



# RE-ECHOES

The official newsletter of the Surprise Lake Camp community

Fall 2024



## SURPRISE LAKE CAMP

SINCE 1961

## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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\*Deceased

Joel "Whammy" Kaufman  
President Emeritus

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Cold Spring, NY 10516  
(845) 265-3616  
[alumni@surpriselake.org](mailto:alumni@surpriselake.org)

Please email your  
newsletter submissions  
or notify us of any errors:  
[alumni@surpriselake.org](mailto:alumni@surpriselake.org)

Layout by [James Dinn](#)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**SLC Alumni Association Raffle 2024** · Ongoing until mid-December  
[www.surpriselake.org/event/raffle2024](http://www.surpriselake.org/event/raffle2024)

**SLCAA Bingo Night** · Thursday, December 12  
[surpriselake.org/event/bingo2024/](http://surpriselake.org/event/bingo2024/)

**Florida Reunion** · Thursday, December 26  
[surpriselake.org/event/fl2024/](http://surpriselake.org/event/fl2024/)

**NYC Alumnight Out** · Date TBD  
Website coming soon.

**SLC Soiree \* A Night of Magic, Mentalism, & Memories** · Thursday, February 27  
[surpriselake.org/event/slcoiree2025/](http://surpriselake.org/event/slcoiree2025/)

[Visit our Events page for more info! Surpriselake.org/events](http://surpriselake.org/events)



# SLC NEWS!

**Let us know, so we can share with the entire SLC Family!**

We want to hear about new babies, jobs, engagements, graduations, anniversaries, celebrations, reunions, and more!

Email [alumni@surpriselake.org](mailto:alumni@surpriselake.org) at any time to have your news included in a future issue of Re-Echoes.

Also, if you have SLC nostalgia, pictures or anything that could be included in the SLC Museum, please let us know.

## Mazel Tov

### Births



Heath Brody born to Ursula (Alvarez) and Jared Kramer on April 27.



Silas Finn born to Allie (Ball) and Jordan Golan on May 3.



Eloise Hamberg born to Tyler and Kayla Hamberg on July 19th.



Sydney Nora born to Britt Karp and Jake Grafstein on August 31.

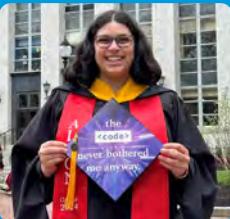


Ayla Lily born to parents Michelle Grosberg Smith and David Smith on October 27



Andrew and Michele (Kaiser) Jacobson on the birth of their granddaughter Ella Kathleen.

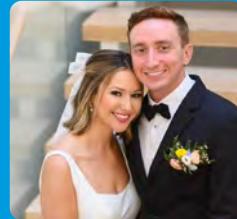
### Weddings, etc



Sammi Olinsky on receiving her Masters in Computer Science from Northeastern University in May



Britt Karp and Jake Grafstein on their May 11th wedding.



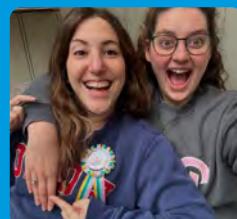
Marissa (Marx) and Brett Merslich on their May 26th wedding.



Jessy Weinberg on her June 20 engagement to Alex Tendler



Brianna Morrison and Adam Miller on their July 12th wedding.



Katie Ottman (SLC 2016-19) and Charlotte Smith (SLC 2016) on their October 31st engagement

Mazel Tov to Mike Metzger, Eddie Cantor's first grandson on his self-published first novel, *The Tragical History of Madame Tourette*. It includes many passages reflecting Mike's memories of growing up with his grandfather and being in the company of his many famous friends, notably Fanny Brice, Gus Edwards, Georgie Jessel, Flortnz Zeigfeld, Will Rogers, etc. If anyone in the SLC community is interested in obtaining the book, they can contact Mike at [metzapata@aol.com](mailto:metzapata@aol.com).

## We Extend Our Deepest Condolences To...

Elaine, Paul, and the Suchow Family on the loss of Elaine's mother, Doris Bieber.

