SUMMER 2021





Autism Society of North Carolina

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CAMP CHRONICLE

The *Camp Chronicle* is published by the Autism Society of North Carolina for campers, parents, supporters, and the counselors and professionals who work with Camp Royall.

Content & Photos: Sara Gage, Kristian Page & MaKia Aikens Editor: Molly Edmonds | Graphic Designer: Erika Chapman





Letter from the Director

Greetings, Campers, Families, and Friends of Camp Royall,

It is always my pleasure to write to you after completing another successful summer at Camp Royall. These last two summers have brought us challenges we never knew we would have to face but have also brought us such joy and celebration at a time when we needed it more than can be imagined. While we have been living through an historic pandemic, I am proud that at Camp Royall, we have been able to provide a calm place of refuge during this particular storm. Summer 2021 was our 25th summer here at Camp Royall and ASNC's 50th time running a summer camp

program. I feel so very grateful to have been a part of 25 summers at Camp Royall and am in awe of the amazing folks who started our camp 50 summers ago. What is more exciting than how we have grown over the years is the great potential ahead of us as we look toward the future.

This summer we operated at a reduced capacity again and had many challenges facing us along the way, but we headed into summer with the same energy and enthusiasm as always and knew we were fortunate to run summer camp again this year. During our 10 weeks of summer camp, we served 224 campers, ages 5-73, from 44 counties across the state of NC.

Throughout the summer, campers had fun while learning new skills and trying activities for the first time. To make camp happen this summer it took 80+ staff members and volunteers, including 3 former campers. One of our former campers, Grant Clark, worked at camp this summer as a residential counselor and he talks about helping campers have their "best week ever" on page 6. Nithi Vechalapu has volunteered with us for years, which is hard to believe given she is only 14; check out the story about this phenomenal young person on page 8. We often have siblings attend camp together and this summer we had several sets of twins attend the same week! It was super fun to be able to serve them and their families, and you'll find a story about Bryan and Ryan on page 4.

We are so fortunate to have so many generous donors who make camp a reality for many of our campers every summer. NC Solar Now (page 10) has become a valued contributor to Camp Royall with their recent donation of solar panels and their ongoing partnership with the Autism Society of North Carolina. We owe a debt of gratitude to all of our supporters for making campers' dreams come true; see page 19 for a list of these amazing people.

Please be sure you take notice of the great opportunities for you to get involved at camp all year long. Check out page 17 for more info on our year-round programs, and we hope to see you at camp soon!

With much camp love and "Enthuuuuusiasm,"

Sara Gage, Camp Royall Director



Bryan & Ryan Wheeler

For first-time campers Bryan and Ryan, their week at Camp Royall deserved a gold medal!

The 17-year-old twins' time at Camp Royall coincided with the Tokyo Olympics, and Bryan said he pretended that everything he did at camp was part of the Summer Games. When he was on the hayride, he pretended he was following racing cyclists. When he was in the pool, he was competing in water polo and water volleyball events. When he was

playing basketball, he was playing for the U.S. team. And when he answered a few questions about his time at camp, he was talking to a news reporter!

Bryan said his counselor Megan was perfect for his week at Camp Royall, because she was "nice, smart, and athletic," which meant she was able to keep up with his Olympic performances, but he loved all the people he had met. "They make me feel interesting," he said. "I wish I could stay here forever."

While Bryan pursued athletic events, Ryan deserved a medal in creativity, according to Activities Director Bri Harris. "He's very good at anything artistic," she said. "He likes Creative Connection and coloring. He also really, really loves the swing in the gym. Yesterday, I was pushing him and he just had a big smile on his face the whole time."

For Bryan and Ryan's mother, Shari, those smiles meant everything. "Ryan is very quiet and shy, and he's not a big smiler," she said. "In the pictures from the week, we saw some genuine smiles on this kid's face. I know he had a great time."



