



# 2023 Annual Impact Report

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Dear Friends of Camp Susan Curtis,

**The impact of camp on a child is noticeable in so many ways.**



The way they talk with more eye contact. The way they interact with their peers with more respect and kindness. The way they gush over their achievements. And the way they carry themselves with more confidence.

**The lifelong impact of Camp Susan Curtis on a child is immeasurable.**

Because of you, at Camp Susan Curtis young people learn to collaborate, communicate more effectively, problem solve, think creatively, assume responsibility, and lead with empathy – **skills and traits that are sure to help them thrive in their future work and life.**

During a time when anxiety and loneliness is so prevalent, **you've given kids a caring community** of mentors and peers – and friendships that will support them for years to come.

You've given kids facing economic hardship the chance to see the world is filled with opportunity - and nurture the idea that anything is possible.

**You Are Helping Kids Thrive.**

THANK YOU for launching kids to a bright future!

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott".

Scott



Because of people like you,  
**389 Maine kids in need had life-changing experiences at camp in 2023!**

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**275** campers went on **overnight hiking trips**, increasing their confidence in the outdoors

**77** campers advanced their **swim skills**, making them **safer** and **stronger** in the water

**3** special new camp programs launched:  
**Calm Down Movement, Poetry, and Sewing**

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“I’m thankful for camp because I can always make new friends here. If you don’t know how to make friends, you may be able to find someone like you. If you feel like a weirdo, you might find someone else who feels like that too. And you always get to make something, do something, run around, have fun, and just be at camp.” –Camper Dantae

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**Top Left:** Emily during her first summer at Camp Susan Curtis. **Top Right:** Emily leading younger campers in a round of camp songs with other Leadership Development campers.

## You helped Emily become a leader.

Emily was 8 years old when she first came to Camp Susan Curtis. **At the time, her family was struggling, living below the poverty line, and for a while, living in a homeless shelter.** She often felt like she had to be more mature than her age to handle all the worries that she and her family faced. But at camp, everything was different. Camp became the **constant in her life.** Every summer she could look forward to returning to this community that loved and believed in her.

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“I was able to forget about all my home problems. I could come to camp and act like a kid and have fun like a kid. I didn’t have to wonder if I’m going to be able to do an activity or have a meal because I didn’t have enough money for it. I had the opportunity to have fun and have three meals a day and do crafts.” –Camper Emily

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This summer was Emily's second as a Leadership Development camper. For the first half of the summer, she was an apprentice, working closely with camp staff **to learn how to be a leader and a role model for younger campers**. After Session 2, the Leadership Team decided that Emily was ready to become a staff member.

Emily was over the moon about her new role. She worked really hard to make sure she was the best staff member she could be. During her 8 years at CSC, Emily gained **stability, connection, and confidence**. Her own experiences as a camper gives her a special insight into why camp matters so much to the kids who attend. She can't wait to come back next summer as a full-time staff member for the first time.

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*“Camp is important for these kids because a lot of them go through hardships they shouldn’t have to go through as kids. I know when I was younger and going through those hardships, I felt like I had no one. But when I was at camp, I felt like I was being cared for, like I had somebody to talk to. And I think that’s very important. Because these campers deserve to have fun and deserve to have somebody comfort them.” –Camper Emily*

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**Left:** Emily learning how to canoe in Trout Lake during her second summer at CSC. **Right:** Emily heading out onto Trout Lake to paddleboard as a Leadership Development camper.



# You helped Maine kids learn the skills they need to thrive.



Children across the nation are struggling with an unprecedented mental health crisis. Rates of **youth anxiety and depression** continue to climb, while access to mental health care is increasingly limited – a situation that is even further exacerbated for children facing economic hardship.

But thanks to the support of caring people like you, Maine kids in need can access experiences at camp that **positively support their mental health** and wellbeing. With the help of supportive camp staff, campers connect to a **caring camp community** and participate in **enriching outdoor activities** that help them build **essential social and emotional skills**, allowing them to better understand their emotions, connect with others, and envision their future success.



**97%**

of campers grew in  
one or more social  
& emotional skills\*

You helped kids  
learn to:

Know how to  
**motivate** & take  
**ownership** of their  
learning & success



Build a **positive**  
sense of **identity** &  
**confidence**



**Regulate** emotions,  
take **positive risks**,  
& **persist** through  
challenges



Learn how to **care** for,  
**connect**, & **empathize**  
with others



Want to **belong** &  
**contribute** to their  
community

\*In 2023, Camp Susan Curtis used a research-based survey tool with 69 campers in addition to its other data collection methods. The tool's user database includes 562 afterschool programs, summer camps, and other youth-serving programs (nationwide), representing the experiences of 45,000 youth.



