

# Camp Scugog's Summer Plans



Dear Fairlawn Avenue United Church,

I know that like me, you were probably anxiously awaiting more information from the provincial government regarding camps this summer. When the announcement came that overnight camps will be allowed to open come phase two, I'm sure that also, like me, you felt a jolt of excitement.

I've been getting lots of requests to learn more about our summer plan which you'll find below. As always, our primary goal is to keep our camp community safe. Our campers are among those who've been hit hardest by COVID-19. During our weekly Mom's (Zoom) Tea Time, moms regularly describe how they and their families have been directly affected by the virus, many having experienced significant loss. Most of our campers come from families of low wage front line workers, or share small apartments with extended families, or are living in transient housing where COVID-19 has spread quickly. It's been a tremendously hard year, and we're eager to get our campers out of the city, into nature, in a supportive environment.

Because our campers are more likely to have, or have contact with someone who has COVID-19, opening Camp Scugog is more challenging. Considerable efforts have been made to address the fact that many

members of our community are, at this moment, vaccine hesitant. We've helped families navigate registration, and our Camp Nurse has had

countless 1-on-1s with campers and staff to answer questions so that they can make informed decisions about their health. Historical traumas have left pervasive cultural distrust with the healthcare system, and there is a barrage of misinformation, and challenges with accessing the vaccine, that have left us serving a community that disproportionately has not received their first dose.

These factors combined with the knowledge that we don't yet have a firm date as to when phase two will begin makes opening this summer at full capacity both unrealistic and unsafe.

We have a plan we're excited about, that we feel can keep our campers safe, and will set Camp Scugog up best for the future.

In June, six staff will arrive on site. These senior staff will be primarily responsible for site maintenance. I know that many of you have joined our Spring Cleaning weekends in previous years, so you know how much work it takes to keep our facilities in good shape. We're now entering our second summer without traditional programming, and our facilities need some extra care. These six staff will be focused on property maintenance, painting, cleaning, and building new hiking trails during the months of June and July.

They will also be responsible for facilitating online programming. Our weekly Moms Tea Time has been incredibly successful and will continue for the foreseeable future. It's been a wonderful way for those who attend our moms and kids camp to stay connected, be part of a community and support each other through really trying times. Online programming will also be available for the LIT/JC's (Leadership group, age 15-17). We've partnered with Canadian Tire's Jumpstart Foundation to purchase 10 Fitbits for each of our LIT/JC's so that they can participate in fun daily challenges to stay in touch and improve their mental and physical health. We're excited about the program, and would like to include our summer 2019 staff as well. If you have an old fit bit you'd like to donate, please let us know by contacting our Office Manager, Vicky, at [vspence@campscugog.org](mailto:vspence@campscugog.org).

We're also partnering with Fairlawn Ave United Church to send a small craft to all 2019 campers. Each will receive a personalized letter, along with materials and instructions to make a friendship bracelet as a reminder of the good times they've had, and the good times still to come at camp.

It is our hope (pending provincial and local health guidelines) that by August, we'll be able to have campers on site. We plan to have the LIT/JC's at camp which is important in maintaining our pipeline of talent for next summer. While the LIT/JC's run their programming, we're also hoping to have a small number of moms with their kids on site. Each family will have their own cabin, and moms will play a more active role in their kids' care compared to summers past. This will allow each family to remain socially distant from other campers, while still enjoying traditional camp activities. Lastly, we're incredibly excited about our new basketball court being completed in the next few weeks, and are eager to host a basketball weekend at the end of August for staff, LITs and JCs.

We are confident we can execute this plan safely, while still supporting our campers, and ensuring we have awesome staff ready for summer 2022.

Another exciting development taking place this summer is a new partnership with Common Earth, an organization committed to combating climate change through educational programming. Common Earth is creating a large (20'x40') organic, regenerative garden at Camp Scugog with the primary goal of promoting understanding of the role healthy soil plays in climate change. We're excited about this program, it will enable our campers to learn more about food farming, climate change and healthy eating.

The other very exciting piece of news is that Camp Scugog was awarded a \$150,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which will be used to launch a Nature School this fall. Nature Schools are outdoor, inquiry based classrooms that touch on all subjects and disciplines: in any given moment an experience can cut across math, science, art, language and physical education. Learning outcomes are based on real-time explorations and experiences, rather than predetermined concepts. Each day will host programming for a different age group of children.

The funds from the Ontario Trillium Foundation will be used to renovate our 100+ year-old dining hall making it a four season facility, and to hire our first staff to launch the program. We're currently in the process of interviewing and are excited about the candidates! This Nature School will serve the surrounding communities within Durham, and funds raised will help to support our summer camp programming, and ideally allow us to carry on some of the year round programming launched during the pandemic.

The final piece of news that I'm thrilled to share, and to say thank you for, is that Camp Scugog was the successful recipient of Peel CAS's Honour Roll 2021. The Honour Roll acknowledges the support and contributions of organizations and individuals in helping to keep children safe. It's an annual award given for exceptional support to Peel CAS over a three or more year period. What's particularly exciting about this award is that we were given it in part, because of the pandemic support provided over the past year. I hope that while reading this, you feel a real sense of pride in this award, because we would not have received it without your support. Absolutely everything done at Camp Scugog is made possible because of our awesome donors and volunteers. Thank you.

It's shaping up to be a unique and busy summer at Camp Scugog, and I'm looking forward to continuing to provide updates as it unfolds. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions and thank you again for making all of these plans possible.

Yours in camping,



Dana Leahey



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