Bryan and Ryan are very different, according to Shari, and she said Camp Royall was able to provide an amazing week for both, with opportunities to make friends, increase independence, and have fun. "Their expectation was to be like their other siblings, who have had a chance to go to camps," she said. "They've heard about exciting things like zip lining and hikes and playing with friends. That's exactly the experience they got, and it was wonderful to see that."

Bryan and Ryan are both gold medalists at Camp Royall, and we hope to see them again!





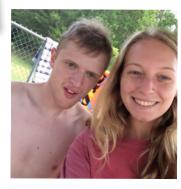




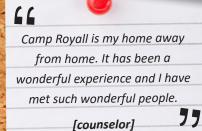








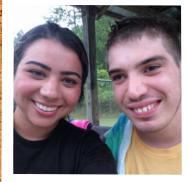
















Grant Clark first attended Camp Royall in 2012 as a camper. That summer, he made a decision that he would return one day as a counselor. This year, he fulfilled that promise.

"It's been really special seeing the other side of things, to see how much effort goes into making sure that these campers have an amazing week," he said. "I had an incredible counselor who made that week really special for me, and now I'm doing activities with the campers that I remember my counselor doing with me."

"Grant made very meaningful connections with his campers. He's always willing to go above and beyond to ensure his campers have a great week."

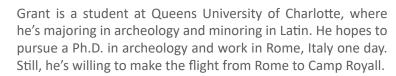
Grant's favorite activity when he was a camper was boating. He made friendships that summer that have lasted to this day.

"I met so many amazing guys that summer, and now I'm meeting incredible campers," Grant said. "I've had a really special bond with every single one of my campers. Maybe it's because I'm on the spectrum like they are, but we're able to bond over shared interests and form a friendship."



Camp Director Sara Gage agreed that Grant has created special bonds with his campers. "Grant made very meaningful connections with his campers. He's always willing to go above and beyond to ensure his campers have a great week."

While Grant worked hard to ensure that campers had their "best week ever," he also had fun. "This job is awesome," he said. "Getting to spend time outdoors is always nice, but then you get to make connections, not just with campers, but with the directors and your fellow counselors. It's really something I've never experienced before."



"If I could have my way, I'd be working here every summer for the rest of my life," he said.

We hope to welcome you back for many more years, Grant!





























VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT: Nithi Vechalapu

At the age of 14, Nithi Vechelapu is already a veteran Camp Royall volunteer. She's volunteered at camp since she was in the fourth grade!

Nithi was introduced to Camp Royall by a teacher at her school who ran Project Unify, a club which brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities. Nithi participated in the club, accompanied athletes to the Special Olympics, and was invited to help out at camp.

Her duties over the years have included working in the office, setting up activities, preparing for arts and crafts, and taking photos. This year, Nithi was especially excited to help go through the pictures and prepare scrapbooks.

"I like volunteering because I get to try new things and have new experiences," Nithi said. "It's been great to take the pictures and see the campers having fun."

Nithi is also helping to educate her community through her volunteer work. "I want others to know what people with autism are like so they understand. I tell people that Camp Royall is a super friendly environment where everyone is so supportive."

Nithi credits Camp Royall with helping her develop better communication skills.

"When I started, I was very shy," Nithi said. "It was hard for me to talk to other people. In arts and crafts, the campers and the counselors would talk to me. Everyone was so nice, and now I can talk to all sorts of different people. Camp Royall gave me that courage to talk to more people."

"I want others to know what people with autism are like so they understand. I tell people that Camp Royall is a super friendly environment where everyone is so supportive." Nithi believes that helping out with a variety of tasks will help her academically, as well: "I used to be shy about asking questions in class, but now I have to ask questions about my work. I've learned how to ask good questions, and I think it will help me ask questions more confidently in high school."

In addition to her volunteer work, Nithi loves sports, dance, and painting. Her current favorite subject is science.

We are so grateful to Nithi for all of her help this summer, and we know she has a bright future ahead!

































Camp is a place of growth for us as staff as well as the campers.

[Counselor]



DONORHIGHLIGHT: NC Solar Now

"Autism affects our community, and we're all in this together. Our support of the Autism Society of North Carolina supports the entire community."

