



# 2018 *the Founder Fire*

*"My own self, At my very best, All the time"*



# *Aspire Nobly, Adventure Daringly, Serve Humbly*

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# A letter

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Anna Kay Vorsteg

## *Tend to the Light*

It is time to **tend to the light** in ourselves and in our communities and not the darkness that surrounds. As the poet David Whyte so beautifully states, "People are hungry and one good word is bread for a thousand."

Tending the light and spreading good words is the urgent, courageous work of best selves and the need of our time. If you have paused to read these words, I hope you will take a moment more to consider what future actions you might take this day, this week, this year – actions that tend and tap the very best within you, so that you, with your unique capacities, can serve as a source of sustenance for others. Are we not all hungry for more light? I dare us to displace the overwhelming darkness in our communities with a force far more overwhelming – us acting at our best. Let us be exhausted by our good actions rather than exhausted by the destructive words and works of others.

If I sound serious, it is because I am. I am troubled by the human toll of divisions and feel the need to issue a call for our collective best. For you see, I have seen the light that has been generated within the American Youth Foundation community, and it is a mighty force. This summer I saw and heard light radiate from the very real and respectful exchanges shared between National Leadership Conference participants who held differing beliefs born out of different life experiences – their passion for understanding out-paced their passion to be right. I saw the light when I witnessed firsthand the result of service projects completed by the generous hands and hearts of our AVAIL campers. I was nearly blinded by the light and deafened by the cheers as our Odyssey and Voyageur campers returned from long, rigorous, life-shaping journeys. I heard the light when I overheard a child tell another child at good-bye, that they had never met someone like them, and that they were glad they had because they had gained a friend and learned so much as a result. And I saw and see the light that has spread from the generous and generative actions of all who gave to support the programs and projects fueled by our successful In Motion, On Mission Campaign. This year in the life of the American Youth Foundation has revealed that we have more to learn and more to do, and many more still to embrace and inspire. AND this year in the life of the AYF has been, if we pause to see it, light-filled. It has been miraculous!

The Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, reminds us that "what we tend will grow." Let's grow the light and with it love and understanding within our human family. And if you, like many, need to be re-inspired, please consider attending one of our Living the Mission Retreats or hosting an AYF event in your community. The work of best selves is not reserved for the young – it is a practice for a lifetime. Together we can do mighty things, and not just at Miniwanca and Merrowvista, but in our home, work and worship communities. It is possible. It is necessary. Let us work together and take bold actions to ensure spirits do not starve in the darkness, but instead, nourish themselves in the light.

I hope that this issue of the Founder Fire is for you a source. I hope it reveals in small ways the miracles that result when individuals commit to good, right action. It has been a hard year for our nation and because of so many of you, a hallowed year for the American Youth Foundation. We thank you.

**"People are hungry, and one good word is bread for a thousand."**

## *Loaves and Fishes*

*by David Whyte*

*This is not  
the age of information.*

*This is NOT  
the age of information.*

*Forget the news,  
and the radio,  
and the blurred screen.*

*This is the time  
of loaves  
and fishes.*

*People are hungry,  
and one good word is bread  
for a thousand.*



# The Impact of



# LEARNing



Beginning in 2014, Miniwanca's Community and Schools Program began working with a new group from Chicago, the LEARN Charter Schools. Below is a message written to the Miniwanca staff from Principal Kelly Tyson, describing the growth that she has observed in her students long after they returned from the dunes.

It's hard for me to believe that this was the sixth year that LEARN 8th graders had the opportunity to attend camp with your team.

Our first group of 8th grade scholars attended in the spring of the 2013-2014 school year. This cohort of 50 students was LEARN Campus 6's first 8th grade graduating class. They became the class that all others modeled themselves after.

When those scholars first returned to school after their trip, they were so ready to take on the world. They weren't afraid to accept challenges and in fact, they sought them out. They found their voice, both collectively and as individuals. That group graduated from 8th grade about a month after attending camp and then from high school this past spring.

They became leaders within their high schools – not just satisfied with being present and participatory – they chose to take honors courses, they chose to include and connect with others different than themselves, they chose to be their best selves.

When they come back to visit us at LEARN, they reminisce about every detail of their three days at camp. Then they tell me all about their accomplishments since then. They talk about going to Spain, Russia, Venezuela, backpacking through the Southwest, sailing in Connecticut. And now, they share where they are this fall – in college! Almost all of them have ventured courageously onto four year colleges away from home (Tufts, Middlebury, Lawrence, Carthage, Bradley, Kenyon and so many more).

Now LEARN scholars attend Miniwanca in the fall of their 8th grade year. During this past trip, after listening to one young man tell me about his excitement, I scanned the room and saw Miniwanca t-shirts on several of our scholars. It occurred to me then that this was the first group of 8th graders who had members who also attended Miniwanca in the summer. They were excited to be back and to share their 'home' with their classmates.

I listened to the mealtime gratitudes and smiled big inside because of the messages that were shared. One scholar got up and said, "I woke up today surrounded by friends and realized that they are now more like family."

At breakfast the next morning, yet another student said, "I am grateful that we are all together and safe." I thought about how simple this blessing was, yet how powerful. Our scholars live in a part of our community that is often not safe. To have four full days of being safe, of running around freely, of playing outside, is a luxury. It's not something to take for granted.

And the transformation is not just with our students. Our teachers negotiate actively to be chosen to attend because they love the connection they make with students while at camp.