Faith (Altschuler) Kirkpatrick on the loss of her father, Paul Altschuler.

Rob Rosenbaum and Steven Rosenbaum on the loss of their mother, Lydia.

Larry, Mara, and Eve Rubinstein and their families on the loss of Robin.

Andy and Lee Meyer and their families on the loss of their father, Mel.

Mia Desmedt Serrano on the loss of her father.

**May their memories be a blessing.**

# Letter from the Camp Director

As we reflect on another wonderful camp season, we're excited to look ahead to Summer 2025! Our team has been hard at work preparing for the upcoming summer, and we wanted to share some updates about what's in store and the progress we've made.

## Hiring and Leadership Development

We're currently in the process of hiring for next summer, including camp counselors, specialists, and support staff. We're excited to welcome a new group of talented individuals who are dedicated to upholding camp's values and traditions while bringing fresh energy to the experience. In addition to hiring the staff, we have finalized the selection of our Leadership campers. These young leaders, who are selected based on their commitment to community, growth, and service, will play an integral role at camp this summer, trying out different staff roles, learning about the challenges and rewards of working at camp, and developing their own understanding of what it means to be Jewish leaders, both at camp and in their home communities.



## Facility Upgrades

We continue to make investments in camp facilities to enhance the camper experience and ensure that our infrastructure remains strong. Our maintenance team has been busy with several maintenance projects, and we're excited to share that we're making progress on upgrading key areas of camp. These upgrades are designed to make SLC even more comfortable for all who spend time here.

## Conferences and Networking

This winter and spring, we'll be attending two important conferences that will help us continue to improve and innovate:

**JCC Camp Conference** in Chicago (December 2024)

**ACA Tri-State Camp Conference** in Atlantic City (March 2025)

These gatherings bring together camp professionals from all over the country, offering a chance to learn, collaborate, and exchange ideas on everything from staff training to program development. We look forward to bringing back new insights and ideas that will benefit our campers and staff.

## Summer 2025 Calendar: Trips and Special Events

As we plan the summer 2025 calendar, we are working to build an exciting and memorable array of trips and special events. From adventurous outings to fun-filled camp traditions, we're ensuring that there's something for everyone. Details about these activities, as well as our specific camp dates, will be shared in the coming months.

We can't wait for another summer of laughter, growth, and unforgettable memories at Surprise Lake Camp. We are grateful for the continued support of our alumni and families, and we look forward to welcoming old friends and new faces back to camp in 2025.

If you have any questions or want to get more involved in camp's future, don't hesitate to reach out. We're always happy to hear from our camp community.

Yours in Camping,

*Sheryl*

See you all then.

# President's Message

Hello SLC Friends and Family!

Welcome to the Fall 2024 issue of ReEchoes! This year has been a whirlwind – it's hard to believe that another spectacular SLC summer has come and gone. We're already counting down the days until the next one!

Speaking of summer at SLC, I want to start by thanking everyone that helped to make this year's Alumni Day, Swim-A-Thon, and Alumni Day Eve Lawnfest such a success. This year was the first since 2019 that we were able to visit camp while it was in session, and it really was special to watch everyone reconnecting with each other and with SLC. The SLC Alumni Association board members, volunteers, and SLC staff who made these events happen did a tremendous job, and everyone that attended truly brought their SLC spirit! I'm already looking forward to the next one!

Until then, we have several events coming up this fall and winter. We'll be hosting a virtual Holiday Bingo Night and a Florida alumni reunion, and will draw a winner of the annual raffle. In early 2025, we'll celebrate the New Year with a night out in NYC in January and, as always, will offer the annual Super Bowl Squares and March Madness fundraisers in February and March. We'll also be hosting the SLC Soiree: A Night of Magic, Mentalism, & Memories at the Hunt & Fish Club in NYC this February, featuring a performance by SLC Alumni extraordinaire and award-winning psychic and mentalist, Michael Gutenplan. Keep an eye on your email and the camp website for more information about these events, and more to come!

