



# Fuel the Fire

FUND THE FUTURE CAMPAIGN

100  
years



## AMERICAN YOUTH FOUNDATION

At the American Youth Foundation (AYF), we believe children are resilient and each individual's strengths have the power to shape our shared future. We believe all people have within them an **inner spark** that is their capacity for making the world a better place. Inspiring people to discover, cultivate, and act on this inner spark is the driving force behind everything we do.



“ My experience as a camper truly made me who I am today. Merrowvista taught me leadership, confidence, humility, and kindness.”

— MERROWVISTA CAMPER





# Celebrating 100 Years of Enkindling Spirits

## Much of what made Miniwanca and Merrowvista special in 1925 endures today.

One hundred years ago, a group of visionary leaders purchased properties in Michigan and New Hampshire. These sites created the foundation for camps that help young people **discover their best selves**. Today, the founders' original mission to inspire young people to live the 4-fold philosophy of balanced living is more relevant than ever.

## The social, emotional, and mental health needs of youth today are particularly acute.

The AYF is committed to providing safe spaces where youth can discover their best selves by stepping away from their everyday lives and opening up to each other.

**A camp only survives 100 years with investment and change.** We are on the verge of our second century and are committed to growing our impact with the same high-quality standards. We honor our past and continue to aspire nobly, adventure daringly, and serve humbly.

Together, we “build the camp and keep it going strong, strong, strong.”



# Meeting the Needs of Kids Today

**Grounded in the vision to empower “inspired people unleashing their best in the world,”** the AYF is committed to broadening access to our programs and inviting kids from all backgrounds, ethnic and racial identities, faiths, and geographic areas to experience the magic of Merrowvista and Miniwanca. It is urgent we expand this access, as youth grapple with isolation, exposure to negative information, and so much pressure.

In many important ways, the AYF is ready for this moment. We provide a life-changing opportunity to discover one’s **best self** while also serving as a touchpoint of emotional and social safety. At Miniwanca and Merrowvista, we inspire youth to discover and build upon their inner strengths and return home transformed, ready to be leaders in their communities. However, we need to do more to grow our relevance and reach.

64%

of camp families believe the pandemic will have a lasting effect on their child’s development.

[luriechildrens.org](http://luriechildrens.org)

Youth today need camp experiences now more than ever.

65%

of camp families believe mental health consequences will be greater for children than adults.

## The AYF’s leadership programs have proven impact:

Data show AYF participants demonstrate significant growth and increased leadership skills. They feel better equipped to manage stress and ready to cope with life’s changes.

“Investigating Participant Outcomes from American Youth Foundation Programs” by Dr. Bob Dvorak & Rob Schumacker, Central Michigan University, 2016





# *Fuel the Fire*

## FUND THE FUTURE

### CAMPAIGN

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

The AYF is launching a campaign that will pave the way for another century of positive youth empowerment programs. We are calling this the Fuel the Fire | Fund the Future Campaign, both to honor the past and to challenge the present. We honor our original founders and challenge current generations to consider ourselves founders of the next century.

The Fuel the Fire | Fund the Future Campaign will invest in our youth programs and extensive facilities, expanding access and reducing barriers to program participation.



**100% of the AYF's  
resources support  
youth empowerment  
at Miniwanca, Merrowvista, and beyond.**



# Programs

\$2,000,000+

1

**will allow the AYF to:**

**Fill the AYF Campuses Year-Round:**

- Add more camp programs
- Plan more conferences
- Maximize both sites throughout the year by hosting more community programs

**Grow into Our Name:**

- Partner with new schools and communities
- Expand the reach of leadership programs beyond campuses to serve youth across the United States of America

**Support the Needs of Today's Youth:**

- Increase access through additional scholarships and financial aid
- Recruit and retain top-quality staff
- Facilitate programs focused on transformational social-emotional learning outcomes



# Facilities

\$2,000,000+

2

**will allow the AYF to:**

**Restore Beloved Facilities:**

- Rebuild the Assembly at Miniwanca
- Update staff housing, restrooms, and showers
- Historic preservation of aging buildings
- Upgrade and maintain infrastructure, electric, plumbing, and water systems

**Build for Environmental Resilience:**

- Invest in long-term sustainable facilities
- Build new severe weather shelters
- Utilize green energy
- Mitigate for changing water levels

**More information on facilities projects and recognition opportunities is available.**

# You Fuel the Fire

The AYF stands ready to enkindle the inner sparks of youth today. They need opportunities to discover their best and become leaders for the future. They need transformational experiences — we all do — and there is no better community for this work than the AYF at Merrowvista and Miniwanca, and beyond!

This campaign will strengthen our programs' reach and relevance for the next 100 years, while enabling us to continue to do what we have done for nearly a century: sing together, play together, work through tough situations together, and provide a safe space for youth to figure out who they are as their own best selves.

**This work requires the best in all of us to rise. We hope you'll join us as a Founder of the next century of powerful, life-shaping experiences.**



## VISION

# Inspired people unleashing their best in the world

## MISSION

We dare people to discover and celebrate the very best in themselves and others, inspire them to explore diverse perspectives and complex challenges, and embolden them to live courageously, engaging their full capacity.

## VALUES

We believe how we act and interact reflects who we are as a community. In practice, at the AYF we value...

**Investing in Youth:** Empowering youth is the core of our mission. We aim to offer equitable access to outdoor, experiential adventures. We seek to amplify youth voices as they recognize their own agency, develop positive leadership skills, articulate their ideas, and act with bold purpose throughout their lives.

**Stewarding the Environment:** Our programs foster a sense of respect and reverence for the natural world. We commit to using only what we need in order to minimize our impact on the planet. We practice environmental stewardship, conserving resources for future generations and offering the experience of connecting deeply with the natural world.

**Enkindling Inner Sparks:** Each person has inherent strengths and passions that, when ignited, form the foundation of best self and a balanced life. We challenge people to be brave, think creatively, develop wholehearted social connections, and explore their values and beliefs.

**Belonging in Community:** Our communities are joy-filled, optimistic, hopeful places where each person is encouraged to explore through play and express their own authentic spirit. We aspire to create spaces where all people are included and feel a sense of belonging. In these thriving program communities, diverse perspectives provide a foundation to build greater understanding and foster equity.

**Growing Together:** Teamwork and collaboration provide essential tools for overcoming challenges. We believe powerful growth happens when we live in community, set boundaries, and take healthy risks. To adventure daringly with the support of others is an opportunity to put our best selves into action.

## OVERARCHING GOAL

Enhance and ensure the relevance and reach of our transformational programming for youth.

The AYF subsidizes tuition for **ALL** participants each year with an average

**37% reduction**  
in cost per child.



The AYF scholarships are given for an **average of 6 years**, ensuring a long-term relationship and growth in the program.

The AYF knows there are additional costs involved in accessing our programs.

**Scholarships are available**

for travel, gear, and other related expenses to get children to Michigan or New Hampshire.



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