We have always embraced the growth mindset with our scholars – that they can accomplish anything they want with time and effort. But this year we included a phrase we heard at Miniwanca: challenge by choice. One way we have enacted this principle is by allowing any scholar to write a letter to me and request to be in a more challenging class. So instead of students testing into a gifted program, they can take on any course if they are willing to commit to the challenge. It was so neat to get letters from middle school students requesting to take algebra or to take classes a year above their grade level.

I share only a small part of what I hear and the changes I've experienced in our scholars. I wish you could see the confidence, the connection, and the joy that comes back with the students from camp.

Sincerely,

*Kelly*

Kelly Tyson





# Celebration & Recognition

On Sunday, May 6, 2018, old and new friends of the AYF community gathered for dinner to kick off the 17th Annual Donald Danforth Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament. As part of the evening program, we presented three awards of recognition to members of the founder family and organizations who have advanced the AYF mission.



**Peggy Walker Stevens**  
Kids4Peace

## VISIONARY

***The Visionary Award is given to an individual whose life's work is emblematic of the American Youth Foundation's mission.***

Peggy has been volunteering with the AYF since the late 1980s. She developed some of the school-year programming at Merrowvista and redesigned the curriculum of the National Leadership Conference at Miniwanca. In 2009, Peggy founded the Boston chapter of Kids4Peace, an organization that educates, trains, and inspires Christian, Jewish, and Muslim youth from diverse backgrounds to become interfaith peace leaders. Thanks to Peggy's vision and her commitment to partnership, over 150 young people from the Jerusalem and Boston areas have come together for 8-day programs at Merrowvista over the past decade. Her encouragement and empowerment of individuals, schools, and organizations to cross society's usual boundaries of race, religion, and ethnicity has not only won the admiration of the AYF, it has provided the organization with a body of work to lean on as it seeks to evolve its own practices.



**Jan Strube**  
Alumni Volunteer

## ENKINDLED SPIRIT

***The Enkindled Spirit Award recognizes an individual who has given their best self back to the American Youth Foundation, and through their unwavering support, has shown that the AYF motto is not just words, but a way of life.***

Jan has been a consistent and dedicated servant to the mission and programs of the American Youth Foundation. In 2007, while attending Summer Seminars for Women, a longtime alumna presented a proposal to the group that involved organizing the AYF's archival materials, making them available for members of the community to learn from, preserve, and better understand the organization's history. Jan enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity and stepped up not only to help, but to lead the effort across the organization. Her ability to honor the past while empowering leaders of the present led to her being named the AYF's Alumni Liaison, a volunteer role she still fills to this day. Jan has long been a steady force in the organization's success and a model for what it means to serve humbly.



Nestlé Purina

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

***The Community Empowerment Award is given to an organization whose humble service to the American Youth Foundation has helped fuel its mission.***

Over the years, Purina's support of youth development and the AYF has not only been inspirational, but deeply impactful. Today, Purina continues to actively support the organization's mission to inspire people to discover and develop their personal best, to seek balance in mental, physical, social and spiritual living, and to make a positive difference in their communities and in the wider world in a variety of ways, including event sponsorships; promotion of William H. Danforth's book, *I Dare You*; in-kind contributions; and helping to further AYF's work to forge relationships that expand year-round community and school programming. The AYF is so proud and grateful to say Purina is a strong partner that helps to encourage and inspire the best in America's youth.





# Living the Mission



**Being your best self can be hard.** But one consistent theme we have heard from you – the participants, staff, family, and friends of the AYF – is that you relish opportunities to live the mission outside of camp, conference, and school programs. And for every young person who takes action every day, there is an adult still passionately connected to the philosophies of best self, balanced living, and positive community.

In support of those efforts, alumni from across the United States gathered this fall at Miniwanca and Merrowvista for the Living the Mission Retreats. Members of the Founder Family discussed how they currently practice the Four Folds and how they find ways to be their own best selves each day. Through conversation, reflection, and team challenges, attendees found new ways to think about the AYF mission and how they can apply that learning to the wider world.

Throughout both weekends, one recurring theme was the notion of touchstones – moments from one's past that provide context for a future goal or objective. In the context of balanced living, participants were asked to think of a time when they excelled in each of the Four Folds. Perhaps at one point,

someone trained for and ran a marathon, the peak of their Physical Fold perseverance. Instead of resolving to run another marathon, the goal was to reflect on the circumstances that got them to that point in the first place; what factors in their life helped them get where they wanted to go? We all likely have different goals today than we did five years ago, and that's ok. Perspective and priorities change with time. One of the objectives of the weekends, and of living a life of intention, is to figure out what is important to you now, and work toward that goal in a realistic way.

Best self and balanced living are lifelong pursuits that are necessarily different for everyone. There is no easy set of answers or rules to being your own best self, all the time; it is a continuous conversation. We need your collaboration, with AYF and with each other, to keep the dialogue going. As the Living the Mission Retreats become an annual staple in the calendar, we invite your continued support in helping us find more ways to gather the founder community together to embrace sincere and thoughtful discussion. We hope to see you at future retreats!

*Our extra special thanks to Pat Jones, our Touchstone Extraordinaire and Living the Mission leader, for guiding the way and pursuing the vision of these retreats all the way to reality.*



# Lead, Everywhere:

*Living the Mission Since 1925*

by Samme Orwig

**S**oon after the young people of Miniwanca and Merrowvista headed home from the first camps of 1925, the American Youth Foundation began the important work of keeping the Founder message alive throughout the year in the lives of all who had participated in the summer's programs. The messages on this page – excerpts from the Founders' Four-Folder – suggest that living the mission was as much an emphasis in those first seasons as it is today.