NC Solar Now's mission is to help North Carolinians save money on their power bills while helping the environment, and that's exactly how they're helping Camp Royall. NC Solar Now donated solar panels and installation to Camp Royall, and the money saved by the system goes directly back to supporting camp.

In addition to donating the solar panels and the installation, NC Solar Now will make a donation to the Autism Society of North Carolina for every sale made. They are also a sponsor of many of our events, including the Camp Royall Classic golf tournament and the Triangle Run/Walk for Autism. At the Triangle Run/Walk for Autism, more than 20 NC Solar Now staff served as course marshals to keep the event safe.

This summer, representatives from NC Solar Now hosted a ribbon-cutting for the solar panel system at camp. Participants had a chance to learn about renewable energy and then enjoy ice cream served by NC Solar Now!



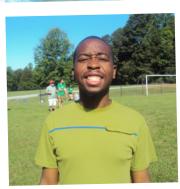
"We're proud and happy to be a sponsor of the Autism Society of North Carolina," said Director of Operations Karl Stupka at the event. "Autism affects our community, and we're all in this together. Our support of the Autism Society of North Carolina supports the entire community."

NC Solar Now is excited to be our long-term partner, and we are excited for all we can do together! Thank you to NC Solar Now for your support and for helping Camp Royall go green!





















Camp Royall is a gift to our son and to our family! This was his first time attending, and we are so grateful for the incredible experiences he had. The staff is top-notch, led by stellar leadership. Our son made life-long friends and memories. Camp Royall is a truly special place.













Between meeting incredible campers, gaining new skills, and enjoying all the camp activities, being at Camp Royall has been a life-changing experience!













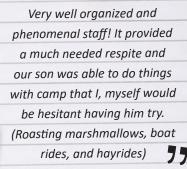








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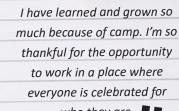












who they are. 🤰









Camp Director: Sara Gage [25] **Assistant Director:** Kristian Page [9] **Program Coordinator:** MaKia Aikens [4] **ASNC Property Manager:** David Yell [30]

Property Management Executive: Ann Kastner [2]

Camp Royall Facility Manager: Tyler Jenkins **ASNC Senior Director of Operations:** Kate Hall [11] **ASNC Operations Accounting Coordinator:**

Angela Mattison [6]

[] indicates how many summers spent working or volunteering

Facility Staff:

Ricky Sampson [16] Ed Wolfram [12] Tristan Wolfram [6] Tessa Yell [3] Malachi Levy [3] Ned Weeks [3] Mike Carter [2] Bailey Jones [2] Caroline Murrell [2] Jadelyn Robles [2] Treasure Aikens Mason Bae Alex Blackburn Isabelle Blackburn Leland Carson James Cotton Alanna Davis Julia Jett Landon Johnson

Activity Directors:

Amanda Miller

Frank Wagoner

Erik Peterson

Amaris Smith [6] Maddy Webber [4] Pieter Westerbeek [4] Bri Harris Cassidy Montgomery Natalie Womble

Counselors:

Rico Thorpe [9]

Rachel Galbraith [4] Gabby Lardizabal [2] Rebekah Williams [2] Zachary Briggs [2] Claudia Bare Hali Bernstein Carly Bierer Megan Blade AJ Bonetti Kristen Branigan Hannah Cameron Grant Clark Jazmin David Amber Deveaugh Gargi Dixit Shereeda English Zahra Goins Derek Hernendaz-Martinez Kelsev Hiscock Savannah Johnson Kayla Keegan Zoey Lloyd Grace McGuire Tyler Osborne Isabella Russo **Emily Siddoway** Kellum Thomson

Ori Wilson



Expert Admin Assistants: Cassie Fraser-Ball

Liliann Vigil

Jack of all trades:

Delaney Burns [5] Isabelle Dewitt [7] Marian Easler [5] Nikeeta Giddings [5] Sybilsue Strivelli [3] Jen Wildes Sierra Wyse

Nurses:

Tina Harris [10] Katie Zimmerman [4] Danielle Spivey [2] Alison Payne

Extraordinary Volunteers:

We want to recognize those who so generously gave their time to support us through many tireless hours of volunteer work. Your dedication and support was inspirational and very much appreciated!

