



CAMP BLODGETT

SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

Childhood is full of wonder, curiosity, play, and learning through experiences. It is also a time when kids get uncomfortable in their own skin. A time when groups form, friendships are made, and kids start to notice the stuff that makes them feel like the odd one out. Here at Camp Blodgett, we center belonging as a primary goal for kids. No one likes to feel left out, and we have a mission responsibility to build a healthy self-esteem for all children we serve. Belonging is key.

At the core of self-esteem programs is summer camp. Summer camp is a sanctuary, a beloved space where all kids are celebrated, encouraged, accepted, and supported as they are. **Thanks to a century of community support, we are heading into our 101st season of accessible and affordable summer camp at Camp Blodgett.**

As with every summer before it, we will build self-confidence in children by:

- Encouraging children to step out of their comfort zone in a challenge by choice environment.
- Teaching children independence and social responsibility through daily community living.
- Introducing children to new experiences from learning how to ride a bicycle to climbing the rock wall.
- Gaining new skills through our weekly workshops, sports activities, arts programming and more.
- Making lifelong friendships with people you may have never met before.
- Developing social skills and cultural sensitivity by living in a diverse community.
- Helping children identify and celebrate their strengths.
- Nature based learning – without screens – helps children center themselves and better connect with themselves and the world around them.

We are eager for another self-esteem building summer and need your continued support to make this happen! **Please join in our 2022 Campership Campaign and ensure at least one child is given the gift of self-confidence at Camp Blodgett, thanks to YOU.**

THANK YOU for being part of our mission!

For the kids,

Lucy Dyer Joswick, Executive Director

- New Camp Director Announcement
- Message from a Young Leader
- New Community Liaison Announcement
- Volunteer Spotlight
- A Message from Our Directors
- Campership Campaign

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UPCOMING EVENTS

May 4 - Camp Blodgett Guild's Giving in Style

A fundraising event at Leigh's

May 7 - Camp Clean-Up Volunteer Day

Individuals and businesses preparing camp to open

June 12, July 31, & August 28 - Acoustic Sunset Benefit Concert Series

September 22 - For The Kids Soirée

October 8 - 2nd Annual Ride for the Kids FUNdraiser



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Camp Blodgett



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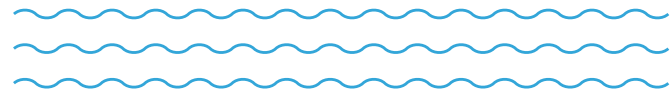


PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEW CAMP DIRECTOR: DONTARIO "DONNY" HODGES!

Donny's journey with Camp Blodgett has taken him on a beautiful journey over half of his lifetime and has given him an in-depth familiarity with the ins and outs of Camp Blodgett's mission to serve the children and teens of Kent and Ottawa

Counties. **"As a former camper and as someone who has grown up with this amazing organization, I know the power of camp. I have seen firsthand what camp has done—not only in my life, but in the lives of countless others."** Someone with Donny's intimate familiarity with Camp Blodgett has witnessed time and again just how powerful the camp experience can be. As Donny puts it, "It is a privilege to watch kids grow up into phenomenal adults, or to [watch] our staff find passion and direction in their lives from their experiences."

As Donny embarks on his newest journey with Camp Blodgett, he will work alongside current Camp Director Brian Paul. **Brian and Donny have worked together on this transition since fall of 2021 and will continue this partnership through the end of the summer. Brian will work hard to mentor and guide Donny into his new path with Camp Blodgett before Donny assumes the mantle by himself in September.** And just as Brian is guiding Donny as he forges his new path with Camp Blodgett, so too is Donny looking forward to serving as a shepherd to our community's children. "I am excited, nervous, and humbled to be coming my first year and co-directing with Brian at such



a vital and important time for summer camps and today's youth. It's no big secret that these past few years have been filled with much trial and hardship, which have rattled not only the summer camp world but many of our lives as well. This is something we keep in mind as we continue to expand our support for our kids."

With Donny taking the reins as Camp Director and with Brian transitioning to his new role as Camp Blodgett's Director of Experiential Education in a few months, the future is looking bright on Lake Michigan. In Brian's new role, he will continue to mentor the program team and serve as the lead staff for non-wedding rental groups seeking memorable group experiences at Camp Blodgett.

Donny writes, **"This summer, we will certainly continue to do what we do best at Camp Blodgett—which is continuing to build meaningful relationships and connections with our campers and ensuring our space is a space where our kids feel safe, valued, and loved.** With registrations already quickly rolling in, it is very apparent that we are all eager to get back to the magic of summer camp and the magic that is Camp Blodgett. I'm excited to connect more with our parents and, of course, our amazing campers!"

MESSAGE FROM A YOUNG LEADER: KYLIE THOMAS

What is the Young Leaders Program?

The Young Leaders program is for youth who no longer fit the age requirements to continue as a camper. This program teaches leadership and responsibility to teens between the ages of 14 to 17. I joined the Young Leaders program after two years of attending Camp Blodgett's summer camp. **My camp experience had such a huge impact on me that I aspired to give other children the same experiences I had.** Being a homeschooled student, I have not been privileged to have the same social life as my peers. Being involved with the Young Leaders program has helped me be around more people my age. It has also given me events to build my social skills with a sense of professionalism. I also attend teen programming which is another opportunity for the youth offered through Camp Blodgett which focuses on career building skills, college readiness, and outdoor education.



