn how camp directors can become change agents by modernizing infrastructure and operations, without losing the magic of tradition.	Lee Bear Ryan Rosen

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 3:15-4:15PM			
Wednesday 3:15-4:15PM	What Lies Beneath: Understanding the Basic Needs of Campers	<p>It is widely recognized that there is no such thing as a "bad child," only challenging behaviors that often signal deeper needs, struggles, or unspoken emotions. This workshop will invite participants to look beyond the surface of acting out or deviant behavior, exploring the underlying "why" behind these responses.</p> <p>Grounded in a Strengths-Based Perspective, this interactive session will provide practical tools and strategies to help camping professionals identify, manage, and respond to challenging behaviors with empathy and effectiveness. Through hands-on activities and discussion, participants will leave better equipped to support campers in a way that fosters resilience, belonging, and positive growth.</p>	Corrie Sirota
	Green Team Building: Fostering Collaboration and Sustainability Through Play	Team building and sustainability go hand-in-hand. This session introduces Green Team Building, an experiential approach that uses hands-on activities to connect collaboration, leadership, and environmental stewardship. Participants will explore how team building exercises can double as sustainability education: strengthening communication, creativity, and systems thinking while modeling eco-friendly practices. Drawing from real-world programs and case studies from Green Camps, this session will inspire facilitators and camp leaders to design experiences that build stronger teams, greener operations, and a shared sense of purpose around sustainability.	Danny Sudman
	Creating Meaningful (and Sustainable) Partnerships with Parents of Campers AND Staff!	Parent engagement is evolving rapidly, driven by shifts in technology, communication, mental health awareness, and rising expectations. As we look to the future (which is actually today!), camps must adapt to increasingly dynamic and sometimes demanding parent interactions. This session explores how to prepare for both routine and challenging conversations, safeguard your camp's reputation, and establish clear ground rules for parents before, during, and after the summer. Learn practical tools to prevent problems, strategies for handling difficult situations, and protocols to protect your camp's values and legitimacy. Join us to discover actionable tips for fostering positive parent relationships and ensuring your camp's continued success in a changing world.	David Phillips
	Indoor Cooperative Games for Inclement Weather	The heat index and thunderstorms are just two severe weather elements that can alter your best outdoor active game plans, because it's either too hot to play or it's raining. This session will provide you with cooperative active games that not only provide your campers with the opportunity to move around but also allows them to continue their social-emotional growth and development. This interactive, fun-filled session will not only provide Counselors with games they can implement right away in any space, but also the goals behind each game that focus on cooperation, sportsmanship, teamwork, fun, respect, and kindness - while reducing the emphasis that winning is the end result.	Gerald Bolden
	Understanding Employment Law	This will be a conversational and engaging session about camp employment law and HR issues. As camp operators, we serve as the heads of HR for our organizations. Considering that a typical mid-size camp has 100+ employees each summer, this is no simple task. In this session, we will discuss some of the primary employment laws and regulations that govern our relationship with staff. We will also discuss best practices to avoid costly employment disputes. The session concludes with a Q&A so participants have the opportunity to ask questions. The presenter is a camp attorney, camp founder, and a law school professor of employment law.	Isaac Mamaysky

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 3:15-4:15PM	World Class Facilitation	In this class, Teambuilding Guru Dr. Jim Cain shares dozens of tips and tools to help you become a better facilitator. Taken from more than 50 years of working and playing with groups, Jim's advice for improving your facilitation skills includes not only tips and tools, but hands-on learning featuring group activities of all kinds that reinforce the lessons presented. In addition, participants will take away two digital collections of the tips presented and even more information to help them become better facilitators.	Jim Cain