Part of the SLC Alumni Association's mission is to provide our alumni with opportunities to connect and keep the magic of SLC alive all year round. Another is to support SLC with financial contributions to the Annual Drive and other programs, which help to pass the SLC experience along to future generations of campers. Each time you attend one of the SLCAA's events, make a purchase at the SLC Store, or renew your Alumni Association dues, you help us get closer to reaching our fundraising goals – so please join us at one of our upcoming events, or pick up some SLC swag as a Hanukkah gift!

We are pleased to announce that this year, the SLC Alumni Association will be matching your donations to SLC's Annual Drive on Giving Tuesday, December 3rd. As we enter the holiday season, we encourage you to think of SLC in your year-end giving, and consider making a contribution on that day.

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to share your news, reminisce about your time at SLC, or discuss how to get more involved with the Alumni Association. I'd love to hear from you!

Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season!

*Jessica*

Jessica Zalin  
President, SLC Alumni Association  
[jessicazalin@surpriselake.org](mailto:jessicazalin@surpriselake.org)





## Mini Reunion in Israel

On June 10, 2024, there was a mini SLC 2022 reunion in Israel.

Photographed include (from left to right) Neta Portal, Idan Akiva, Coral Weinberg, Julia Levine, Hanah Kopel, Netanel Neta, Efrat Cohen, and Hila Damari! Neta's boyfriend Santi is also pictured. We had so much fun catching up after 2 years at Neta's home in Ra'anana! (Submitted by Julia Levine)



# Gifts for a Soldier

Hi! My name is Samantha and I recently ordered a bunch of camp merchandise from you guys to give to my good friend who lives in Israel. I wanted to give you a little background on our relationship and some photos of him receiving his gifts!

Ariel Pulver went to SLC in the early 90's (he said around 1993). When he turned 20 he moved to Israel, joined the IDF and is now one of birthrights most favorite tour guides! Ariel has 3 children. One was actually born on October 7th while sirens and rockets were going off over the hospital. They were forced into the stairwell of the hospital shortly after delivery of his third and first boy. Imagine the emotions of having two beautiful girls at home hiding with family, scared of what's happening down the block from them and then delivering this precious new life. They were spiraling in every emotion.

When I met Ariel 6 years ago we both connected over our love for our wonderful memories from our time at SLC. He incorporates his camp songs he has learned into his tour guiding and his passion for community and education into everything he does! He's a light that shines like no other! He does something on his tours called "Gift of the Day" so of course he needed those too! I gave him one gift every day! On the last day I gave him his shirts and to my surprise he pulled out his old SLC shirt he keeps with him as a good luck charm!!! So we of course had to take photos!!! I will attach the photos below!

Thank you for helping expedite this special gift! You have no idea what this means for us and for him! Ariel is my older brother I've never had and I'm so grateful I was able to do this for him!



# Whammy

A huge Mazel Tov to our very own Joel "Whammy" Kaufman on his recent rise to local celebrity status. New York Road Runners assembled the most compelling runner stories from the 2024 TCS New York City Marathon to form [Team Inspire](#), and Whammy was asked to be part of the team! Team Inspire consists of 26 diverse runners who vary in age, hometown, pace, background, and reason for running, but who have all been impacted by the transformative power of running. We admire Whammy's grit and determination, and his commitment to fundraising for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. While he may have come in last place in the race, Whammy is first place in our books!

Click the links below to view some of Whammy's highlights in the media.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/video/retired-queens-teacher-who-finished-last-in-the-2023-nyc-marathon-is-ready-to-run-again/#x>

<https://www.runnersworld.com/news/a62777720/joel-kaufman-new-york-city-marathon/>

<https://www.qgazette.com/articles/four-queens-runners-selected-for-marathons-team-inspire/>

<https://nypost.com/2024/10/29/lifestyle/retiree-who-finished-last-in-2023-nyc-marathon-back-for-2024/>

## **2024 NYC Marathon - by Whammy**

One of the great things about NYC is participating in a NYC Marathon. Over the past eight years, I've been able to raise over \$150,000 for the Leukemia Society and honor Sheila, Team Krigsy, Skylar, Keith, Howie, Steve, and many other loved ones.