Julian Ballen Ella Boeke Katie Kinkade Maggie Powell Ryan Steinberg Nithi Vechalapu Ethan Wildes

Trainers and Consultants:

We are extremely grateful to friends of Camp Royall from various parts of the autism community who gave their time and expertise to educate us and guide us throughout the summer so that we might serve our campers with the highest level of care possible.

Erica Brown
Stephanie Burke
Michelle Christopher
Isabelle Dewitt
Denise Dixon
Marian Easler
Lesley Fraser-Ball
Wykia Macon
Dylan Matthews
Anna Morgan
Michelle Scatamacchia
Liliann Vigil





































Camp Royall Wish List

If you want to support Camp Royall through material donations, we would be grateful to receive the items below. For your convenience, we have also created an Amazon list: https://a.co/6nqcAqe

Arts & Crafts Wishes:

- Glue/glue sticks
- Scissors (of all sizes)
- Paint (fabric paint, tempera paint, face paint, watercolors, finger paint)
- Painting supplies (brushes, small paint containers, watercolor paper, canvas)
- Pipe cleaners
- Glitter
- Beads (not too small) and plastic string for beading
- Noise-canceling headphone

- Sensory toys
- Chewie tubes
- Construction paper
- Googly eyes
- Plain white T-shirts of all sizes (youth small- adult 4XL)
- Tie-dye Supplies
- Dry-erase markers (thin)
- Sharpie markers
- Markers
- Blue painter's tape
- Cardstock (any size or color)

General Program Wishes:

- Musical instruments
- Pool toys
- Gym equipment (yoga balls, tumbling mats, balls)
- Board games (new or like-new)
- Books (new or like-new)
- Coloring books (new or like-new)
- DVDs (new or like-new)
- Ziploc baggies (sandwich-size and gallon-size)
- Bubble solution
- Toilet paper
- Liquid hand soap
- Shaving foam
- Hand sanitizer
- Baby wipes
- Clorox wipes
- Laundry detergent

- Power strips
- Digital timers
- Charging cords (old Apple chargers, lightning chargers, Android, USB plugins)
- Velcro dots
- Flashlights
- Night lights (and bulbs)
- Batteries (AA and AAA and D)
- Puzzles (new or like new)
- Digital timers
- Laminating sheets (to be used in a hot laminator)
- Fishing gear (cane poles, rod and reel, bobbers, hooks etc.)
- Paddle boats
- Golf carts
- Four-wheel drive pickup truck





Camp Royall never stops! We offer programs for campers of all ages across the whole spectrum year-round. Check out our upcoming programs below – we hope to see you soon!

Mini Camps provide campers the chance to spend the weekend at camp, from 5 p.m. Friday to 12 noon Sunday. Campers enjoy a miniature version of our summer camp program while families benefit from respite; preference is given to campers living at home. Supervision at a ratio of 1:1 or 1:2 is provided during these weekends.

Residential Camps will be offered in December and January for campers of all ages. The overnight program includes a 1:1 or 1:2 counselor-to-camper ratio, based on each camper's level of need.

Adult Retreats give independent adults, 18 years and older, a chance to enjoy time with friends at Camp Royall. There are 1-2 staff in cabins at night, and any new participants will be screened by camp staff to make sure they are a good fit. Participants enjoy recreational activities at camp as well as outings in the community.

Teen Retreats offer independent teens (ages 13-22) a chance to enjoy time with friends at Camp Royall! There are 1-2 staff in cabins at night, and any new participants will be screened by camp staff to make sure they are a good fit. Participants enjoy recreational activities at camp, as well as outings in the community.

Teen Tuesday offers independent teens (ages 13-22) the opportunity to learn life skills in a welcoming group setting. The group meets one Tuesday a month from 5 until 7:30 p.m.