	Addressing Camper Behavior: What Do I See, What Do I Hear, What Do I Do?	Managing camper behavior is a common (and often emotional) challenge for staff; it can make or break the camp experience. Even with training and policies in place, staff may struggle to respond effectively in the moment. Guide staff to recognize early warning signs by noticing what they see and hear, and to respond with clear, consistent steps, such as using camper success plans, to support both individuals and groups. Emphasizing early intervention, proactive communication, and positive reinforcement equips staff with practical, easy-to-use strategies for both preventative and responsive behavior management. The result: greater confidence, fewer escalations, and a more supportive camp environment.	Kim Aycock
	Disability Inclusion Includes ALL Staff: Strategies for Getting Your Team On Board	Struggling to get your staff on board with inclusion? A key principle for successful disability inclusion is organizational commitment: every position on your camp team should play a role in ensuring everyone belongs. We'll tackle common hurdles in building an inclusive culture by using strategies and best practices to bring your whole team on board. Hiring or appointing an Inclusion Specialist isn't the magic answer; it can backfire if they aren't properly supported. Learn how to best mentor and teach front-line staff, giving your entire team the tools and confidence to foster disability inclusion and enhance success for all at camp this summer.	Lisa Drennan
	Lessons Learned from Leading a Camp Startup	Learn the triumphs and misadventures of starting and growing a camp... all without the blood, sweat, and tears! This fast-paced session shares practical, battle-tested lessons learned over two summers of launching and scaling a new day camp. From programming cheat codes to novel staffing strategies, you'll walk away with ideas you can apply immediately, whether you're building something new or energizing an existing program.	Mario Del Cueto
	Team Harmony in the Age of Social Muscle Atrophy: Helping Counselors Connect Beyond the Screens	Every year dozens of Counselors from different backgrounds and experiences land in one place with just days to figure out how to work and thrive together. But today's screen-heavy culture has led to a gradual weakening of the everyday social skills that make teamwork natural. Our increasingly divided culture has only added to the challenge. In this workshop, Team Culture Specialist Peace Ike offers practical tools to rebuild those social muscles so Counselors can communicate confidently, work through differences, and create unity campers can feel.	Peace Ike
	Reimagining Staff Training Week	From safety protocols to camper care, there is a lot to get through during your staff training week! But this is also your staff members' first experience with your camp, and by prioritizing their experience, you not only ensure they feel confident and knowledgeable to successfully fulfill their responsibilities, but that they feel excited and energized to do so. This session will guide participants through a crash course in redesigning staff training to ensure their experience is at the forefront. Through a series of facilitated exercises, participants will reflect on past successes and challenges, identify priority areas for the season ahead, and build an engaging training schedule that includes a variety of sessions that speak to the needs of the camp, as well as those of the staff. Participants will leave this session with a road map to designing an engaging, educational, and fun staff training that can be implemented with their own teams.	Shoshi Rothschild

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 3:15-4:15PM	The Business of Camp: Reading Your Financial Story	We don't have to love the business side of camp to know it matters. This session helps you decode what your financial reports are really saying, and why understanding them empowers you to lead more strategically. You'll learn how to read the three core financial statements (income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow report) in plain language, spot red flags or opportunities, and use that knowledge to strengthen your camp's financial sustainability and mission delivery. Perfect for camp leaders who want confidence, not confusion, when looking at the numbers.	Todd Lennig
	Get Active! Vendor Make-and-Take	Join us as we gather to make easy and fun projects that you can take with you when you are done. This is a great session to pick up new ideas for quick and easily implemented projects for your camp's Arts and Crafts, STEM, Nature programs and more.	