## Founder-Campers are Leaders

**“Our Camp objective is to fit you for and inspire you to intelligent leadership at home, so that you may discover two things:**

- ▶ **The way to your best self as a leader by participating fully in the activities open to you;**
- ▶ **To realize yourself – at your very best – by giving your best to home, school (or work), church and community.**

Frankly, Miniwanca and Merrowvista will be worthwhile only in so far as you render the outstanding leadership in young people's affairs back home. Founder Campers are leaders, not followers. We expect you to lead – Everywhere!”



High Dive at the West Docks, 1942

## Back on the Job!

**“It's great to be back home** among old friends and familiar things. Home is a splendid spot and home folks, home town, home habits count heavily in our lives.

You have been away from home and now you are back on the job. What have you seen that has made you dissatisfied with home? You love the old places and its customs, but you know that some things should be changed because you have seen beyond the mountain.

To be true to your responsibility as a traveler you must bring back something which will make home better. Your only method of repaying the investment on sending you away is in returning with something new and better for all.

Let's get back on the job, not in the old way, but in the new way. We lived it for two weeks. Now let's live it during the next fifty!”



Synchronized Swimming at the West Docks, 1936

## The Pioneering Spirit

**“The Founders are admittedly a busy people.**

Standing, as they do, for all the aggressiveness and vision which characterizes youth, they are constantly on the alert to forward the plans and objectives which have become so much a part of their lives and which shall mean so much to the world in the days ahead.

The pioneer always bears the brunt of the battle. But what is hardship and sacrifice to that crowning joy of achievement? The discovery of new distances, the pushing back of horizons, the opening-up of new territory, the releasing of pent-up resources, these, and added values of soul and character stuff, are also the lot of the pioneer – and where is the thinking Founder who does not revel in these possibilities for personal development?

And so we pioneer Founders press on, busily and enthusiastically, from one peak to another, daring greatly and fearing nothing.”



Younger Boys Camp Craft Projects, 1942



These young people of the AYF strive to be at their best. They continue to discover more about themselves and passionately pursue projects that serve their communities. They are *enkindled spirits* – glowing embers that inspire others to action.

# Enkindled Spirits



*Candace Carr*

Climbing off of the bus her first summer and walking to the Hollow at Miniwanca, staring out at the hundreds of strangers enthusiastically singing camp songs, Candace didn't know where she had landed and what might be in store for her.

The summer session came and went, and within weeks of going home, she returned to Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls with a renewed sense of her own abilities and voice. When she heard about the opportunity to become Student Council President, she decided to take a chance and run for office. "I gained a better sense of myself and realized I don't have to be anyone else for people to like me. I could just be my own self." Candace won the election and went on to lead her peers in powerful efforts like her school-wide kindness initiative, and a mentoring program to bridge the gap between incoming and returning Hawthorn students.

She entered a speech contest with her Rhoer Club in Chicago, where she talked about the power of living as her best self and making a positive change in the world. She won and was invited to the national level competition, which took place in Dallas just days after she completed the 500-mile Adventurer cycling trip at Miniwanca.

Candace is truly an enkindled spirit, someone who has built on lessons from her experience and gained the confidence to become an inspired public speaker and leader of her peers. We can't wait to see what she will tackle next. We are lucky that she has been a part of our camp community and look forward to hearing about accomplishments to come in the future of this bright young Founder.



*Chaney Dalton*

Former Merrowvista camper Chaney Dalton is an active member in the Boston chapter of Kids4Peace, a global movement empowering young people to create peaceful communities through interfaith education. Chaney says, "I believe meeting people of different races, classes, and religions through Kids4Peace has really shaped me into the person I strive to be." She first got involved with the organization because she wanted to gain a deeper understanding and feel empowered to speak up in support of other faith communities. She serves as a role model for middle school students and hopes that they see the possibilities for young people to make a difference.

Chaney hopes that there is an even broader impact as well. She acknowledges that Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities often live so close geographically, but in different social worlds, so there is a network of understanding that has to be cultivated. She says her work "has really developed my ability to have productive conversations about divisive topics. Kids4Peace has taught me how to understand other people and respond in a way that honors my beliefs and theirs."

She has been surprised by the ways that the work has shaped her as well. Chaney credits Kids4Peace for bringing her a more focused understanding to her own values and beliefs. "It's about caring for my community, particularly those in the margins of it", she says.

Having completed the Kids4Peace program, she is now fully invested in conflict resolution and social justice. She is hoping to go to college next year, and will continue to develop her toolkit of skills, and in the process, her best self.



# Enkindle



*Rachelle Brown-Mitchell*

Rachelle Brown-Mitchell is a senior at Codman Academy in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Every year in October, the upper school of Codman Academy visits Merrowvista for three days of programming. During this year's visit, we got to speak to Rachelle about her involvement with organizations in her community. In 2017, Rachelle joined Mothers for Justice and Equality, a nonprofit organization that primarily serves to support people in their recovery from trauma caused by violence. Through this organization, Rachelle has worked to find ways to cultivate a culture of healing in her community. She wants to facilitate connections between people who share common experiences and channel that energy into proactive preventative action.

Mothers for Justice and Equality is involved in many aspects of neighborhood health. It has hosted voter drives, offered workforce training for unemployed mothers, and was also selected to form a Parent and Police advisory group with the Boston Police Commissioner to improve neighborhood policing culture. "This organization has helped me believe in the power I hold in being a part of the solution to any situation," says Rachelle.

According to her, being a part of something greater has made her a more empathetic person and has helped her find positive ways to channel her own enthusiasm for resolving challenges that her community faces. Rachelle feels that her work has allowed her to come out of her shell and speak her truth on issues that are important to her. "Being able to express yourself and communicate creatively through different activities whether that be dancing, acting, writing, singing, or debate...is powerful and important," she says.