## You helped kids explore and connect in the Maine outdoors.

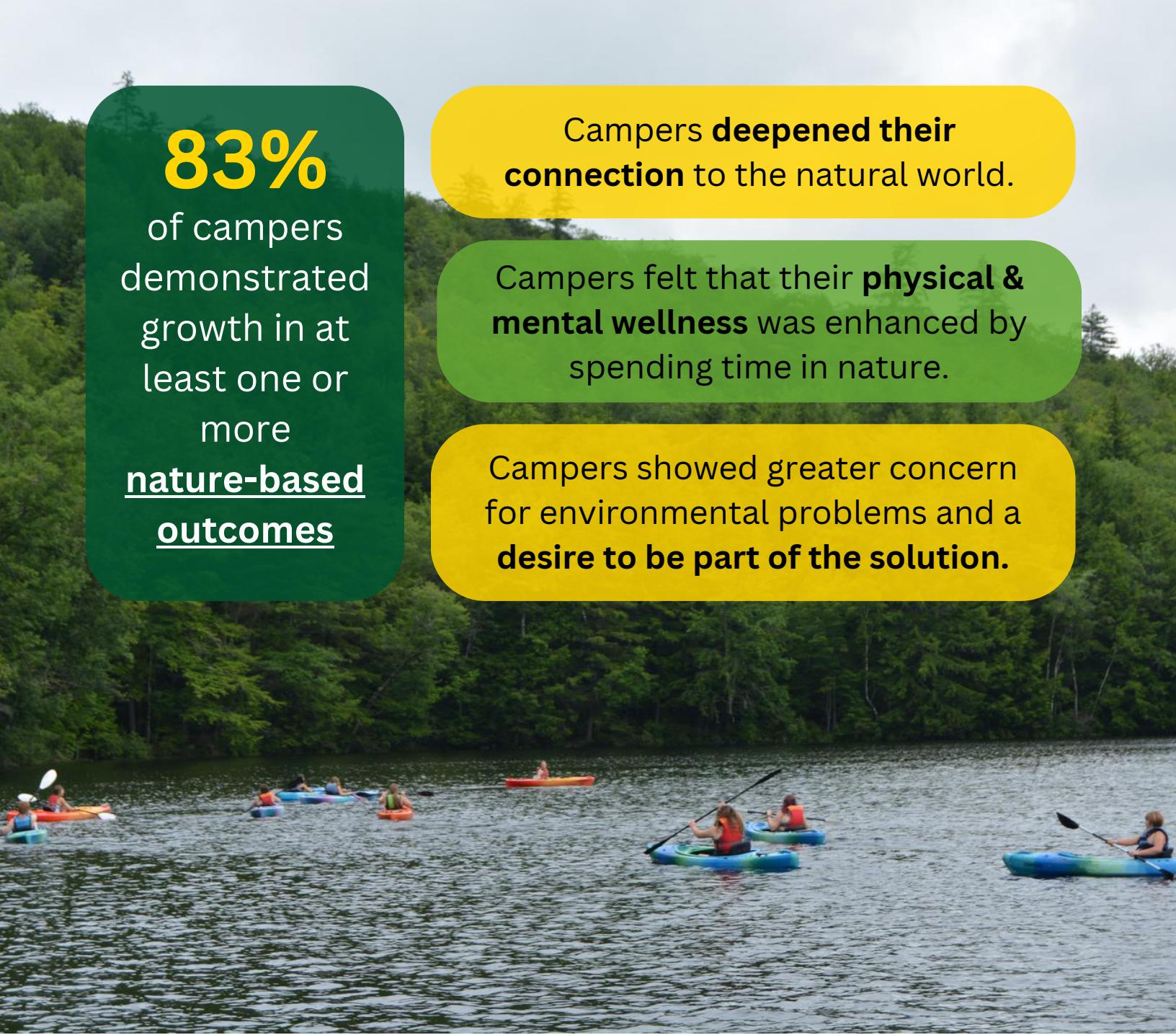
According to the CDC, **children aged 8-18 spend an average of 6-9 hours in front of a screen** each day. But Camp Susan Curtis knows the critical value of giving children an opportunity to completely disconnect from technology, and instead spend time **exploring the outdoors**, engaging in **healthy physical activities**, and **connecting with friends in real life**.

On average during the summer of 2023, each camper spent **90 hours immersed in the outdoors** over their 10-day camp experience.

Spending time in nature is linked with better **physical health**, improved **learning outcomes**, and **lower rates of anxiety**, stress, and depression.\*



*\*American Academy of Pediatrics*



**83%**

of campers demonstrated growth in at least one or more **nature-based outcomes**

Campers **deepened their connection** to the natural world.