	One Plan, Many Scenarios: Tips for Building an All-Hazards Emergency Response Framework for Camps	Emergencies can happen at any time, from severe weather and medical incidents to missing campers or active threats. In all these situations, planning is key, but it can often feel overwhelming. Camp leaders, staff, and campers can all benefit from one clear, adaptable emergency response framework that works across a wide range of scenarios. Join a longtime 4-H Camp Director, a Police Officer, and a Fire Lieutenant as they share practical ways to build an all-hazards emergency plan that's simple to teach, easy to practice, and ready to use. You'll learn how to define clear roles, set up effective communication steps, collaborate with first responders as part of your camp training, and make sure your entire team feels confident when it matters most. Participants will leave with real-world tips, sample tools, and a solid foundation they can adapt to help everyone stay calm, coordinated, and safe.	Amanda Wahle John-Michael Wahle Michael Steele
	Selling Beyond Summer: How Sales Pro Certification Builds a Year-Round Camp Business	Stop filling your camp with groups that drain your staff and your budget. Join us for an honest look at how a few smart shifts can help you sell out your groups and conferences without burning out your team. During the off season, camps often end up taking whatever groups they can get. These low-paying, high-demand groups create more stress than revenue. It doesn't have to be that way. This session will show you how to find the groups that fit your mission, respect your staff, and make the work feel easier. We'll dig into practical ways to streamline your off-season operations so you can run more efficient groups and walk into summer fully focused on what you do best: creating incredible experiences for your campers	Genevieve Sullivan Drew Kelley
	Lessons from Two Recent ACA Legends of Camping Award Winners: Recalling the Past, Assessing the Present, and Predicting the Future	Join two of ACA's most recent Legends of Camping Award recipients as they share stories from their journeys, reflect on today's challenges, and inspire us with a vision for the future of camp. Packed with wisdom, humor, and heart, this session will leave you energized and reminded of why camp matters yesterday, today, and tomorrow.	Joel Shapiro Cricket Snearing
	Insanity or Genius? The Magic of Camper Choice at Day Camp	Discover how you can elevate your day camp culture by allowing campers to self-select their daily activities and how to overcome barriers for implementation. This session will discuss how SummerCollab has implemented choice activities for campers in grades 1-8, and the magic that happens when kids make their own choices. If you are looking to improve culture, decrease camper behavior, and/or enhance your staff development, the magic of camper choice might be your missing solution.	Kristina Woznicki Jennifer Reid

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Wednesday 3:15-4:15PM	Don't Let Lice Bug Your Summer: Stress-Free Management for Camps	Head lice can feel like a big disruption at camp, but it doesn't have to be. In this workshop, lice professionals Laurene Plourde and Jill Bazos, will share proven strategies to keep lice from becoming a stressful memory for campers, staff, and parents. We'll walk through the science of lice, dispel common myths, and provide a clear, step-by-step process for effective head checks and treatment procedures. Participants will learn what supplies and systems every camp should have in place, how to minimize disruptions when lice are discovered, and how to decide whether to manage checks in-house or bring in a professional. Our goal is to ensure every camp leaves equipped with confidence and actionable steps for a stress-free lice management process.	Laurene Plourde Jill Bazos
	Fostering Camp Culture Through Data-Driven Program Innovation	Creating a safe, transformative camp experience requires more than supervision and policies - it demands intentional design grounded in data and continuous improvement. This session explores how Change Summer uses Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) data and strategies to drive program innovation and cultivate environments where campers thrive and are safe. We believe safety and emotional well-being are directly correlated, and ensure both are incorporated into our camp culture and our program. We'll share how we created tailored, data-driven camper surveys, how we interpret our data insights to shape programming and culture, and how we are continuing to innovate the way we measure our impact.	Paige Moffett Lauren Pitcairn Ijeoma Duru
Thursday 9:00-10:00AM			
Thursday 9:00-10:00AM	Getting Comfortable With Your Budget: A Crash Course in Fiscal Management	<p>Let's be honest - most of us didn't get into camping because we love spreadsheets. But budgets shape everything we do: what we can build, who we can hire, and how we show up for our campers.</p> <p>This crash course is for camp leaders who want to finally feel confident talking about money. We'll walk through what a camp budget really means, then jump into hands-on "what if" challenges. What if enrollment drops mid-season? What if we actually make more money than expected? You'll practice adjusting, prioritizing, and explaining your decisions in ways that make sense to boards, families, and staff.</p> <p>You'll leave with simple tools, real examples, and the confidence to stop dodging the finance talk, because leading well means owning the numbers, not fearing them.</p>	Allison Krabill
