



RE-ECHOES

The official newsletter of the Surprise Lake Camp community

Spring 2026



Scenes from Volunteer Day

Thanks to all of our wonderful participants!



President's Message

Hello SLC Friends and Family!

Welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of ReEchoes! I've been so excited to see all of the nature coming back to life over the last few weeks. It seems like everyone, and everything, is gearing up for summer, and the promise of another fantastic SLC season lies ahead!

Part of the SLC Alumni Association's mission is to keep the SLC magic alive all year long, by creating opportunities for our alumni to connect and engage with the SLC community. Since our last issue, we hosted a reunion in Florida in December, and our annual Super Bowl and March Madness fundraisers to start the year. We also hosted our second annual SLC Soiree: An Evening of Enchantment & Intrigue at the Hunt & Fish Club in NYC this February, which featured a performance by SLC's very own Michael Gutenplan, an award-winning psychic and mentalist. The night was filled with audience participation and Michael's talents surprised us again and again - special thanks to all of our attendees and sponsors for making the night so memorable!

As the summer approaches, we'll have many more opportunities to bring our alumni community together. On June 18th, we'll be hosting our annual Take Me Out to the Ballgame event - this year we'll see the Yankees take on the White Sox! Once summer arrives, we're looking forward to welcoming you all back to the camp area for our annual Alumni Weekend on July 18th and 19th! Just like last year, we'll kick off the weekend on Saturday night in Fishkill with Alumni Day Eve Lawn Fest, an informal party with food, drinks, music, and great company. This year's theme is "Throwback Tees & Camp Memories," so wear something that represents your favorite camp era and join us for a walk down memory (or merry) lane! We'll continue the festivities on Sunday with Alumni Day, where we'll all gather in the place we know and love, SLC. The day will start with a Swim-A-Thon in the morning, and will continue with a round-up, swimming, boating, a BBQ, and plenty of opportunities for us all to reminisce and reconnect with SLC and with each other throughout the day. The last few Alumni Days have been so special with so many of our alumni in attendance. I hope you'll be able to join us this year too!

Another part of the SLC Alumni Association's mission is to support camp by making a meaningful contribution to SLC's annual scholarship drive and other programs, which allows us to share the SLC experience with future generations of SLC campers. Each time you attend one of the SLCAA's events, make a purchase at the SLC store, or join or renew your membership to the SLC Alumni Association, you help us get closer to reaching our fundraising goals. We thank you for your ongoing support!

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to share your news, reminisce about camp, or discuss how to get more involved with the Alumni Association. Please also consider joining us at our annual Open Meeting for alumni association members on June 8th - keep your eye on your inbox for more details soon!

Looking forward to seeing you all at SLC this summer!

Jessica

Jessica Zalin
President, SLC Alumni Association
jessiczalin@surpriselake.org





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- Show Gratitude:** Make a tribute gift* in someone's honor.
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*Contact your employer to see if they support a matching gift program!



Camp Improvements

How SLC Has Grown—And Why It Still Feels Like Home

As an SLC alum, you might remember a time when sleeping in a tent was just part of the SLC experience. There wasn't a heated pool yet, and the "culinary program" only meant cooking hot dogs on the campfire. SLC has come a long way since then—but it remains the same where it matters most: caring, commitment, Jewish heritage, and [our five core values](#).

This summer marks an exciting new chapter at camp, with upgrades designed to enhance adventure, comfort, and the overall camper experience. From new waterfront activities to long-term facility planning, these improvements reflect our commitment to unforgettable summers.

A Brand-New Aquapark on the Lake: A major highlight this summer is the new aquapark. Built for nonstop energy and fun, it features inflatable climbing structures, slides, and balance challenges that encourage teamwork and play.

Whether campers are racing across obstacles or jumping in for fun, the aquapark will quickly become a favorite part of lake life.

