

Camp Onas/Friends Camp Association
2020 Annual Report
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Last year at this time, I spoke of Camp Onas' anticipation for yet another successful summer of camp life. With some foresight, members of the Board and the Staff had recently completed an emergency response plan, designed to consider what we would do if something happened in the camp to shut us down for the season. The assessment of our fiscal resilience led us to believe we could survive a year without income, though it would impact us significantly in the long run. Then the coronavirus happened, and we found ourselves facing what our theoretical thinking had largely prepared us for. After a spring of careful and deep searching, we concluded that it wouldn't be safe and responsible to operate Camp Onas in the 2020 summer season. There were serious belt-tightening measures, and a PPP loan procured. The larger camp community... the campers, staff, alumni and families... were sad, but took their disappointment with understanding and support. We refunded camp costs to families, though a significant number converted those tuition dollars into helpful donations. And while it was a quiet summer, it was not without activity, as many aspects of camp maintenance needed to run in spite of the quiet. Camp Staff kept momentum going with a regular stream of virtual Camp Onas activities for those sad campers who wanted to feel that kind of love, and a slate of alumni get-togethers were added as well, recognizing the need for meaningful connection everyone in the Camp Onas community experienced this past year.

Camp Onas recognizes that whatever may come, our primary concern is protecting Camp's ability to reopen, and its future ability to provide a treasured camp experience and community for years to come. Even as we restricted spending, we placed a priority on those expenditures that will facilitate re-opening and address the long-term sustainability of the organization.

Prior to the shutdown, we had begun the process of planning to replace the two fifty year-old shower houses, and after careful consideration, we continue to move ahead with those plans, as the work is integral to the future of Camp Onas. The plans are nearly complete, and we are on the precipice of applying for building permits, with the objective of starting construction immediately after the 2021 camp season ends. Camp Onas plans to fund this construction by paying for a portion of the costs outright, pursuing donations and grants for a part, and financing the rest.

Camp Onas will be sending out an email newsletter this week or next, which will include information on this project. It will also mention the change of Board Leadership (Stephen Kunkel of Solebury Meeting will step down as clerk, and I will step up. Maiké Haehle (of Makefield Monthly Meeting) will become the new Assistant Clerk). The newsletter will also highlight several 'Camp Champions', who are donors who helped sustain Camp Onas this year and explain in their own words why supporting Camp Onas is a priority for them. If you are not already on the Camp Onas email list, you can sign up on the Camp Onas website.

So what of the upcoming summer? Camp Onas plans to offer a summer camp program in 2021, and Holly and Matt Hecht, the Directors, are still working on some of the specifics before opening registration. They are each connected to professional networks of camp directors, experts, and healthcare providers with whom they have been collaborating since the spring to plan for camps to open in 2021. Most camps that were closed in 2020 plan to open this year with varying degrees of changes to their programs to reduce transmission risk. Camp directors nationwide have been working together over the year to find effective ways to adapt summer camp programs in light of COVID-19 guidance.

Camp Onas is designing a 2021 program that assumes COVID-19 will still be part of the general public's lives this summer; and is focusing on reducing risk to the degree it is possible, while balancing health and safety needs with those elements of Camp Onas that are most essential and important. Providing an outdoor, social, and community-based experience that looks and feels like "Camp Onas" is a priority, along with taking responsible measures to protect individual and public health.

There is a lot to consider in the planning, and Camp Onas has not yet announced dates, tuition, or opened registration or staff applications for the coming summer, though the hope is that both will open by the end of this month.

Holly and Matt are still determining what adjustments need to be made to camp capacity, the number and length of sessions, and any eligibility requirements before opening registration. They are working to prevent (to the degree it is possible) last minute changes and cancellations in the 2021 summer.

When registration opens, those who've expressed interest (either by previously attending Onas or signing up for the mailing list on the Onas website, www.camponas.org) will hear from Camp Onas with the news. After a couple of weeks, the information will also be shared on social media. We anticipate that, as in years past when registration opens, Camp Onas will fill quickly.

Of course, there are nearly infinite details that remain to be settled, but our reading of the larger Camp Onas community is that there is a consensus felt by all... Camp Onas Forever!