	Where Does the Soup Go? Lessons Learned From an Anxious Kid... Who Grew into a Teen	<p>Years ago, my son's first camp experience came wrapped in tears, fear, and overwhelming anxiety, an experience that changed how my team approached camp. Now older, his worries have grown and shifted, offering new lessons about supporting teens. Back by popular demand, this session expands on the beloved "Where Does the Soup Go?" presentation.</p> <p>Together, we'll explore the reality of anxiety for both brain and body, the unique benefits and challenges that summer camps bring for anxious youth, and how staff can adapt their approach as campers grow.</p> <p>Participants will leave with practical strategies to support anxious campers with empathy and humor, tools to help teens build belonging and resilience, and actionable steps to train and empower staff to better meet the needs of today's campers.</p>	Amanda Wahle
	From Hookup Culture to Consent Culture: How to Make the Difficult Transition	When camp staff arrive at the beginning of each summer, they are not blank slates. Hookup culture, the harmful sexual culture on high school and college campuses today, has far-reaching impacts on the way our staff have learned to conceptualize sex, romance, and intimacy. To foster a healthy, professional culture among staff, camps have the opportunity to address hookup culture and consent in their staff training and cultural expectations. Building a culture that celebrates consent and self-advocacy skills will also allow us to do the most important thing of all: care for our campers better. This session will allow camp leaders to understand the hookup culture their staff are entrenched in outside of camp and build the tools to take tangible steps towards building a consent culture this summer.	Elissa Asch

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Thursday 9:00-10:00AM	Creating a Camp Culture People Want To Be A Part Of	The best camps intentionally build cultures where campers and staff feel seen, valued, and inspired to return year after year. This session explores practical ways to create a positive, inclusive, mission-driven camp culture through strong values, intentional onboarding, meaningful traditions, and authentic leadership. Learn how to foster belonging, promote staff ownership, and prevent burnout or culture drift. Help your camp become a community people are proud to be part of long after summer ends.	Hunter Goodhart
	From Florida Man to The Bear - Lessons Learned in the Kitchen	For 29 summers, Iain has lived the camp and camp kitchen life from washing dishes to running a resident camp. In this lively session, he shares lessons learned along the way: the meals that worked (and didn't), camper feedback, silly traditions, and how his kitchen evolved into one of the highest-rated parts of camp. Discover what makes a camp dining experience truly memorable, explore your own non-negotiables, and leave inspired with a few new ideas and maybe a craving for Taco Tuesday.	Iain McClements
	Responding to Racially Charged Language Among Campers using the "Speak Up Superpowers" Framework	"Go back to Mexico or I'll report you to ICE" one of your counselors overheard their camper jokingly say this to a Latinx camper and is asking for your help to address it. As adults in charge of camper safety, we need tools and strategies to address racially charged language among campers. In this interactive workshop, we will begin by recognizing how unconscious beliefs can influence interactions and interpretations. Using real-life camp scenarios, we'll then apply the "Speak Up Superpowers" framework along with an understanding of applicable frameworks, and a sense that addressing racially charged incidents is an ongoing learning process that requires active participation and continuous growth.	Jen "Dusty" Clitheroe
	Painted Projects for All	Paint, painting, painted can be so many different things. Come explore different uses of paints, and different types of simple paints. Join in the fun as we colorfully paint our way to making several unique crafts with string, paper, water, rocks, and paint. Participants can expect to create 2-3 crafts in a supportive, fun environment and leave with directions and ideas for many more painting projects.	Jen Hargrave