Each Marathon starts and I am at mile 0 ready to begin. I ask myself "What in the world am I doing?" But then, I am off and walking. All blessings.

I get to see different alumni from camp from the past seven decades. I am always so excited when people shout "Whammy" or "SLC" if I don't recognize them quickly.

This year, the first person from camp to ran past me was Nico Wells. He certainly looked like he was going to win the Marathon. I appreciated his shout out. Other people from camp were waiting for me along the route.

My rule is to always stop and take a picture with anyone who is waiting for me. And make sure I give them a hug.

- I saw Rafael, MV camper (2024.) in Brooklyn. Good thing I had brought a Whammy card to give him! (Yes, I bring Whammy cards and Pokemon cards wherever I go). A great Whammy memory for him and me!
- I saw Spike (1970s) and his friend.
- I saw Elana (Spike's sister) (80s and 90) and her husband.
- I saw Vicky (70s) and her husband in LIC.
- At mile 11 when I was trying to find more energy, Andrea Zalin (00s, 10s, 20s) was waiting for me on 1st Avenue.
- Jared Tyler (10s and maybe 20s) was also on 1st Avenue. He has the record on seeing me in many marathons (besides family). Always appreciate him.
- Seeing Ori (2024) from camp, with my family.

It gave me such joy to see people waiting for me. Each person is a great Marathon memory. I always say I never run or walk alone. I am so motivated by everyone waiting for me on the course.

My last 1.2 miles I always hear Sheila's voice telling me "You got this." This makes tears run down my face and overcomes my entire being as another Marathon is done. I have nothing left to give. I have left everything on the course. And then the finish. The finish is always the cherry on the sundae, until my next Marathon.

Mazel Tov to Eric LeVine (1970s), who finished his first NYC marathon and raised over \$13,000 to fight Leukemia and Lymphoma Blood cancers.



I always look forward to seeing SLCers on the course and on the sidelines.

Making a difference, and remembering Sheila, Howie, Steve, and keeping Team Krigsy, Keith, and Skylar in our hearts.

- The Official Last Finisher of the 2023 NYC Marathon
- The Official Last TNT Finisher of the 2024 Disney Marathon
- 2024 NYRR Team Inspire
- The Owner of Last Place,
- #SLCFOREVER

## Why I Joined the 1902 Society

I first came to Surprise Lake Camp as a camper in 1947, when I was only 8 years old. I continued coming to SLC every summer until 1952. In 1955, I came back to SLC as a CIT. From 1957 to 1960, I was a counselor, as well as the camp bugler.

When the SLC Alumni Association was founded back in 1961, I was a Charter Member. I am proud to have been an active Board Member and Past President of the Alumni Association for many years.

In October, 1961, I was married to Louise, and we remained together for almost 62 years, until she passed away on July 22nd 2023. For many years Louise and I lived in the Bronx and Scarsdale, New York. After our son, Larry was born, we moved to East Windsor, New Jersey, for the next 33 years. In August, 2007, we moved to Lakeland, Florida.

It's hard to believe that so many years have passed by since I first came to Surprise Lake Camp. However, I enjoy seeing all the photos and videos of SLC that are posted on the Internet. It brings back so many fond memories of one of the happiest and enjoyable times of my life. That is why I chose to be a part of the 1902 Legacy Society.

Al Elkins

It's difficult to put into words just how much of an impact Surprise Lake Camp has had on my life. The memories and lifelong friendships I've made at camp have shaped me as a person, and the SLC community continues to mean so much to me and my family.

Whether it's through volunteering or donating, for me, giving back has never been a matter of if, but how. As a second generation SLC-er, joining the 1902 Society is an easy way I can help ensure Surprise Lake Camp is around for many generations to come.

Sammi Olinsky



I joined the 1902 Legacy Society because of the impact that SLC had on my life and the lives of our now adult children. We made lifelong friends and have wonderful enduring memories of our time there as campers, staff, and from 35 years of Labor Day weekends. The serenity and beauty of camp is something that captures one's heart. My wife Gwen never went to SLC, but she has always loved and supported our decision to send our kids there. Our daughter in law Kayla also recognizes the integral role that SLC plays in our family. I am a proud member of 1902.