*Mitchell Swayze*

Mitchell attends International Academy. After returning home this past summer from his Adventurer year at Miniwanca, as part of a class assignment, he was asked to create and act on a project that provides a benefit to his community.

Mitchell decided that he wanted to do something for Miniwanca. After reflecting on the ways that he could give something impactful to camp, he landed on the idea of building a couple of little libraries—small, public bookcases where campers and staff can borrow and donate literature. "I believe that books, with the ideas they give and the stories they tell, would benefit everyone at Miniwanca," Mitchell says. However, his plan extends even further. "I would like to donate the little library along with books for various reading levels, and things that a new camper may forget to bring, such as a toothbrush, deodorant, even bug nets."

Mitchell is currently working on making his plan come to fruition. We are grateful for Mitchell's thoughtfulness, commitment to stewardship, and desire to give back to the community. We hope that Miniwanca campers enjoy the new little libraries next summer.



# ed Spirits



*Naomi Watson*

Naomi Watson is a member of the Nicasio 4-H Club in California and a winner of the AYF's National Leadership Award. Her teachers have remarked that she is the type of young person who can easily connect on a personal level with both her peers and adults. She has already served in many leadership roles both within and outside of her 4-H. She has been the Junior Leader, the Club Treasurer, Vice President and President twice over. She has headed up club committees and she is a role model to other members of the community. Naomi continues to be highly engaged in club events, including the National 4-H Citizen Focus Inaugural in Washington DC, where she earned the opportunity to participate as a California Ambassador.

Naomi's leadership doesn't stop with her 4-H commitments. She finds time to take on an active role at her high school as a Student Senator, a Crew Leadership Ambassador, a member of the Peer Resource Group, and delegate for the American Legion Auxiliary.

Naomi is highly motivated, confident, and compassionate. We look forward to seeing her continue to make a lasting impression not only on her Marin County 4-H, but to the world at large.



*Valarie Gitau*

Valarie is currently a 7th grader in Lowell, Massachusetts at the Lowell Community Charter Public School. She has loved reading since the age of three and has always wanted to share her passion with others. Last year, Valarie had an opportunity to start a project that involved a donation drive to get books to kids and adults at the Lowell Community Health Center.

The project was called the Book Nook. Valarie collected hundreds of titles with the help of students and teachers at her school, as well as Leah Okimoto from Aaron's Presents ([aaronspresents.org](http://aaronspresents.org)), a charitable organization giving young kids an opportunity to dream up and carry out a project that benefits others. Valarie gained valuable leadership and project management skills in the process. She is grateful for all of the people who donated books and hopes people all over the United States can come together to promote reading in their communities.

Valarie was a summer camper at Merrowvista this past year, where she enjoyed making new friends, s'mores, friendship bracelets, and exploring the natural world around her. We are excited to see what Valarie does next!





# The Growth of a Leader

The National Leadership Award (NLA) was created in 1941 by William H. Danforth in order to acknowledge young people who demonstrate exceptional qualities of leadership. Formerly known as the I Dare You Leadership Award, the NLA was given by Danforth's Ralston Purina Company. The American Youth Foundation adopted the award in the 1990s, partnering with organizations across the country to recognize exceptional qualities in young people.

In February 2014, Jordan Al-Faleh earned an NLA during the Montgomery County 4-H's Recognition Banquet. She first joined the 4-H chapter in Maryland as an extracurricular activity when she was six years old. She was involved with her 4-H on a county, state, and international level and took advantage of many opportunities to learn and grow in the twelve years she was a part of it. One of her many community-focused projects was raising awareness about distracted driving, which took her all over the state of Maryland. Jordan was also paired with a 4-H member from Cambodia whom she worked with to create and plan a hydroponic farm, which was implemented in her partner's community. She was a healthy living ambassador, traveling to teach healthy habits to her peers. She also worked in aeronautics, built robots, made a documentary of the history of the 4-H in her county, and was subsequently awarded the Diamond Clover – the 4-H involvement award.

Jordan earned her NLA and was intrigued by what she learned afterward about the National Leadership Conference. Wanting to improve upon her leadership skills even more, she attended NLC for the first time in the summer of 2015. She traveled to Michigan with an open mind but not knowing anyone at Miniwanca. Since then Jordan has become very close with her classmates from ohitika ikiya (Lakota Sioux for "dare to stand courageously"). During her conference years, she felt like her classmates offered so many of the social resources that she needed as she developed her confidence and voice.

Jordan graduated from the NLC program in the summer of 2018. She is currently pre-med at the University of Maryland, studying kinesiology. She is a proud member of the AYF for life and will undoubtedly continue to grow as a leader in her community.



Jordan (left) and her classmate Natalie, both recent NLC graduates



BOOKER, MRS. JEAN  
(nee Jean Daly)

# Jean Booker

## A Cairn for Youth Development



As Jean Booker's close friend and fellow camper wrote, "to know Jean is to enrich your life. To hear her name is to smile, and the image that comes to mind is of sturdiness and balance." Jean passed away on March 3, 2018, at the age of 91.

**She dedicated her life to youth development**, spending most of her years in public education. When she wasn't teaching or serving on the Board of Education for the Dayton School District in Ohio, she was helping spread the mission of the AYF at both Miniwanca and Merrowvista. From the first summer Jean spent at Miniwanca Girls Camp, she knew it was somewhere she would return to for years to come.