	The Power of the Narrative: Using Storytelling to Transform Your Camp	In this session, we will move beyond treating stories as simple anecdotes and instead learn how to craft and deploy them to solve concrete challenges. Participants will learn how storytelling can transform a camp's identity into a compelling brand, communicate a unified vision to staff and stakeholders, elevate routine training into memorable, impactful lessons, enrich program areas to foster deeper camper engagement, and build an unshakeable bond of trust with parents. Specifically, this workshop will provide staff with a practical toolkit of narrative frameworks and prompts, enabling them to tell powerful stories that inspire action, build community, and foster a deeper connection to instructional objectives and the camp's mission. By the end of this session, attendees will not just understand the theory of storytelling; they will have a practical toolkit to immediately implement, creating a more cohesive, engaging, and successful camp community.	Keith Schoch
	The Inside-Out Camp: How to Prioritize Your Staff	What is the true engine of an unforgettable camp experience? This session explores the powerful "Inside-Out" leadership model, a framework built on one core principle: a thriving camp starts from within. Leo, a camp leader with over 15 years of field-tested experience, will demonstrate how prioritizing the staff journey, their growth, well-being, and sense of purpose, creates a powerful ripple effect across the entire camp. Discover practical strategies to build an exceptional staff experience that directly translates into higher staff retention, deeper camper engagement, and a vibrant, self-sustaining culture. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to focus on their team and unlock their camp's true potential.	Leonardo Patarca
	From Interview to Arrival: Building a Strong Staff Onboarding Experience Before Day One	At Woodmont Day Camp, onboarding our staff doesn't begin at orientation, it starts the moment they are invited to interview. In this session, we'll walk through the systems and strategies we use to initiate communication and subsequently prepare our staff before they even arrive at camp. From interview tools to pre-season emails, and even an online introductory "course," learn how we've designed our onboarding process to build excitement, confidence, and connection long before our staff ever sets foot on camp for orientation.	Marisa Gershwin
	How Artificial Intelligence Will Transform Camp Operations	This session explores how emerging technologies are already reshaping the way camps operate, with examples like automated medical form processing, camper intake profiles that surface important insights, time-saving email and communication tools, and AI-assisted staff hiring processes. Attendees will see how "Efficiency AI" can streamline operations and how "Opportunity AI" can open new frontiers in safety, camper experience, and personalized parent engagement. Participants will leave with clear, actionable ideas for integrating AI into their own camp operations.	Matt Kaufman

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Thursday 9:00-10:00AM	Awesome Activities: Teaching Staff (and Campers!) to Handle Challenges and Make Decisions with Flexibility, Confidence, and Creativity	Join us to play, learn, and take it all back home to your staff team! Staff leaders are frequently reporting that many (not all) of our team members have increased difficulty with "solving problems on the spot". To their credit, many staff don't move forward for fear of doing things "wrong" or when they haven't been given explicit directions about what to do in a specific situation. In response, Michael has designed some great ways to use "playing with a purpose" to boost their skills in approaching challenges with greater initiative, skill, creativity, calmness, and confidence. Learn how to get them to ask for support even when reluctant to do so. Most importantly, he'll demonstrate with the concept of "point of concentration" how to explain to staff the one key secret to improvising solutions when we haven't been told exactly how to handle something. These are quick bursts of experiential learning that can be used and practiced in staff training before and after campers arrive.	Michael Brandwein
	The "Unknown Known" Magic of the Campfire: The Serious Work of Making Fun	We all know that getting camp culture right is one of the critical factors that lead to lasting success or closing our gates. Too often, we rely on what we've always done or chase after the newest trend without ever looking at what research actually tells us. We know what we're doing even if we struggle to articulate what we know, but frankly, we don't have time for academics. However, there are scholars, some with camp backgrounds, who take camp culture seriously. They test what we assume, study what we don't fully understand, and uncover insights we might never see on our own. Their work often lies hidden in academic journals, but it has practical lessons that can strengthen and evolve our programs. This session introduces scholars whose research sheds light on camp culture. Participants will leave with clear, usable takeaways to get camp culture right.	Patrick Vrooman
	Health Center Staffing: Diversity in Roles and Needs	Camps have diverse profiles, locations, and operations. This means that there is no one particular health service model that works for everyone. This session will discuss the many variables that impact the decision of camp leadership on how to most effectively and safely staff health services.	Tracey Gaslin