Campers felt that their **physical & mental wellness** was enhanced by spending time in nature.

Campers showed greater concern for environmental problems and a **desire to be part of the solution.**

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*“Camp to me is a home away from home. The friendships and memories I made here are like no other. CSC has given me opportunities that have changed how I view both nature as well as myself.”*

*-Camper Charlotte*

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# You gave kids the clothes and gear they need to have fun at camp.

As the cost of living rises and camper families face increased hardship, more of our campers arrive at camp without the essential basics they need at camp. **No child should have to worry** about not having the things they need, or worry that the cost of purchasing items will create more stress for their parent.

In 2023, thanks to the kindness of caring people like you, **every camper who needed clothing or supplies at camp received them**. Anything a camper receives they take home with them. Examples included:

A new pair of **sneakers**



A new **toothbrush & toothpaste** and all other hygiene items



A new **swimsuit** and a towel



A **rain jacket**



Any other necessary **clothing**



**Bedding** for their cabin bed





## You helped Maine kids plan for their bright futures.

Maine children facing economic hardship don't have the same exposure to postsecondary opportunities. Your support helped campers **explore the endless possibilities** that exist for their futures and learn how to **become leaders** in the camp community. **You helped kids:**

→ **Learn about future possibilities through college tours.**

**50 campers went on campus tours** to Colby College and the University of Southern Maine, where they learned about what it's like to attend college from CSC alums and staff.

→ **Discover an affordable path to higher education.**

**83 campers participated in scholarship discussions**, including meetings with the Mitchell Institute and the USM Promise Scholars, to learn about opportunities that could help them pursue a higher education.

→ **Become supportive role models for younger campers.**

High school **campers shadowed experienced staff members** to learn how to be a successful, caring camp staff member and lead their own activities for younger campers.



# You helped Ashton connect with nature.

Things are not always easy for Ashton at home. He lives with his mother and sibling on a very limited income. **As the child of a deaf adult, he also often supports his mother by translating spoken words into American Sign Language.** There is a lot going on at home, and he doesn't always get to do the things he enjoys. But **at camp, Ashton gets to do the thing he loves most** – spend time in nature.



*“I really like getting out in nature. I get to do that a lot more here than I would at home. My favorite place would either be in the woods, up on Allen Mountain, or in the water. Up on Allen it is really calm. I like to hike up there.*

*But I also love the water. I love swimming, boating, anything like that.” –Camper Ashton*



**Left:** Ashton in 2017, making a new friend during his first summer at camp. **Right:** Ashton in 2023, enjoying a quiet moment by Trout Lake before his next Leadership Development activity.

Camp was the place where **Ashton discovered a love of the outdoors** and deepened his connection to nature. He loves getting to challenge himself by hiking up the mountains surrounding camp and looks forward to the peaceful evening campfires by Trout Lake. This summer was his first in the Leadership Development Program, where he's **learning the skills he needs to become a camp staff member.**

Next summer, Ashton plans to return for the next phase of the Leadership Development program, and then, hopefully, be hired as a staff member. He is excited to inspire a love of nature in his own campers.



*“I’m more of a role model. It’s giving me a different perspective. Before coming here, I was more worried about video games and stuff. Now, I’m more focused on what’s actually happening in the world and on spending more time outside. Camp has helped me a lot, and I want to help other kids too.” -Camper Ashton*



### **A special thank you from Ashton:**

Dear friend of camp Susan

My name is Ashton and I have been going to camp for 5 years. What I love about camp is the constant feelings of happiness and the amount of enthusiasm all of the campers and staff have and I look forward to coming back future years

*happiness!*

Thank you for helping to send me to camp  
Sincerely, Ashton.

# THANK YOU for impacting the lives of Maine kids!

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Your impact on Maine children in need will ripple out for years to come, giving these children an essential and healthy foundation for a brighter future.



2023 Camper Stats	
Total Campers Served	389
Elementary Campers (4-7)	269
Middle School Campers (8-9)	80
High School Campers (10-12)	40
Percentage of Returning Campers	70%
Percentage of campers who have experienced a significant life event	71%

2023 Campers by County			
Androscoggin	54	Oxford	133
Aroostook	10	Penobscot	23
Cumberland	70	Piscataquis	0
Franklin	8	Sagadahoc	16
Hancock	0	Somerset	3
Kennebec	20	Waldo	3
Knox	2	Washington	1
Lincoln	26	York	20



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**Andrew DeStaebler**, Program Associate

**Hannah Liautaud**, Development Assistant

THANK YOU for giving Maine kids JOY  
at Camp Susan Curtis!



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