Larry Hamberg

# Some thoughts about Gifts to Surprise Lake Camp (SLC)

By James (Jim) E. Meyer, SLC Alum Mid 1950's

First let me say what a pleasure it is to serve on the Board of Directors and other committees (including Development) for SLC. At a recent Development Committee meeting we were discussing current issues and changes within the Fundraising Community. We thought it was a good idea to put some thoughts in writing to our donors and others about "what's happening" in fundraising and what types of gifts work well for the individual and for SLC. By way of background SLC was founded in 1902 (6 tents, 25 campers, and 6 counselors) and went through some legal changes until 1920 when SLC was incorporated. SLC is the oldest Jewish residential camp in the U.S. and on the same site as it was in 1902. The predominant feeling about SLC is that it is a family. Some of the family is gone, many are here, and many more will come as the family continues to grow.

That said there was an interesting article recently in Kiplinger Personal Finance about intergenerational wealth transfer in the United States. Indeed, some of the wealthiest donors have already decided to give away most of the fortunes they have amassed, with a large portion going to non-profits i.e. Warren Buffett and Bill Gates. It is also important and obvious to know that not everyone has amassed a "fortune". With that said the non-profit community should be positioning itself for the transfer of some \$84 Trillion with \$72 Trillion expected to go to family over the next 20 years. If the numbers are correct, it already means that some \$12 Trillion will go to charities. We at SLC hope that all of you that come into some expected or unexpected income/estate proceeds, and have the ability to do so, might consider a gift to SLC for the future of the camp so that many more kids can experience the joy, education, and fun that so many have already experienced.

Some other thoughts:

It makes perfect sense if you are taking Required Minimum Distributions, (RMDs), which this year is required at age 73, to consider a full or partial Qualified Charitable Distribution, (QCD), from your IRA, which means that you will not pay tax on the funds directly transferred to SLC even if you do not itemize but rather use the standard deduction for your taxes. Interestingly you may also do the QCD once you are 70 ½ before you start RMDs. Please check with your advisor(s) as you must follow the rules carefully as to how a QCD works. This year the maximum you may transfer to a charity is \$105,000 and it does not have to be all from RMDs.

Another thought that you might want to explore is a Charitable Gift Annuity, CGA. Our CGA program is actually run by UJA. Based on your age (two life ages are allowed i.e. husband and wife) you receive a fixed percentage each year of the original deposit which may be distributed quarterly, semiannually, or yearly. The rates are usually higher than any safe fixed income product. You receive income until you pass away (on two lives the payment stops on the second death) and there are tax advantages. On the death of the owner(s) SLC will receive approximately 50% of the original deposit. So, if the deposit was \$20,000 SLC will receive approximately \$10,000. Sample rates for a Single Life 60 year old is 5.2%, 70 6.3%, and 80 8.1%. Rates are unisex.

Remember SLC has one of the most generous scholarship programs in the country. The bottom line is to keep SLC as wonderful as it has been for the many years it has operated and using the original theme of the camp – the development of children using a social group work model.

For further information on any of the above, please call the Development Office of SLC at (845) 265-3616.



# 1902 Legacy Society Letter of Intent



The 1902 Society was created to help fulfill our mission of providing the magic of summer camp to every child, regardless of ability to pay.

This is critical to who we are and the vision of our founders. Through the 1902 Society, we acknowledge the philanthropic intent of individuals who have made provisions in their estate plans, or other means, to benefit Surprise Lake Camp, which was founded in 1902.

*"Just as my parents planted for me, so do I plant for my children."*

**I/we would like to be listed as a member(s) of Surprise Lake Camp's 1902 Society today!**

There is no minimum planned gift amount to become a member. Your membership will be completed with this signed and returned form. You may decide at a later date how you wish to fulfill your Letter of Intent.

**I/we intend to include SLC in my/our estate plans in the future. Please contact us with more info.**

There is no minimum planned gift amount to become a member. We will contact you soon to begin planning.