Expanded Adventure Elements: Adventure programming is also expanding with the introduction of mid-level self-belaying challenges—something SLC has not had until now. These new elements fill an important gap in our adventure progression, giving campers a safe and supported way to take on more independent climbing experiences as they mature.

Designed to build confidence, resilience, and collaboration, these experiences offer new ways for campers to be challenged. They meet campers where they are, from first-time adventurers to more experienced thrill-seekers, creating more opportunities to explore, grow, and push themselves in a supportive environment.

Comfort Upgrades: Air Conditioning in Dining Spaces: Camp life is about balance—high energy activity and meaningful downtime. Last summer we added air conditioning to the Mainside Dining Room, and this summer Teenside Dining Room is now fully air-conditioned, making mealtimes and gatherings more comfortable during warm weather.

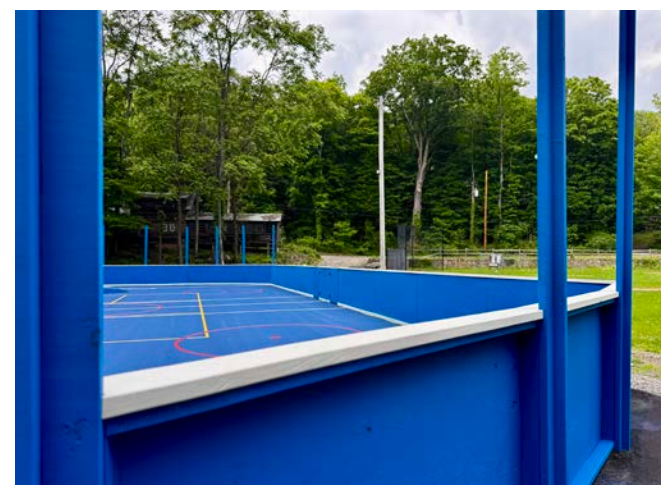
Other Recent Improvements Across Camp (2023–2026)

SLC has continued to invest in camp life in meaningful ways over the past several years:

2026: Installation of new bleachers at both the Mainside Ballfield and the Welcome Center/Canteen basketball court to enhance viewing and camp spirit.

2025: A newly renovated Teenside open-air hockey rink featuring a high-quality acrylic surface, improved surrounding walls, brighter lighting, and pickleball lines to expand play options.

2025: A brand-new low ropes course on the Mainside sports field, offering shaded, age-appropriate adventure alongside the climbing wall, zipline, and existing ropes courses.



2024: A transformed SLC canteen featuring a new game and movie room, a wraparound porch overlooking the basketball court, upgraded lighting, windows, doors, and new furniture for a more social, relaxed space. We also added a beautiful, new "SLC Welcome Center" to greet future SLC families in comfort.

2023: Replacement of the Mainside tennis court and addition of pickleball lines and nets, quickly becoming a camper favorite for learning and playing.

2023: Major upgrades to ballfields, including new backstops and re-graded clay surfaces for improved gameplay.

Together, these improvements reflect a steady evolution of camp life—building on tradition while continuously enhancing the camper experience.

Looking Ahead: New Cabin Plans for 2027

While this summer brings exciting upgrades, planning is already underway for the future, including new cabin developments scheduled for 2027. These spaces are being designed with modern camper needs in mind, focused on comfort, community, and a strong sense of home.

More details will be shared as plans progress, but the direction is clear: continued investment in the camper experience for years to come.

A Summer of Growth and Continuity

This summer brings new adventures on the lake, expanded opportunities on land, and greater comfort across camp. Most importantly, it continues what SLC has always been—a place where campers grow, connect, and feel at home.

For alumni watching SLC evolve, we hope you feel proud of how far it has come while still recognizing its heart. If SLC shaped your childhood, imagine that experience for your children or grandchildren. Over time, SLC has continued to grow in meaningful ways, including a pickleball program, a chess program, a culinary program, and an organic farm—just to name a few. And yes, we still have ice cream at the Eddie Cantor Theater.