Adult Skills Program is being piloted in the fall. This new program will take place two days per week in the spring and focus on recreation, leisure, and basic life skills development. 1:1 or 1:2 support will be provided for participants.

Registration for 2022 Programs

Online registration for the Camp Royall Summer Camp lottery will run from November 1 to January 15. Registration for all other 2022 spring programs will also open on November 1, but that registration closes on December 15, so that families can be notified in early January. After the registration period, you can apply for waitlists.

For more information or to register for any of our programs, please visit www.camproyall.org. Questions? Contact us at 919-542-1033 or camproyall@autismsociety-nc.org



"Camp Royall

has increased my

son's confidence,

independence, and

willingness to try

new things."

How Does ASNC's Camp Royall Change Lives?

Camp Royall is the oldest and largest camp program for individuals of all ages with autism in the world, serving more than 3,000 individuals with autism and their families a year. Camp experiences provide an opportunity for exploration, for making friends, for trying new and exciting activities, and a time for personal growth in independence and confidence. As a result, campers return home with skills once thought unattainable by their families and the ability to make a friend and be a friend.

What Are Camp Royall's Needs?

Camp Scholarships: Providing summer camp scholarships to campers each summer is the most critical need. Due to the additional financial demands of caring for a child with autism, most families are unable to afford the \$1,850 cost per week for their child to attend camp and receive the benefits of a week with specialized

staff. Fundraising for camp scholarships is a year-round focus. Each year we raise close to \$300,000, but it is not enough to help each family in need.

Program/Facility Donations: Providing program supplies and maintaining a 133-acre facility is expensive. In-kind and financial donations help offset these costs. Current needs include: arts and crafts supplies, sensory toys, technology items, and a pickup truck.

Planning for Our Future: As we look to the future and the growing number of children and families who depend on our services, we must expand the number of campers we are able to serve each week by providing additional sleeping facilities. We are currently assessing the costs and looking at fundraising opportunities for the future.

How Can You Help?

More than 88 cents of every dollar we raise is used for services that directly affect people with autism, and every dollar raised stays within North Carolina, helping people who live and work in our local communities. Contact Kristy White to

discuss partnership opportunities that include individual gifts, named scholarships, planned giving, connections to corporations or foundations, and other opportunities to get involved.

"Camp Royall has increased my son's confidence, independence, and willingness to try new things. I can tell that he feels valued for

his contribution," one mom said. "Camp Royall has created happy memories that will stay with him throughout his life. It gave me peace of mind, knowing that he was in a safe, loving, and supervised environment."

We are excited about what is happening today as a result of our efforts. We're even more excited about what can happen with your help.

Contact Information

Kristy White Chief Development Officer 5121 Kingdom Way, Suite 100 Raleigh, NC 27607 919-865-5086 kwhite@autismsociety-nc.org

Many thanks to our Camp Royall donors.

The support of the following individuals, businesses, and foundations helped the Autism Society of North Carolina provide camp scholarships during 2021.

\$50,000 & Above

Estate of Mary V. Balliet

\$25.000-\$49.999

Teresa and John Sears

\$10,000-\$24,999

BB&T Charitable Giving
Citibank Trust South Dakota
Costanzo Family Charitable Trust
Mosaic Pediatric Therapy
Premiere Communications &
Consulting

Truist

Maria Costanzo

Carol and Douglas Fink

Donald Hadley

Kristen and Ron Howrigon

Lori and Gregg Ireland

Torrie and John Kline

Lorraine and Dale Reynolds

Karen Schaefer

Jill and Doug Terry

Kim and Jeff Woodlief

\$5,000-\$9,999

ASNC New Hanover County Chapter

ASNC Surry County Chapter

Credit Suisse

Galloway Ridge Charitable Fund

The Cooper Royall Foundation

Rebecca and Cory Bean

Meg and Gary Jack

\$2,500-\$4,999

ASNC Mecklenburg County Chapter

ASNC Montgomery/Stanly County Chapter

ASNC Orange/Chatham County Chapter

Raleigh Diamond

The Summer Camp Fund

Women of Fearrington

Lindsay and James Bedford

Amy and John Brien

Patrick Falvey

Heather Moore and Steven Jones Louise and Michael Southern Leigh and Jeff Vittert
JoAnn and Mark Wainwright