In 1943, at the urging of her English teacher, Jean Booker first attended Miniwanca's Older Girls Camp, the program now known as the National Leadership Conference. She progressed through the curriculum year after year, returning in the 1950s to be head of the waterfront. She experienced Miniwanca with many of the original founders of the AYF and was grateful to have them as role models during the formative years of her life.

In the 1950s, Jean visited Merrowvista for the first time and was inspired by the alumni who were raising funds to reopen the camp after it had been closed for several years. She called them a "living testimony of what a small group of talented and committed people could do" and eagerly joined their cause. Jean went on to be a director and mentor at Merrowvista for many years through the 50s and 60s, all the while helping new students attend Miniwanca programs each summer, just as her teacher had helped her years before.

Jean Booker was a fierce advocate for bringing more diverse populations to the American Youth Foundation and was not hesitant to stand up when she felt that the organization needed to do more to improve its programs. She believed that "in trying to provide leadership we have to be open to the need" of young people.

In 1976, after years of mentoring participants at both camps, Jean joined the AYF's Board of Directors, where she guided the organization until her retirement in 2010. Even then, she remained an advisor, helping the organization continue to flourish. At her retirement, AYF President, Anna Kay Vorsteg said, "Jean is always that voice that is advocating for youth. She has often served as the conscience of our organization, always innovative and pushing us to reach more kids. She is a catalyst, absolutely instrumental in the enhancement of the camps and conferences and in the development of our community and schools programs." Jean has been a guiding light for the organization, empowering the AYF to make the most of its resources and reach as many young people as possible.

Jean Booker is remembered as a founder, and her guidance will be sorely missed. Her legacy lives on through the youth who will continue to benefit from her leadership for decades to come.

Another summer season began with force at the 2018 National Leadership Conference. Over 250 young people, traveling from over 30 different states, converged on the dunes of Miniwanca.

This four-year program builds on the lessons learned from previous Conferences. Participants are placed in a class that remains together for the entirety of their multi-year experience. They engage in conversations and activities about leadership, focused on topics relevant to their lives. Third and Fourth Year participants are asked to put many of their developed skills into practice as leaders in the community.

This year, students had the opportunity to write a note to incoming participants, offering advice and describing the significance of what lay ahead. This is what a few of them had to say:

**"In just one week I've grown physically, mentally, spiritually, socially, and most importantly I've grown as a leader. I've learned how to play a different role in the community and compromise with others that I don't agree with... the best thing to bring to this camp is an open mind. Be ready to learn and grow and become a better [version of your]self." – Kyran**

# WISE WORDS ▶

**"Camp is where you can have fun and let your inner child run wild. Camp is where you learn and hear about different perspectives. Camp is where you can focus on yourself and learn to love and accept every part of yourself. Camp is where you can make mistakes and it won't be held against you." – Krystal**

**"Here, I  
of what  
and how**





**"Be a friend, introduce yourself. Push your boundaries so you become vulnerable."** – Ryan



**"The best part about NLC is the wide range of experiences that you will witness that will help you define yourself."** – Preston

**"Here's some advice:**

- **Take showers every day**
- **Bring extra socks and a bug net**
- **Do not hesitate to speak your mind**
- **Be vulnerable and open to learning**
- **Finally... have fun"** – Jeanne



# From the AYF National Leadership Conference

**I have learned the ins and outs of what it takes to be a good leader, and how to do so humbly."** – Wanzi



**"We push and dare each other to take risks and to be our best at every moment."** – Charles

**"Sometimes, being a follower and supporter for those around you is the strongest kind of leader. Reflections and leadership classes allowed me to better understand myself, and to see what I can do to live my best life."** – Sarah

# IN MOTION,

## CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

### We launched this campaign

**five years ago to better serve young people** and to preserve the tradition and legacy of the AYF, and we are proud of what we have accomplished together. Hundreds of youth are already benefiting from the campaign's impact, attending programs that **empower them to learn, laugh, and grow.**

Program  
Scholarships  
and Operations

\$2,839,631

**Goal: \$2,500,000**

These dollars will support our program operations and continue to enable youth to discover their best selves at Miniwanca and Merrowvista.

Facilities  
Restoration

\$1,585,038

**Goal: \$1,500,000**

Contributions go directly toward restoring and enhancing existing structures at both Miniwanca and Merrowvista so that new generations of young people have vital spaces to develop their best selves.

Planned Giving

\$5,865,000

**Goal: \$4,000,000**

These gifts ensure that the AYF will deliver on its mission for years to come. Those who make planned gift pledges become members of the Eternal Flame Society.

GIFTS & PLEDGES TO DATE

\* Undesignated gifts to the campaign have been assigned to either program scholarships and operations or facilities as needed.

### We are so incredibly thankful

**to the 2,475 donors who have made gifts for the future** and are enabling the American Youth Foundation to continue its mission beyond today. We have so much gratitude for your selfless support. Because of your gifts, historical buildings have been renovated and program spaces enhanced, providing generations of young people to come to the places that support them at their best. Help us continue to fulfill the mission of **my own self, at my very best, all the time, today, tomorrow, and into the future.**

**The In Motion, On Mission Campaign will officially come to an end on December 31, 2018.**

**We invite you to continue its success by making an end-of-year gift to the campaign.**



# ON MISSION

– THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2018



Consider joining the  
Eternal Flame Society  
by making a legacy gift



# The Audacious Many

by Heather Kiley



One of my favorite lines in William H. Danforth's book *I Dare You* can be found in the beginning. It is where he offers an invitation.

*"I am looking for you, one of the audacious few, who will face life courageously, ready to strike straight at the heart of anything that is keeping you from your best; you intrepid ones behind whom the world moves forward."*

I have always found this line both challenging and inviting (after all, we are *all* capable of *audacity*). In any case, I find myself returning to this invitation, again and again, thinking about what it means to be audacious.