We would love to welcome the next generation into this story—and invite you to come back, reconnect, and see what SLC has become. Please join us at Rookie Days, our 5-day Get Your Feet Wet program, or Family Camp Weekend. [Details on these great starter programs can be found here.](#)



Our 2025 Supporters

The donors listed below made gifts between January 1 and December 31, 2025. This listing includes alumni and friends who made contributions in support of our tuition assistance programs, capital endeavors, and program expansions. We are grateful to the SLC community for your love and generosity.

Surprise Lake Camp has a multitude of diverse programs that often require expensive pieces of equipment for our campers to successfully engage and learn. Your in-kind gifts provide critical support and enrich our sports, aquatics, music, adventure, performance, and nature programs, making camp life even more fun and meaningful! We would like to extend our thanks to the following 2025 in-kind contributors:

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125th Gala

March 21, 2027
 Ziegfeld Ballroom, NYC



For more info, contact Tracie Basch at tracie@baschproductions.com

WELCOME JOE!

Surprise Lake Camp is very happy to announce its new Development Director, Joseph Vayas.

Joe brings extensive experience in advancement roles across higher education and nonprofit organizations, with a strong focus on alumni fundraising, donor stewardship, and community engagement. Over the course of his career, he has successfully developed and led strategic initiatives designed to deepen relationships, inspire philanthropic giving, and foster a strong sense of connection among communities.

Outside of his professional work, Joe enjoys staying active and spending as much time as possible outdoors with his family and dog. He is an avid runner and regularly explores the natural beauty of the Hudson Valley, often hiking local trails and taking advantage of the region's scenic landscapes throughout the year.

Joe holds a Bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and a Master's degree from Temple University. He is excited to support the Surprise Lake Camp community by strengthening meaningful relationships with alumni, families, and supporters.





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I'd like to join CHA18 and give monthly:

Monthly gifts** of \$ _____ each month for # _____ of months for a total gift of \$ _____

**Credit card required. SLC will establish monthly gift installments upon receipt of this form.

Please contact me about joining the 1902 Legacy Society:

I'd like to consider joining the hundreds of families who are including Surprise Lake Camp in their estate plans.

I'd also like to renew my Alumni Association membership:

If paying by check, please remember to add in this amount: Annual: \$50 Lifetime: \$360

I'll pay by:

CreditCard Visa MC Disc Amex Card#: _____

Exp Date: ____/____/____ Sec Code: _____ Billing Zip Code: _____

Cover the credit card company's transaction fee. Please add 3.5% to my gift.

Bank Routing Number: _____ Bank Account Number: _____

Enclosed Check: Payable to Surprise Lake Camp. Mail to: 382 Lake Surprise Road, Cold Spring, NY 10516

Thank you for your generosity!

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ADDRESS

382 Lake Surprise Road
Cold Spring, NY 10516

Spring, 2026

Dear Alumni,

At Surprise Lake Camp, summer is about so much more than activities and traditions. It is about relationships. It is about community. And it is about the unmistakable joy that comes from living Jewish values in a place where every child is known, supported, and celebrated.

In 2026, we are proud to continue offering a camp experience defined by extraordinary camper-staff relationships. Our counselors are mentors, role models, and trusted guides who create safe, nurturing spaces where campers feel a deep sense of belonging. These relationships are often what campers remember most long after the summer ends—someone who believed in them, encouraged them, and helped them discover who they could be.

That spirit of care and connection extends across our entire camp community. From Shabbat by the lake to shared meals, song sessions, and everyday moments of laughter, Surprise Lake Camp fosters a powerful sense of togetherness. Campers arrive as individuals and leave as part of a vibrant, supportive community—one rooted in kindness, responsibility, and mutual respect.

Jewish joy is at the heart of it all. At SLC, Judaism is lived, sung, played, and celebrated. Campers explore their Jewish identity through joyful ritual, meaningful traditions, and values that feel relevant and alive. It is a Judaism that feels welcoming and proud, helping young people build a lifelong connection to their heritage and to one another.