Quick facts:

- enjoys reading
- listening to music
- watching anime



MEET VALERIA MARIN

"I began as a camper at 9 years old, and I never left... I just enjoyed the environment Camp Blodgett offered."



Camp Blodgett welcomes Valeria as a full-time staff member in the newly created role of Community Liaison. This strategic position serves as the glue between programs and operations.

Val has been with Camp Blodgett for over a decade. She was a camper, a Young Leader, a Counselor, and Head Counselor with our year-round educational/recreational program.

After earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Family Studies from Western Michigan University, Val wanted to learn more about non-profit leadership at Camp Blodgett and be part of the strategic and creative process of program creation.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: DREW WESSELL



"I was looking for a place to re-engage in the community."

QUICK FACTS

- Board Member since 2017
- Board Treasurer since 2018
- Finance Committee Chair
- Member of Executive Committee

Valeria Marin, Community Liaison, sat down with longtime volunteer and current board treasurer Drew Wessell to talk more with him about his involvement with Camp Blodgett and its importance in the West Michigan community.

Val: How did you hear about Camp Blodgett and begin volunteering? Why did you stay involved?

I first came to Camp Blodgett (CB) as a Catholic Central High School student for COREX, the class retreat that kicks off senior year. In 2017, I met former Executive Director (ED) Erica Czaja and current ED Lucy Dyer Joswick through the Grand Rapids Chamber's Leadership Grand Rapids program. I have volunteered since then because I feel connected to Camp Blodgett's mission and central purpose—providing access to the camp experience for kids who otherwise could not afford it. I value the programs that serve the community year-round and enjoy working with a committed staff whose skills continuously improve those programs.

Val: What's something you wished people knew more about CB?

There are many ways to experience Camp Blodgett beyond summer camp. Camp offers year-round STEM programming and leadership training to its youth staff.

Val: How do you think people should support CB?

Check out our volunteer opportunities, fundraising events, and concerts in the summer. Tell your friends about us. If the mission resonates, take them to a concert or event so they can experience all that Camp Blodgett has to offer. Community members can also support our mission by renting the Loeks Retreat Center for weddings, meetings, and corporate retreats.

"Drew is a valued volunteer who consistently shows up for Camp Blodgett! Drew shows interest and engagement in everything we do and has coached us through rapid growth over the past several years with his finance, business, and management experience."

-Lucy Dyer Joswick,
Executive Director

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTORS...

PROGRAMS

It has been a big year for CB's programs, and we are just getting started!

Highlights: We added multiple innovative young adult readiness programs to help prepare our teens for their future! STEM also continues to expand programming, and has added additional sites by partnering with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids.

Looking forward: Check out our teen programs on career planning, financial and budget education, leadership development, and outdoor education.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We are busy planning Camp Blodgett's communication plans, volunteer opportunities, and fundraising efforts.

Highlights: CB kicked off the 2022 Campership Campaign for individuals. Your support for this campaign provides camping experiences to children who otherwise could not afford it.

Looking forward: We are hosting events in-person again! Our Acoustic Sunset Benefit Concert Series is BACK! Our Ride for the Kids, a Camp Blodgett FUNdraiser, is back this fall! Keep up with us on Facebook, Instagram, and our monthly E-Newsletter: A Cup of Camp.

FACILITIES

We've been busy with weekend retreats that come to camp over the winter. These groups include youth groups, mission teams, and cross country skiers.

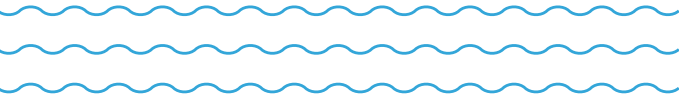
Highlight: We added partitions in the shower area of our bath house to increase privacy and safety for our campers.

Looking Forward: We are excited to get started with weddings and a busy volunteer schedule this spring so camp can look its best for our 101st year!





Camp Blodgett
528 Bridge St. NW, Ste 6
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INVEST IN KIDS.

Camp Blodgett kicked off the 2022 Campership Campaign for individuals and businesses to help children experience a camp whose mission is rooted in building healthy self-esteem, promoting social responsibility, and encouraging academic success.

Camp Blodgett is a camp for all children in West Michigan. We stand out because of our dedication to provide free and low-cost recreational and educational programs for children who are facing poverty. Camp Blodgett teaches values that last a lifetime, and YOU are the primary ingredient to help make this work possible for years to come. Annually, we are tasked with raising the difference between the small amount we charge our families for summer camp and STEM Academy and their true costs—that means raising just over \$1 million each year.



INVEST IN A CAMBERSHIP.

\$500 **Cover the costs of one child attending a one-week session at Camp Blodgett.** Give the gifts of new experiences, challenging activities, building confidence, making new friends, and exploring the great outdoors.

\$250 **Contribute half of a child's week at Camp Blodgett.** Support half the cost of one week of magical memories on the shores of Lake Michigan for our community's most vulnerable children.

\$100 **Sponsor a day at Camp Blodgett for one child.** In just one day, a child can step their toes into Lake Michigan for the first time, practice archery, try out the rock wall, learn a new skill at a workshop, take a dip in our pool, and so much more!



To view all of our campership options or make a donation online, scan the QR code or visit us at campblodgett.org/donate

You can also make a donation using the enclosed envelope. Memo: Campership