It is an interesting word. *Audacious* can mean to be *daring* – bold and fearless, especially in challenging assumptions or conventions. It can also be defined as a *willingness to take surprisingly bold risks* – valiant and heroic. However it can also have a less positive connotation—audacity can illustrate a lack of respect for others. I find the conflicting sentiments fascinating. There is a fine line between boldly challenging assumptions on the path to meaningful action versus being seen as demonstrating the disrespect that inevitably hinders collaboration.

In AYF, we invite our participants and staff to be courageous and bold as they seek to positively impact their communities in small ways and large. We provide opportunities to practice creative problem solving and collaboration so that as individuals launch from our programs they have a greater awareness of what it means to bring their own best self to challenges great and small; to be audacious in the best way possible when facing difficult and complex problems.

And I believe key elements of achieving this lies in our ability to be courageous enough to listen with the goal of understanding and courageous enough to speak in a manner that invites others to do the same.

This, of course, is no easy task. But I believe we cannot be the audacious many without it. I was reminded of this when reading David Gregory's book *How's Your Faith?* In one chapter he writes about the importance of listening and learning from those whose beliefs are different than our own. In this case, the topic is specific to religion but I believe it is applicable to a range of topics and beliefs where there are multiple, complex perspectives.

In the book, Gregory writes:

*"Larry Hoffman likes to say that each faith has a room in what he calls the 'museum of the human spirit.' We share a room with our own people, all of us working away at our life projects, constantly renovating. From time to time, we wander into other rooms in this faith museum. That doesn't mean we are turning our back on our room, Hoffman says; but after visiting another room, we can't help being changed. We might return to our own room and find our practice enlivened and deepened. We might even find ourselves shifting in another direction for a while. But we are all part of the same project – the project of the human spirit."*

The challenges we face today are complex and sometimes disheartening, and I know there are no simple answers. What I also believe with all my heart is that finding the answers requires us all to be willing to step outside our own 'rooms' and be courageous enough to listen and learn. To be bold and fearless in a way that invites others to hear us. This is an essential first step in bringing people together to work toward positive change. It is a first step in accepting the invitation to be one of the *audacious many*!





*More than ever before, kids need to be surrounded by fresh air, positive growth-oriented experiences, and supportive relationships. We need to ensure that financial barriers don't stop a kid from experiencing all that AYF has to offer, including the ropes challenges! I am eager to help today's youth both climb a mountain and develop a strong sense of self.*

**Chandlee Dickey**, *Former Camper Parent*

For the past several years, Chandlee has committed to helping youth in the greater Boston area make it to summer camp. The AYF not only thanks Chandlee and others like her for ensuring that financial obstacles do not prevent young people from participating in a summer program, but invites others to learn how they can make a commitment of their own. Please consider becoming a youth sponsor.

# Supporting our Youth

In addition to sponsoring students from Codman Academy in the greater Boston area for the past several years, Patrick and his wife, Kim, have committed to leaving a legacy gift to the AYF. The AYF is able to grow our community and serve a more diverse population of young people because of the support of donors like Patrick and Kim. We hope you will consider contributing to the AYF mission through a legacy gift, such as listing AYF as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy, a retirement plan, or through other estate planning.



*The AYF's programs have been formative to me, my family and now my children. Seeing the joy and the growth that they experience with the AYF has significantly reinforced my support for the Foundation. It is also my belief that the mission of developing the next generation of positive, capable leaders has never been more important. Because of these factors, when the time came to plan for our family's future, my wife and I were committed to ensuring that the AYF was included. We want to do what we can to help ensure that future generations will benefit from everything it has to offer.*

**Patrick West**, *Former Camper Parent / Board Member*

**For more information**, reach out to the AYF Development Office at (314) 719-4343 or [development@ayf.com](mailto:development@ayf.com).



# For Real and On Purpose



by Carrie Kennedy

**When we are living** on the dunes of Miniwanca or in the mountains of Merrowvista, our days are built around living a balanced life. The challenges of creating and caring for communities allow us to practice being our own, best selves. Participants dare to take on challenges that enable them to learn more about themselves and their capacities with the goal of putting their new learning into practice at home. We know that this isn't easy and we try to seek out resources that support living the AYF mission.

We are excited to share that just such a resource will be available in 2019! For Real and On Purpose, by Carrie Kennedy, is a book specifically written for teens to continue to explore and practice what they learn at Miniwanca and Merrowvista. We hope it will also provide an inspirational and accessible introduction to AYF philosophy for those who haven't been a part of on-site programs, but still have the desire to make a positive difference in the world.

We will share more information on how to get your copy of For Real and On Purpose in the spring of 2019, but for now, here's a sneak peek...

*Earlier in this chapter, we mentioned getting to the root of a way of thinking about your life, and the best place to start is with Danforth's own words, taken directly from the pages of I Dare You: **"You have not one, but four lives to live – a four-fold opportunity to grow. A body, a brain, a heart, and a soul – these are our living tools. To use them is not a task. It is a golden opportunity."***

*Now go back and read that quote once more to let it sink in.*

*Do you get it? We are bombarded by so much information every single day, including opinions, images, choices, rumors, facts, news, and nonsense, that we forget that these external messages aren't what's real for us. And the material things in our lives, like our shoes and cell phones, don't ultimately matter. What is real to us is exactly four things: how we take care of our bodies and our world, what our minds can do, who we engage with in our communities, and why we make the choices we make. As Danforth points out, we should embrace these as four amazing opportunities and learn to use them with consistency, with confidence, with purpose, and with joy.*

*A major goal of AYF programming is to give young people the experiences that allow them to understand themselves – what they think and value, how their brains and bodies work – so they can get a real sense of their own identity. When they have this sense, the next goal is to help them figure out their purpose and to see how they fit into the bigger picture. Then, with this important foundation, they can see their own potential, and recognize how much they have to offer to the other people who happen to live on the same planet.*





Thank you for continuing to support and share our mission with others.