**I/we have already made provisions for the following planned/deferred gift(s) to SLC:**  
(check all that apply)

Bequest in a Will     Charitable Gift Annuity     Retirement Plan/IRA  
 Life Insurance Policy     Charitable Lead Trust     Charitable Remainder Trust  
 Real Estate     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

The amount of my/our planned gift is \$\_\_\_\_\_ OR \_\_\_\_\_ % your estate or appropriate planned gift.

Attorney/Trustee Name & Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Custodian Name & Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

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Preferred name(s) for display/publication OR write "Anonymous"

Your Full Name

Date of Birth

Relationship to Camp

Spouse's Full Name (as applicable)

Spouse's Date of Birth (as applicable)

Relationship to Camp

Address

City

State

Zip

Preferred Phone

Email

**By signing this Letter of Intent, I/we reaffirm my/our commitment to Surprise Lake Camp.  
I/we understand that this commitment is revocable and can be modified by me/us at any time.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(as applicable)

**Please complete and return this form to:**

Surprise Lake Camp • 382 Lake Surprise Road • Cold Spring, NY 10516  
Phone: (845) 265-3616 • Fax: (646) 582-0138 • Email: [development@surpriselake.org](mailto:development@surpriselake.org)

# Current Members of The 1902 Society

We are extremely grateful to the following individuals who have included Surprise Lake Camp in their estate plans. Your commitment may inspire others, making your impact even greater!

Anonymous (5)	Larry Cooperstein	Rob Greenspan
Estelle & Herbert Adler	Anita Cruso	Aurora Luna Griggs
Paola & Ronnie Adragna/Gilbert	Jane Hershey Cuozzo	Harold Grinspoon
Michele Albo	Dave Dale*	Brenda & Matthew Grosshandler
Jacob Albrecht	Jordan Dale	Andrea & Arthur Gruber
Marcia & Bob Altabet	Kate & David Danino	Michael Gurman
Jennifer & Marc Ambrose	Mia Desmedt	Michael Gutenplan
Walter Arnstein*	Jon Dickie	Gwen & Larry Hamberg
Margery Arsham	Wendy & James Dinn	Julia Handel
Margie & Bob Atwater	Michele Mars DiRuggiero	Irving Harris*
Celia Baczkowski	Laurie Dobkin-Helm	Dayle Henshel
Sylvaine Baczkowski	Jenna Dorfman-Tandlich	Joy Henshel
Jason Bailis & Jeff Henderson	Matt Dorter	Patti Henshel
Marilyn Bailis & Jerry Mark*	Jill Dosik	Andrew Hess
Tracie & Mark Basch	Mandy Efrati	Barbara* & Stanley* Hirsch
Peter D. Baum	Louise* & Alvin L. Elkins	Roberta & Peter Hirsch
Pearl & Harry Belkowitz	Amie Ettinger	Thelma & Sanford Hochberg
Janeen Bellafiore Levine & Brian Levine	Michael Fandal	Jennifer Hochstadt
Jennifer Herman Benalt & Adam Benalt	Lori Heitzner Fishman	Margot Hodes & David Rosenstraub
Karen* & Adam Bendeson	Seth Fishman	Gayle Hoffman
Lauren & Mark Benmoise	David Fleischner	Jason A. Hoffman
Sara & Adam Benmoise	Paulette Ann Forgacs	Nancy & Alan Hoffman
Molly Benton*	Ralph Forgacs	Carol Robin Horowitz
Evie & Jon Berger	Beulah Fox*	Rachel Israel
Blanche Berk	Gregory Fox	Seymour Israel
Howie Berk	Kenneth L. Freedman	Sharon & Jeff Jacobs
Jeff Berk	Robert French	Suzanne Jacobs & Jeff Borkan
Jennifer & Matthew Berk	Glen Frick	Zach Jacobs
Michael Berk	Marissa Garfinkel	Amy & Bruce Jaffe
Andie Biederman	Rose & Harris Ghersin	Chuck Jainchill
Jake Biederman	Scott Gilden	Susie Jainchill & Tsahi Gelardin
Brian Blaufeux	Allie (Ball) and Jordan Golan	Danielle Johnson
Robbie & Steven Bloom	Amy Goldberg	Erez Jontef
Martin Blum	Dr. Joseph Goldberg	Stan Josephson
Nelson Braff	Rabbi Claire Ginsburg Goldstein	Michael Kall
Amy Bram	Michelle Goldstein	Linda Kane
Elyse Braun	Shira Goldstein	Irwin Karp
Jill Breder	Linda & Ben Gordon	Erica Karron
Mitchell Brenner	Melissa Gordon	Heidi & Bruce Katz
Ezra Cahn	Stephen Gordon	Karri & Joel "Whammy" Kaufman
Justin K. Cantor	Karen Gorsky & Vicki Eggleton	Faith Altschuler Kirkpatrick
Meridee Simon Cole	Jaclyn Greenbaum	Sheryl Kirschenbaum
Nancy Chanin Collins	Pam & Jay Greenbaum	Alan Kleiman
	Suzy Greenberg	Barbra & Ty Klein
	Shira & Evan Greenblatt	Ele Klein