Equally central to our mission is the belief that every child who wants to experience camp should be able to do so, regardless of a family's financial circumstances. Each year, generous donors make it possible for us to provide meaningful scholarships to campers who might otherwise miss out on the magic of Surprise Lake Camp. Your support ensures that finances are never a barrier to belonging, friendship, growth, and joy.

Your annual gift makes all this possible. It supports the recruitment and training of exceptional staff, expands access through financial aid, and sustains the safe, nurturing environment that allows every camper to thrive.

As we look ahead, 2026 also marks an important moment of anticipation. The following year, Surprise Lake Camp will celebrate its 125th anniversary—an extraordinary milestone for the oldest Jewish summer camp in the United States. We are already gearing up for this historic moment by strengthening our programs, investing in our people, and preparing camp for the generations still to come.

We invite you to be part of this momentum. Your support today honors our legacy while helping shape a joyful, connected, and values-driven future for Surprise Lake Camp.

Thank you for believing in the power of camp, community, and Jewish joy.

With gratitude,

Chuck Jainchill

Chuck Jainchill
President, Board of Directors

Adam Bendeson

Adam Bendeson, MSW
Executive Director



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 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."

To fill out this form online go to: <https://surpriselake.org/ways-to-give/1902-legacy-society/>

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
- Life Insurance Policy
- Real Estate
- Charitable Gift Annuity
- Charitable Lead Trust
- Other: _____
- Retirement Plan/IRA
- Charitable Remainder Trust

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

Attorney/Trustee Name & Contact Information: _____

Custodian Name & Contact Information: _____

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)

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) | Nancy Chanin Collins | Shira & Evan Greenblatt |
| Estelle & Herbert Adler | Larry Cooperstein | Rob Greenspan |
| Paola & Ronnie Adragna/Gilbert | Anita Cruso | Aurora Luna Griggs |
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Please complete and return this form to:

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List as of December 2025

SUMMER OF '76 . . . 50 YEARS LATER!



By Ken Pollet

**Hard as it is to imagine,
 this summer marks 50 years since the
 unforgettable summer of '76.**

For so many of us, that was an especially meaningful summer. Many of the Boys of Unit C and the Girls of Unit A were at camp for the very first time that year, and the friendships and connections formed that summer have lasted a lifetime. The same is true for many of us who were Junior Side staff - relationships with each other, with camp began that summer and continue to this day.

So much has happened in all of our lives over the past half century, but somehow that summer still feels like yesterday.

To celebrate this "half century," it would be wonderful if as many people as possible who were part of that special summer - whether camper or staff, Junior Side or any other side of the lake - could come back for [Alumni Day](#) this summer on Sunday, July 19th and help to mark the occasion.



As always, one of the highlights of Alumni Day will be the Junior Side-style roundup - same songs, same spirit, nothing has changed!

And of course, the night before is [Lawn Fest](#).

It would be especially great if as many of us as possible could spend some real time together that weekend, so for anyone interested, I'm planning to organize a casual group dinner the night before - early enough so we can still make it over to Lawn Fest afterward. It would be a wonderful chance to reconnect, reminisce, laugh about old stories, and celebrate just how much that summer - and those friendships - have meant to all of us over the years.