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As a nonprofit organization, the American Youth Foundation depends on the generosity of our alumni, families and friends. We are so grateful for the support of the many volunteers and donors who give their time and resources to help move our organization forward.

Your commitment allows thousands of young people to experience the core values of four-fold balanced living every year, and it enables the AYF to continue to build toward the future, creating important foundations that ensure the health of our organization for years to come.



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## REVENUE

Program Fees (Camps, Conference, Schools) \$ 4,499,751

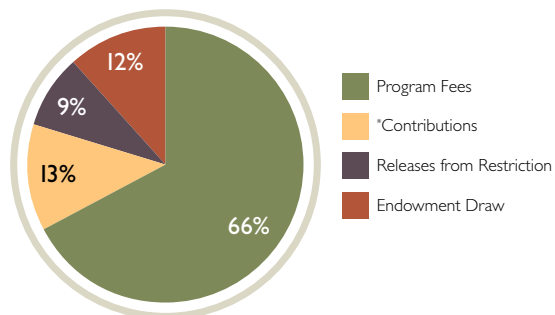
\*Contributions (Grants, Donations & Other) \$ 904,624

Releases from Restriction: Construction \$ 608,264

Endowment Draw \$ 829,649

**TOTAL REVENUE, SUPPORT & DRAW \$ 6,842,288**

### Breakdown of 2017 Revenue



## EXPENSES

Program Operations \$ 4,547,084

Scholarships Awarded \$ 732,710

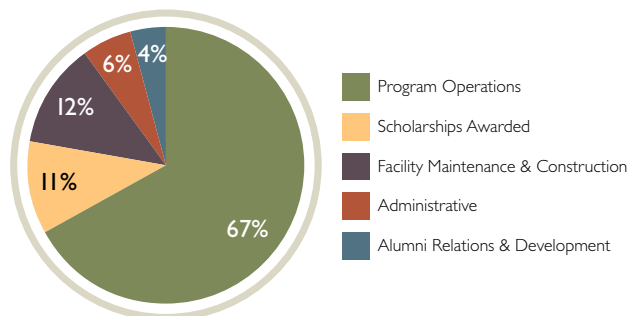
Facility Maintenance & Construction \$ 835,542

Administrative \$ 422,409

Alumni Relations & Development \$ 304,543

**TOTAL EXPENSES \$ 6,842,288**

### Breakdown of 2017 Expenses



\*The above numbers reflect all activities related to the IMOM Campaign.



The American Youth Foundation extends our deepest gratitude to the following individuals, corporations and foundations for their generous support of our programs and the children we serve.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please accept our sincere apologies for any errors or omissions.

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**In honor of the Wright Family**

Katie and Albert Bell

**In honor of Holley Young**

Jan Anderson





# LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

STAY CONNECTED WITH THE AYF

## AYF.COM

With a year-round blog, calendar, videos, and photo galleries of programs and events, we hope it is easier than ever for you to stay up-to-date on all things AYF.

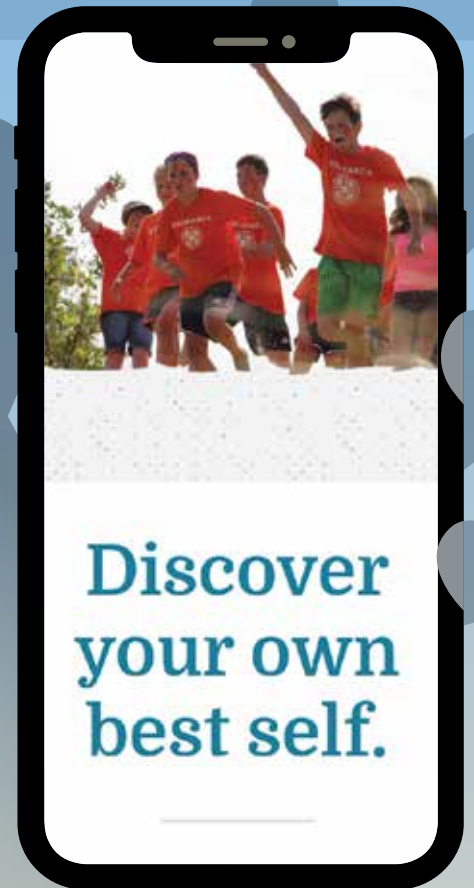
### Have a great idea?!

Share ways that you try to live the AYF mission in your community, every day.

## @SOCIALMEDIA

If you just can't wait for Volunteer Weekend, you can always connect online with Merrowvista or Miniwanca (or both!):

- ▶  **facebook**
  - ▶ @americanyouthfoundation
  - ▶ @merrowvista
  - ▶ @miniwanca
- ▶  **INSTAGRAM**
  - ▶ @camp\_miniwanca
  - ▶ @merrowvista
- ▶  **TWITTER**
  - ▶ @Merrowvista
  - ▶ @Miniwanca



# AYF

## BY THE NUMBERS

In 2017, AYF served

**6,317**  
people



from

**43**

states, Washington D.C.,



and

**12**

countries



at Miniwanca,  
Merrowvista  
and St. Louis.