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Andrew Korn  
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Fred Levy  
Randi & Scott Lieberman  
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Jamie Marcus  
Judy & Michael\* Margulies  
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Paul Novick  
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Shelli & Larry Olinsky  
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Lee Posniack  
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**ADDRESS**  
382 Lake Surprise Road  
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# Fall Appeal

To Our Dear SLC Alumni,

It should come as no surprise that over the last century, Surprise Lake Camp has had a tremendous impact on thousands of lives, because summer camp is a place that creates opportunity for life-changing experiences time, and time, again. When you have a formative experience like this, it stays with you for the rest of your life.

In this spirit, I am thrilled to introduce you to Marissa (Marx) Merslich, a former camper and staff member who recognized something in herself through her experiences at SLC, and what she did to harness and carry those feelings in her everyday life.

“Surprise Lake Camp entered my life when I was just 9 years old. My single mother, raising three children, was searching for ways to shape my Jewish identity. Her first Google search for a Jewish sleepaway camp led her to a place that offered support and boldly claimed to be ‘The best in Jewish camping.’ The decision seemed clear.

“At Surprise Lake, I not only learned what it means to be Jewish, but I also had my Bat Mitzvah there, and I grew through nine consecutive summers. After a six-year hiatus, I returned in 2019 for my first job after college. Though I wasn’t sure yet what I wanted to be, I knew it involved working in the Jewish nonprofit world. Now, I work in development for a global Jewish nonprofit and am pursuing my master’s in Jewish professional studies.

“Surprise Lake Camp didn’t just shape my Jewish future—it showed me how sacred our people are.”

From a camper’s perspective, they are learning how to sail on the lake and climb mountains, they are learning teamwork and how to solve problems independently, they are learning traditional Jewish values and Israeli culture, they are having fun, growing, and making it “the best summer.” At Surprise Lake Camp, these aren’t just nostalgic memories. They’re everyday realities for hundreds of children who get to experience all this and more!

While, as adults, we don’t always get to jump into the fun with both feet, we do have the benefit of hindsight and understand why and how these unique experiences shape who we are, and how we interact with the world. Even though Marissa has grown in the Jewish Community and engages with Jewish nonprofits, both nationally and globally, when we asked why Surprise Lake Camp is still the top nonprofit she supports, she explained, “...I reaped all of the benefits... for 7 years as a camper. Without this support I would not have been able to attend camp. I support [SLC] to give other campers the security of attending camp year after year, knowing it can be a constant in their life.” Marissa experienced something at SLC that she hasn’t experienced anywhere before or since – the kindness and support of her most formative experiences provided by you - the people who care most deeply.

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At Surprise Lake Camp we work to ensure that no child will be turned away due to their ability to pay. We invite you to support our 122-year tradition by donating to SLC's Annual Drive to foster learning, memories, friendship, teamwork, and shape our future today! Your generosity will echo across generations as these young minds grow into adults who will continue to cherish their Jewish roots and carry forward our community's shared values.