	Helping Camp Parents Thrive: Supporting their Campers, Setting Expectations, and Letting Go	As summer camps increasingly serve as crucial developmental experiences for children, parents are navigating more complex emotions around separation, trust, and control. This session, led by a Psychotherapist, Camp Wellness Advisor, and former Camp Director, will explore how camps can play an active role in supporting not just campers, but their parents as well. Participants will learn how to communicate with families in a way that validates their concerns while reinforcing boundaries that protect the camper experience. We'll discuss strategies to help parents prepare for the emotional transition of camp drop-off, manage their need for control, and avoid over-involvement that may undermine their child's independence. The session will also address why more communication, updates, or access isn't always better-and how to help parents understand and respect this.	Tracey Weiss
	CIT Program Development = Strong Future Leadership	We all know and have experienced the staffing challenge. Each year, we look for a new and creative solution to add to our hiring strategies. and camps mustn't overlook the importance of building and maintaining a strong CIT Program. Your best staff is there, in camp, in the making. Camps need to ensure their CIT Program is effective and producing future staff. Most importantly, the CIT participants need to experience and feel their summer experience is one of professional and personal growth, and that being a camp counselor is an important step into their future endeavors. Come ready to evaluate, share, and build your CIT program. You will walk away with a clearer direction and incentive to spend time evaluating and building this essential feeder program.	Whitney Ryan
	Growing a Camper and Staff MESH Program - A Case Study	This roundtable chat will explore one camp's progression of MESH (Mental, Emotional, Social Health) support for staff and campers. From sporadic virtual consulting to the development of an on-site MESH department, Frost Valley YMCA has continued to invest in the well-being of its stakeholders and has seen the benefits. You'll hear from Frost Valley's mental health consultant, who has been working with the camp since the inception of the program, as well as its new on-site MESH Director. You'll also hear insights from members of the Frost Valley director team, who can share about some of the successes and setbacks faced over the years. They'll share about prioritizing MESH in the budget, thoughts on creating and implementing intentional policies, and more! Camp leaders who are considering making an investment in the mental, emotional, and social well-being of their campers and staff can't miss this! Folks who have created MESH programs and roles are encouraged to come share their stories and experiences.	Christine Mohle Elizabeth Mangum
	We Get to Do This: Increasing Retention through Staff Engagement	When the day starts, does your staff think "I have to go to work" or "I get to go to work"? Getting to go to work means our staff members understand the purpose of their jobs, they feel appreciated, and they have fun! This highly interactive session includes a mix of thought-provoking discussion as well as dynamic activities to encourage camp leaders to increase the engagement level of the staff they lead as a key tool to help increase staff retention.	Jed Buck Roz Buck

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Thursday 10:15-11:15AM			
Thursday 10:15-11:15AM	Authenticity Wins: Actionable Social Media Strategies to Grow Your Camp Community	<p>Aaron Bloomfield, founder of Summer Camp Connect, the worlds largest online summer camp community, has generated over 70 million views across social media in the camp industry. In this session, he shares proven strategies for leveraging genuine, story-driven content to strengthen camp culture, engage alumni, and attract new families. Drawing from direct feedback from thousands of campers, counselors, alumni, and directors, Aaron reveals how authentic storytelling and community-centered content can bridge generations, showcase camp traditions, and spread the magic of camp year-round.</p> <p>Most importantly, attendees will walk away with actionable strategies they can implement immediately without big budgets, marketing degrees, or complex tools required. Learn how to turn summer 2026 into a marketing engine, driving year-round connection, stronger communities, higher enrollment, and more effective staff recruitment.</p>	Aaron Bloomfield
	Right Fit, Right Now: Mastering Camp Hiring	<p>Great camps start with great people, but how do we find them? This session explores effective hiring practices that go beyond resumes and reference checks. Learn how to design a hiring process that identifies not just skill sets, but character, cultural fit, and potential.</p> <p>We'll look at strategies for spotting teachability, evaluating buy-in, and recognizing leadership capacity, even in candidates who may not check every traditional box. Whether you're hiring summer staff or year-round team members, this workshop will equip you with tools to build a values-aligned team that's committed, coachable, and ready to grow.</p> <p>Come ready to rethink your approach to hiring, ask hard questions, and walk away with practical tools you can use to strengthen your team, one great hire at a time.</p>	Brad Halsey