**78%** of AYF campers and **52%** of National Leadership Conference participants received financial assistance and/or discounts through our scholarship funds.

**MV**

**SUMMER:**  
515 Campers  
**CSP:**  
2,411 Participants  
in 48 Programs

**NLC**

**NATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP  
CONFERENCE:**  
255 Participants

**NLA**

**NATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP  
AWARD:**  
855 Recipients

**MW**

**SUMMER:**  
710 Campers  
**CSP:**  
1,571 Participants  
in 27 Programs

# Rugby/Vest Day



**Every year, Meg Sequino brings together** hundreds of members of the AYF community. As the catalyst behind *Merrowvista & Miniwanca Rugby and/or Vest Day*, she has coordinated the event every year since she first created it in 2010.

Meg is a former Merrowvista camper and summer staff member. She began as a Trailblazer and completed the Four Trails program before spending a year on staff as a member of the Logistics Team, helping campers prepare for their hiking, cycling, and canoeing trips. Meg originally thought of the idea because she felt passionate about maintaining the connections she had cultivated over her years at camp:

"I first started Rugby-Vest Day in 2010 after I had finished Odyssey. I was in my senior year of high school and getting ready to go through a lot of changes in life. After several conversations with my fellow camp friends, I thought it would be fun to try and bring everyone together on one day and reach out to as many people as possible."

The idea behind the day is simple: shared through social media, former Voyager and Odyssey participants get together all over the country and the world, decked out in the rubbies and vests they earned as campers or staff. For many though, the day is much more than a reason to take another photo. It's a reminder of the individual challenges they faced on their trip, the experience they shared with their fellow campers, and their connection to the broader philosophy and values of best self, balanced living, and making a positive difference.

Meg says, "we always talk about the connection of the past Voyager and Odyssey campers during the summer, but I wanted to bring that to life during the year. I wanted the day to be a time for everyone to gather with new and old friends to take the time to reflect on all the things they learned during the summer."

Now a Mechanical Engineer working at Emerson managing control system upgrades at gas turbine

power plants, her AYF experiences are still relevant. "Camp has such a special place in my heart because that is where I discovered who I truly was and what I believed in," she says.

Though the event itself is simple, for Meg, the more profound connections lie beneath the surface. "I take it as a day to reflect on those lessons that I have learned and try to anchor myself as my life continues to change. Every year I try to leave an inspiring message to the group and I hope to continue to inspire others for years come. It is rare to find a group of people continually trying to grow and improve themselves." It's also just one part of a greater approach. "We get caught up in social media, the news cycle, and the minutiae of day-to-day life that we forget to stop, reflect and be grateful. That is the key to beginning to live a balanced life. We must learn and strive to fill ourselves with gratitude even when it doesn't seem like it is possible."





# Save the Date: 2019



## Alumni Programs & Events

@Miniwanca

APR 26  
to  
APR 28

Volunteer Weekend

[ayf.com/volunteer-weekend](http://ayf.com/volunteer-weekend)

@St. Louis

MAY 05

Donald Danforth Jr.  
Memorial  
Dinner and Auction  
[ayf.com/golf](http://ayf.com/golf)

@St. Louis

MAY 06

Donald Danforth Jr.  
Memorial  
Golf Tournament  
[ayf.com/golf](http://ayf.com/golf)

@Merrowvista

MAY 17  
to  
MAY 19

Volunteer Weekend

[ayf.com/volunteer-weekend](http://ayf.com/volunteer-weekend)

@Miniwanca

JUL 31  
to  
AUG 04

Summer Seminars  
for Women

[ayf.com/ssw](http://ayf.com/ssw)

@Merrowvista

AUG 22  
to  
AUG 25

Merrowvista  
Summer Seminar

[ayf.com/mvss](http://ayf.com/mvss)

@Miniwanca

AUG 30  
to  
SEP 02

Alumni & Family  
Camp

[ayf.com/family-camp](http://ayf.com/family-camp)

@Merrowvista

SEP 20  
to  
SEP 22

Living the Mission  
Adult Retreat

[ayf.com/living-the-mission-retreats](http://ayf.com/living-the-mission-retreats)

@Miniwanca

OCT 11  
to  
OCT 13

Living the Mission  
Adult Retreat

[ayf.com/living-the-mission-retreats](http://ayf.com/living-the-mission-retreats)

## Summer

@Miniwanca

JUN 14  
to  
JUN 21

National Leadership  
Conference

[ayf.com/nlc](http://ayf.com/nlc)

@Miniwanca

JUN 30  
to  
AUG 09

Summer Camp

[ayf.com/miniwanca](http://ayf.com/miniwanca)

@Merrowvista

JUN 30  
to  
AUG 15

Summer Camp

[ayf.com/merrowvista](http://ayf.com/merrowvista)

*Calling Enkindled Spirits to Volunteer!*

# Aspire Nobly

Join us at camp this summer!

# Adventure Daringly

**We are looking to fill** roles for bus chaperones, as well as positions on the health and facilities teams. With as little as a one-week commitment, you can be a vital part of our staff!

# Serve Humbly

**Volunteer or work** at Miniwanca or Merrowvista during the 2019 summer camp season and help create an enriching experience for young people.



Visit [ayf.com/volunteer](https://ayf.com/volunteer) to find out more.



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[ayf.com](http://ayf.com)

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147 Canaan Rd.  
Ctr. Tuftonboro, NH 03816  
603-539-6607

### Development

6357 Clayton Rd.  
St. Louis, MO 63117  
314-719-4343

### Miniwanca

8845 W. Garfield Rd.  
Shelby, MI 49455  
231-861-2262