By contributing generously to SLC's Annual Drive, you're not just financing fun-filled summers for deserving kids; you're shaping their future by providing them with unforgettable formative lessons on independence, teamwork, problem-solving, and cultural heritage. Join us today by providing the means to continue transforming lives one summer at a time!

Sincerely,



Eve Rubinstein  
Chair, Development Committee



Lindsey Brown, MS  
Advancement/Development Director

P.S. Complete the enclosed form and return to SLC, or Scan the QR code below (with your phone's camera app) to contribute online instead!





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**Use this form or give online at [surprislake.org/donate](http://surprislake.org/donate).**

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## Please also:

Contact me about joining the 1902 Legacy Society. I'd like to consider joining the hundreds of families who have chosen to include Surprise Lake Camp in their estate plans.

Add my SLC Alumni Association Membership Dues\*:  Annual: \$50  Lifetime: \$360  
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Enclosed Check: Payable to Surprise Lake Camp. Mail to 382 Lake Surprise Road, Cold Spring, NY 10516

**Thank you for your generosity!**

# SLC Visit

by Jack Ciaramella



It was a beautiful summer day, August 14th, in Cold Spring, New York. That early evening, I drove from my home in Rockland County, to Surprise Lake Camp. My friend and fellow-ECAS member, Celia Silva accompanied me on the trip. The forty-five-minute ride was pleasurable, as we were excited to be attending the camp, looking forward to an enjoyable musical revue, produced and staged by the campers and their counselors.

We, the members of the Eddie Cantor Appreciation Society (ECAS), were graciously invited to attend this production by Alumni/Event Coordinator, Celia Baczkowski and to SLC's Advancement/Development Director Lindsey Brown. Several other members of our society had planned to join us, however unforeseen circumstances and faltered travel accommodations

interfered. Sadly, several of our members missed out on a wonderful performance!

As an avid (lifetime) fan of entertainer / philanthropist, Eddie Cantor, and currently President of ECAS, it's always been a thrill for me to make a trip to SLC. It may sound silly, but just sitting within the camp's outdoor Eddie Cantor Theatre, reminds me of what an impact this beautiful camp had on young Eddie, and with so many other under-privileged kids of that time, who, like Eddie Cantor, were truly inspired and enthralled by the camp's values and leadership. It's a camp in which, no doubt, warmly changed their lives forever. If not for the success of SLC, and the support that many donors provided through the years, chances are that quite a few of these kids (including Eddie Cantor) may have never gotten such a unique experience anywhere else.

Since 1994 (the year after the ECAS was founded), I've had the privilege to visit the camp quite a few times—including a few 'Alumni Day' visits. Each time has been fun and pleasurable. In addition to sharing these awesome camp experiences with many ECAS members, we've had special guests join us through the years, as well. These included Jerry Stiller, Anne Meara, Joe Franklin, Sheila Rogers, and several members of the Eddie Cantor family.

Well, getting back to the evening of August 14th... The camp provided two separate productions, one for the younger campers, and another for the older campers that were performed one after the other, with announcements and an award ceremony in-between, honoring the theatre director, long-time SLC staff, volunteers, and campers, as well. I especially admired SLC's 'M A C H O' award, and its recognition in helping others!

When mentioned after the performances that the campers had very little time to rehearse for the show, Celia and I were simply floored! We couldn't believe how talented these kids were and how well they presented themselves. Both the younger and older campers displayed such professionalism, and genuine stage presence (no stage fright) while covering an array of Disney and various Broadway show tunes! For the finale, all the campers gathered together on the staged and performed the camp's theme song! Every number was a joy to watch! It was evident as to how much love and passion these campers put into their performances! Great show--great job everyone!

Needless to say, Celia and I had so much fun that evening, and I personally sensed a warm, good-spirited feeling throughout the night, amongst the campers and staff. And I must say 'kudos' to all who work so hard to help maintain the great reputation SLC has!

Once again, a great big THANK YOU going out to Lindsey and Celia for inviting us to the show! Hope to be back at camp again real soon! My best to All of You Always!



# Fall Hike Day



# The SLC Community Corner!

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