	When People Get Mad: Supporting Big Feelings (Youth & Adults)	From campers to coworkers to parents, people get mad. This session equips you with de-escalation tools rooted in care and dignity. Learn how to regulate escalated moments, repair harm, and respond to conflict in ways that strengthen relationships instead of straining them.	Chris Rehs-Dupin
	The Parent Perspective: Understanding Families' Summer Choices in 2026	Every summer, parents face a growing menu of choices for their kids, including travel sports and specialty programs to traditional day and overnight camps. In this data-driven, story-filled session, Dan unpacks what families are signing up for, what influences those choices, and what this means for camps looking to stay relevant. We'll explore the role of cost, convenience, safety, reputation, and location in a parent's decision-making process. We'll uncover opportunities for camps to better connect with today's families.	Dan Weir
	Nurturing Healthy Competition in a High-Pressure World	Campers love competition, but justifying ferocious competition by saying, "Hey, it's a competitive world out there!" ignores the critical differences between healthy and harmful competition. Even worse, most young people will arrive at camp feeling excessive pressure to succeed. Participants in this inspiring workshop will learn the keys to upending harmful competition and external pressures by using healthy approaches that not only boost campers' mental health, they also improve performance!	Dr. Chris Thurber
	Responses to Staff Sexual Misconduct: Punitive, Restorative, and Advocacy Approaches	When sexual harassment or assault occurs in our communities, camp leadership holds two distinct, and sometimes conflicting, responsibilities: supporting the staff member who was harmed and maintaining community safety going forward. Teaching camp directors how to use trauma-informed approaches that empower and center the needs of staff who experience harm, while also fulfilling their leadership responsibilities, is essential. As a camp consultant who has helped camp leadership teams through many challenging processes around sexual assault, Elissa Asch will share various best-practice approaches to supporting survivors, repairing harm, and moving forward as a community.	Elissa Asch
	From Obstacles to Opportunity: How Great Leaders Turn Setbacks into Strength	<p>Every day at camp brings the unexpected: storms, staffing shifts, homesickness, or last-minute parent concerns. These obstacles can feel overwhelming, but how leaders respond doesn't just keep camp running smoothly; it models resilience and mindset skills for the next generation. In this engaging session, resilience strategist Erin Mark shares her story of overcoming impossible odds while living with a terminal illness.</p> <p>That journey from "training to die" to "training to live" shapes her message about urgency, reinvention, and mindset shifts that fuel resilience. Through humor, story, and practical tools, Erin equips camp professionals to reframe setbacks, turn obstacles into opportunities, and strengthen their own leadership. Attendees will leave inspired and ready to thrive through challenges both at camp and beyond!</p>	Erin Mark

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
<div>Thursday 10:15-11:15AM</div> <div>5AM</div>	From Chaos to Culture: Radical Candor and the Rebuild Year Ahead	Even the strongest camp cultures need moments of repair and renewal. Drawing on <i>Radical Candor</i> by Kim Scott and more than 15 years of experience leading an overnight camp, Executive Director Jacqueline McDonough explores how honesty, empathy, and accountability can transform leadership communication. Entering 2026 as a rebuild year, Jacqueline shares how she's using radical candor to repair trust, strengthen staff culture, and model transparent leadership. Participants will leave with practical communication tools, feedback frameworks, and strategies for sustaining trust and morale in the seasons ahead.	Jacqueline McDonough
	Fuel the Fun: Nut-Aware, Kid-Approved Choices	A practical playbook for camp snack service. We'll cover nut-aware systems, clear labeling, pars and rotation, and how to keep kid-loved options ready, house granola bars and always-available colorful apples and bananas, alongside higher-protein and some extra special staff snacks. Leave with simple checklists, a weekly rotation, and a printable granola-bar recipe.	Michael Mack
	Supporting Younger Kids at Sleepaway Camp: Scaffolds for Success	Younger campers are excited, but often overwhelmed. They're still developing the Executive Functioning skills needed for independence: transitioning, organizing, and regulating emotions. Without the right support, small struggles can spiral into homesickness or behavior issues. This session shows how to build EF-informed routines that help younger campers thrive—boosting retention, staff satisfaction, and family trust.	Rachel Hoffman