\$1,000-\$2,499

Acorn Alcinda Foundation
Ammons Chiropractic Clinic
ASNC Buncombe County Chapter
ASNC Cleveland County Chapter
ASNC Craven County Chapter
ASNC Crystal Coast Chapter
ASNC Lincoln County Chapter
ASNC Sampson County Chapter
ASNC Wake County Chapter
Bank of America
CADCO Construction Company
Johnston County Community
Foundation

Kamm McKenzie OBGYN

North Carolina Community

The Raidy Charitable Foundation

Wake Electric Membership

Corporation

Womble Bond Dickinson

Stephanie Alger and Colin Woodlock

Roger Cheek

Janet and James Cozart

Karen and Michael Crow

Kimberly and Robert Cummings

Sandy Daston

Pamela Dilavore

Laura and Marc Fraioli

Leeann and Mark Garms

Heather Hankinson

Ruth Hurst and Tom Wiebe

Sharon Jeffries-Jones and Steve

Jones

Laurie and Kyle Kennedy

Keryn and Kevin Maionchi

Rose Morgan

Maureen Morrell

Elizabeth and Chris Norton

Timothy O'Hara

Jim Phillips

Dawn Rohlik

Linda and Kevin Routh

Kristin and Scotty Selby

Katie and Tracey Sheriff

Nancy and Michael Smith

James Trotter

Denise and Steve Vanderwoude Joanne Westcott and William

Kristy and Andrew White

Susan Whitlow

Buccheri

\$500-\$999

ASNC Davie/Forsyth County Chapter

ASNC Durham County Chapter ASNC Guilford County Chapter

ASNC Haywood County Chapter

ASNC UNC-CH Campus Group
The Knightly Order Of The Fiat

Lux-Triangle Chapter
Raleigh Kiwanis Foundation

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Todd Dameron

Laurie Daniel Jordan and Lyndon

Jordan

Shannon and Robert Duvall

Tom Elwell

Amy and Vance Fowler

Madison Gardner

Lesley and Michael Graves

Kate and Harvey Hall

Melissa and Robert Johnson

Kari and Monte Johnston

Lisa and Scott Josephs

Lisa and David Kaylie

Matt Knowles

Mary Anne and Bill Kuhn

Tommy Lawrence

Sandra and Stephen Lehrman

Jeanne McGovern and Michael

Schwenk

Tim Morris

Pat and Jim Morrison

Kristy and Aleck Myers

Hunter Outen

Daniel Rauscher

Candace and Joseph Roberts

Susan and Craig Scates

Susan and Bryan Schild

James Seawell

Potter and Bill Sewell

Christy Sherman

Lauren Stanek

Mikki Verhoeven

Michela and Jason Vernon

Jonathan Willard

\$250-\$499

ASNC Alamance County Chapter

ASNC Jackson/Swain/Qualla

Boundary Chapter

ASNC Pender County Chapter

ASNC Polk Autism Support Group Knights of Columbus Operation

LAMB

UNC SPARK Jeff Alpi

Michael Azrak

Rhonda Bishop-Hazlewood

Amy Brande

Mark Ciamarra

Renee and Len Clark

John Coleman

Latonya Croney

Memory Dossenbach

Kathleen DuVal and Marty Smith

Kerri and Jeremy Erb

Christina Flake

Hal Garrison

Hollin and John Goodwin

Elizabeth and Vito Guarnaccia

Keri and Judd Hartman

Cathy Heitman

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Kelly Johnson Rachel Mallory

Ann and Jerry Moser

Sealy and Bran Nash

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Trista and Eric Nelson

Nancy and Joe Nestor

Cindy and Scott Nyberg
Roxanne and James Thompson

Kim and Mark Tizzard

Becky and Tom Webb

Judy and Paul Wendler

Rex Wilson

