



Camp Blodgett

CONNECTION

FALL 2021



In a flash, our 100th summer has come and gone, and what a summer it was! We were so thankful to be able to come together for a traditional Camp Blodgett experience after a season missed. With the pandemic still a reality, there were certainly untraditional experiences, like a COVID check at check-in, wearing masks, and daily temperature checks, but our kids were so grateful for the escape.



In honor of our 100th summer, we wanted to celebrate each week with gusto! Every week was a birthday with adventures from caricature artists, laser tag and archery tag, guest musicians visiting, and more! Piñatas and birthday presents, singing and dance parties—campers made up for all the fun they missed out on last summer!

After over a year of abnormality and complex realities, the perseverance of our children is amazing. The majority spent the last year in front of a computer for school, hungry for experiential learning, but rolling with this loss of normalcy in their lives. They were so eager for summer camp – a chance to live like they once did – a kid enjoying sunshine and play on the lakeshore.

We saw the change in our kids, sometimes more challenging behavior, but also saw great successes in our kids. One child who had struggled with making good choices at camp in the past really turned around this summer. He certainly had struggles, but it was clear he was more in control of his emotions, owning his choices, and able to express his feelings with words rather than actions. This was huge, and it felt really special to be a part of his journey this summer. At checkout his mom came expecting to get pulled to the side to hear about what happened over the week, but instead was blown away with positive stories and big smiles!

I think that is the magic of camp: understanding that we are all on our own journey, and having a safe space to explore new ideas, friendships, and experiences. You get to make mistakes and try again and be embraced for who you are! Camp Blodgett may be 100 years old now, but we are just getting started!



Thank you for being a part of our journey by investing in our campers.

I can't wait to see where we go from here.

Brian Paul
Camp Director



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IMAGING

FALL CENTENNIAL BIKE RIDE & AFTER PARTY!

October 16

8am to 6pm

8am first rollout

10am last rollout

18+ ONLY, ID & helmet required

Camp Blodgett is celebrating 100-years of providing recreational & educational activities to children experiencing poverty. This year, we adopted an organization called Elves & More who provided bicycles to low-income children living in the 49507 zip code, one of the primary communities we serve. To celebrate our centennial and this new partnership, we are hosting a bike ride along the Lake Michigan shoreline, out & back.

To entice everyone from beginning explorers to those cyclists that spend weekends on their trusty steeds, this ride will include your choice from 20-62 miles (a metric century!).

The \$50 fee includes:

- Entry to event
- Title of West Michigan Adventure Maker
- 2 drink coupons
- Swag bag for each rider & all of the dancing you can do at our After Party!

Don't want to ride? Join us at the after party!
Your \$25 fee includes 2 drink tickets as well.



For more info, registration, and tickets, scan the code below or visit: campblodgett.org/CB100BikeRide



NEW TEEN PROGRAMS!

We are adding three new teen programs this school year thanks to new grants from the American Camping Association (ACA) and the Youth Advisory Committee of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation (GRCF).

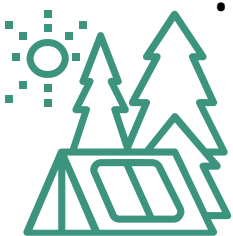
The programs were designed based on teen interest and demand for us to offer more than Young Leaders as a way for older campers to stay engaged. The GRCF program supports us for one year and ACA supports teen programs for the next three years. Each of the latest programs is for high school students in Kent and Ottawa Counties and includes three interest groups. High School age campers can now choose from four teen-specific offerings.

• **Adulting:** Each quarter, by teen suggestion, Camp Blodgett will offer a series of adult-skill building courses. This will begin with a cooking basics series this September. Other topic areas include monetary management and car maintenance.

• **Future Focus:** Each quarter, we will host an event, facility tour or gathering where teens can learn about opportunities post-high school. This will include university and college visits, learning about trade schools and certifications, and helping many first-generation post-high school learners.

• **Outdoor Adventures:** Every month, as weather allows, we will host an outdoor adventure opportunity, many outside of camp's land. From hiking to kayaking to biking to sledding, we will provide more safe opportunities for teens to gather and connect with the outdoors. In the summer, we will offer our first tent camping trip for a small group and hope to grow that to more overnights in future years.

• **Young Leaders:** This program is not going anywhere, but will no longer be our only offering. Young Leaders will continue to meet monthly for leadership lessons and to plan the quarterly day camps they hold for campers. In the summer, the most FIERCE* teens are selected to serve as Young Leaders, where they support all aspects of programming and receive a \$50 stipend for each week of their service.



8 weeks of summer camp

372 kids served

71% paid less than \$40 — the lowest rate on our sliding scale

64% live at or below the federal poverty line

at a glance

We asked... kids answered!



Top 3 Camp Activities

1. Swimming in the pool
2. Making new friends
3. Free time with friends

97% reported feeling safe at camp

96% feel like they belong when they are at camp

96% felt supported by staff to try new things

88% feel better about themselves when they are at camp

94% want to return for summer 2022

STEM ACADEMY STUDENTS

88% said their teachers helped increase their knowledge

56% said they can see themselves in future STEM careers

75% said their time with us helped them understand a topic they were previously stuck on

50% increase in their interest in attending college, from beginning of summer to end

Introducing...

To better measure our impact in building future leaders, with our teens, we developed the "FIERCE 5," as the leadership qualities youth develop through our programs. At each of our monthly meetings, we deploy educational and experiential activities designed to help define and build these qualities.

Our Young Leaders use these leadership skills to develop quarterly day camps for younger campers, during their time serving at summer camp and as they navigate the world as adults-in-training.



F - Flexibility

I - Innovation

E - Empathy

R - Responsibility

C - Compassion

E - Giving extra to all we do





Camp Blodgett
528 Bridge St. NW, Ste. 6
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Virtual **FOR THE KIDS** Campaign

We were so hopeful to gather this fall after celebrating with you this July, but sadly this pandemic is continually in control. Our fall fundraising event is a critical component of our annual program support typically raising between \$40,000 and \$50,000 in one day!

Instead of gathering for lunch, we will save those expenses and stay healthy with a one month **For the Kids Campaign from Monday, October 11, 2021 to Thursday, November 11, 2021. Those who donate \$100 or more will receive access to a premiere reveal of our brand-new logo!** In addition to this, you have the chance to win unique prizes with each donation you make.

We have been working with a former camper and counselor turned artist and a local graphic designer to bring our kids' designs to life. You can visit our website to view more and vote for your favorite design, to be revealed at the end of this campaign!

Meet our Director of Community Development, Jennifer Grondzik



As our new fundraising and communication lead, Jennifer joins us familiar with our mission as her father was a camper over 50 years ago. She has fond memories of her family later gathering at Camp Blodgett for a family reunion and talent show in our meeting hall.

Jennifer joins us after serving in fundraising and education for nearly two decades, most recently with Greater Ottawa County United Way. She has also served GRCC, Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore, and GVSU.

When you meet Jennifer (and she will be sure you will), you will be drawn to her energy and intentional style of communication. With a master's degree in Communication, Jennifer is eager to utilize her multi-faceted skill set to ensure our community has the opportunity to invest their time, talents, and treasures in Camp Blodgett.

You may contact Jennifer at jennifer@campblodgett.org