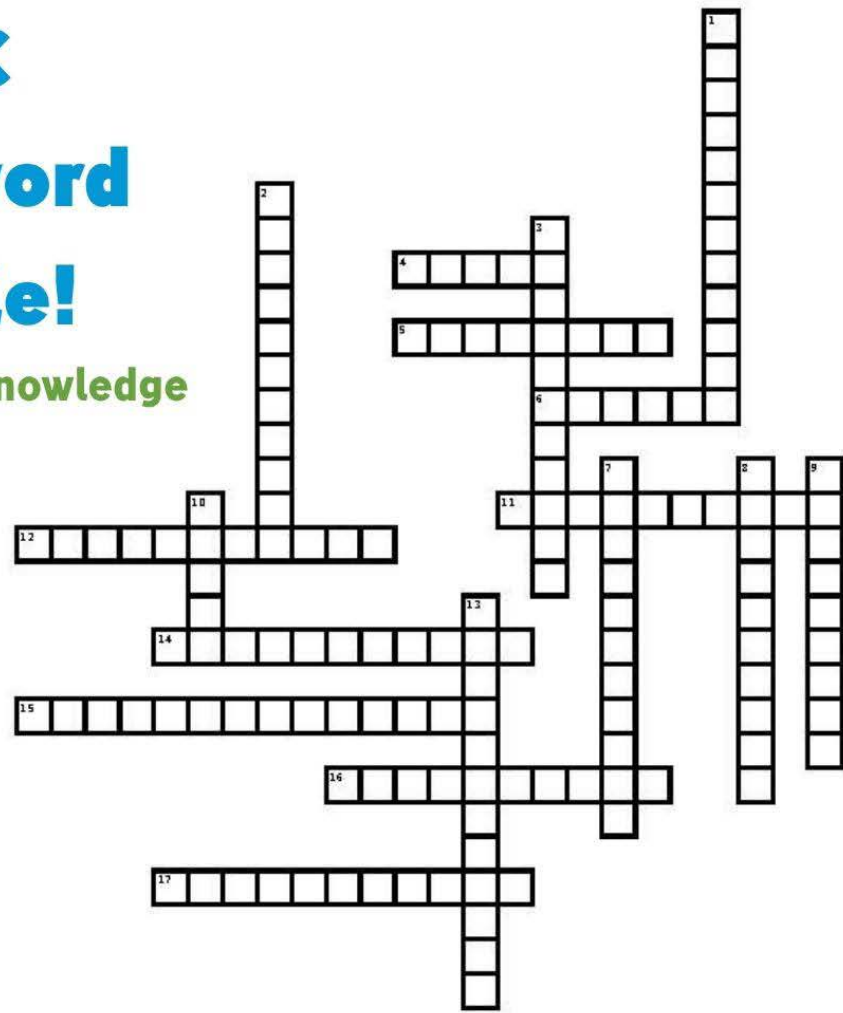
If you think you can make it and would like to join the dinner, please let me know at kpollet@ahahr.com. Hoping to see lots of you there!!

*This person reached beyond their own life to enrich the future. They left the world a little better than they found it. May their memory be a blessing.

SLC

Crossword Puzzle!

Test your SLC knowledge



Down:

1. This new facility was built in 2016 in memory of Harry Henshel
2. Unit where the oldest campers live and participate in a special leadership program as half campers, half staff.
3. Famous musician who attended SLC and sings Sweet Caroline, among many other famous songs.
7. Famous entertainer who attended camp on a scholarship in the early 1900's and later was a generous supporter of SLC.
8. He worked at camp for an incredible 71 years.
9. Camp was founded for poor boys who lived in these, on the Lower East Side.
10. 1952 was the first year that camp allowed these to attend
13. Famous actor who attended SLC who played big roles in Seinfeld, Zoolander, the King of Queens, and more.

Across:

4. This is the color we wear at camp on Friday nights
5. Camp "song," or ritual before bedtime.
6. SLC was the first camp to have staff from this country
11. He holds the record for longest tenure as Executive Director of SLC, from 1986-2016.
12. Famous member of KISS who attended SLC
14. The Teen Dining Room is named for this man, who was Executive Director from 1954-1973.
15. He was SLC's Executive Director from 1919-1954.
16. He was camp's Neil Diamond Music Specialist for 30 years.
17. A camper-favorite that happens every week after services.

The SLC Community Corner!

Thanks to our Winter Advertisers.

Michael Zbar, CPA
Jordana Zbar, CPA
Corey Zbar, CPA



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