	Blurred Lines, Big Responsibilities: Empowering CITs and Under-18 Staff in Child Abuse Prevention	Explore strategies for delivering child and peer abuse prevention training to counselors-in-training (CITs) and staff under 18. Learn how to address their unique roles, clarify boundaries, and equip them with practical tools that help them prevent incidents and respond appropriately to foster a safer camp community.	Teresa Tucker
	Current Challenges and Solutions for Aquatics Directors: A Panel Discussion	Aquatics Directors are navigating an increasingly complex landscape, staffing shortages, evolving safety standards, rising participant expectations, and the need for inclusive programming are just a few of the pressing issues. This panel discussion brings together experienced aquatics leaders from a variety of camp settings to share insights, strategies, and practical solutions to today's most urgent challenges. Panelists will explore topics such as: recruiting and retaining qualified lifeguards and instructors, managing risk and compliance with safety protocols, adapting programming for inclusion, responding to mental health needs in aquatic environments, leveraging partnerships and certifications to enhance training. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions, share their own experiences, and leave with actionable ideas to strengthen their aquatics programs. Whether you're a seasoned director or new to the role, this session offers a valuable space for collaboration.	Cait Waxler Hanna Wasserman Deidra Clark-Towers Jennifer DeSpagna April E. Beattie
	One Game, Five Ways: Designing Activities with Built-In Progressions	What if one great game could work for every age group at camp, without losing the fun, challenge, or learning? In this hands-on session, we'll explore how to design and adapt activities with built-in progressions that grow with your campers. From Pre-K to 8th grade, we'll show you how to scaffold skill development, rules, and roles so the same core game stays fresh, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate across all levels. You'll leave with a toolkit of ready-to-use progressions and a framework to make every game at your camp more flexible, scalable, and purposeful.	Cristian Irizarry Lisa Henriquez
	From Ally to Co-Conspirator: An Anti-Racism Lab for Camp Leaders	This session is for leaders ready to move from passive allyship to active co-conspiracy in the fight against racism at camp. We begin by clearly defining this crucial shift, which requires using your voice, power, and resources to challenge and change systems. This is a lab, not a lecture, focused on building your practical toolkit for intervention and advocacy. You will practice interrupting microaggressions in real-time, discuss how to advocate for anti-racist policies in hiring, budgeting, and power structures, and policy shifts that you can push out tomorrow that will show your community that you're walking the talk. Leave this session empowered with the confidence and concrete skills to act as a genuine co-conspirator for your staff of color.	Ella Quimby Simone Gamble

Day and Time	Session Name	Description	Speakers
Thursday 10:15-11:15	What's Worth Repeating: Building Culture through Program Design	Every camp has that one thing that hits harder than anything else, that 11/10 program moment that becomes legend. But why? We'll unpack the anatomy of a truly great program, from the spark of an idea to how it's planned, staffed, budgeted, and embedded into culture. We'll dig into the tension between Tradition vs. Expectation, and Sacred vs. Shared. We'll also look at programming through a modern lens, one informed by parents, staff, and MrBeast's Manifesto: storytelling, generosity, and overdelivering on the outrageous and unexpected.	Justin Pritikin Taylor Gagnon
	Culture of Safety: The Systems that Make Safety Stick	A Culture of Safety doesn't just live in people; it's built through the systems, communication loops, and daily rhythms that hold camp together. This session explores how operational structures, from scheduling and incident reporting to feedback and follow-up, can make safety second nature. Through practical examples and discussion, participants will learn how to design systems that strengthen communication, build accountability without burnout, and help staff stay proactive instead of reactive. You'll leave with tools to align your operations and team culture so safety isn't just a policy, it's built into the bones of your camp.	Lauren Pitcairn Paige Moffett
	Camp Legal Crisis Ready: Risk, Response and Responsibilities	When legal crises strike at camp involving staff, quick and informed action is critical. This session explores high-stakes scenarios like abuse allegations, sexual harassment investigations, staff mental health emergencies, and terminations. Attendees will gain practical strategies to respond ethically, legally, and effectively. Through real-world examples and expert insights, camp leaders will leave better prepared to protect their staff, campers, and organization when the unexpected occurs.	Rachel Satinsky