



Camp Linden

A Program of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Winter Views

December 2024

Message from Dr. Dubb

We wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a healthy and happy New Year. As Chair of Friends of Camp Linden I want to thank you again for your past support and provide a report on what we have been doing.

Last summer Camp Linden provided another exciting program of fun, learning and exposure to the natural world to over 150 children from low-income inner-city neighborhoods. In addition to our returning community partners from Philadelphia, we welcomed children from Coatesville, an economically depressed city in Chester County.

In the course of our work to eliminate invasive species in the Camp Linden woods, we discovered and protected a grove of Umbrella Magnolia trees, which are rare in this region.

The annual picnic continues to evolve from an afternoon event for members of the Philadelphia Ethical Society to an opportunity to share the camp facilities with our neighbors and others in the Ethical Culture movement.

None of this would be possible without your ongoing support. Please think of Camp Linden when you make your end of the year charitable contributions. A response card and envelope are enclosed for your convenience. You can also contribute on-line by hitting the "DONATE" button on the Camp Linden page of the Ethical Society website: phillyethics.org/camp-linden.

Jeffrey Dubb, M.D., Chair, Friends of Camp Linden



Report on Summer 2024

One hundred and fifty children from five low-income urban neighborhoods participated in our Children's Summer Program. Following its first day at Camp Linden our new community partner Coatesville Kids to College (CKC) posted on its website:

Our partnership with Camp Linden of the Philadelphia Ethical Society this week gave the students and staff a one-of-a-kind experience. Teaching them about pollination and the life of insects and how essential they are to the natural cycles of the environment. The students enjoyed a full day of learning and pool time with their friends and counselors in this wonderful day of fun-filled environmental education. Only 15 minutes away, this hidden gem has become such a great asset to our "Go Green" summer and creating "unbee-lievable" and exceptional experiences we strive for when empowering our children and youth.

Coatesville is a once thriving industrial center that fell on hard times with the decline of its major employer, Lukens Steel. CKC's elementary-school age campers attended Camp Linden with middle school and high school students serving as instructional assistants. *(continued on next page.)*

Report on Summer 2024 continued.

Our returning community partners serve low-income neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Dixon Learning Academy and Western Learning Center are child-care programs located in South Philadelphia. The Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia focuses on the needs of the Cambodian refugee and immigrant communities. Its campers included seven who spoke only Spanish and one who spoke only French. North 10 operates out of Lenfest Center, a community center serving the Hunting Park and East Tioga sections of North Philadelphia. Community Concern 13 is a child-care center in North Central Philadelphia which has been bringing its school-age children to Camp Linden for over twenty-five years.

Our six week curriculum includes environmental education, swimming instruction, and character building. Camp Linden can accommodate two groups of up to thirty children each day. One group goes to the pool and the other goes to environmental education in the morning, and they switch after lunch. Campers receive colored wrist bands to document and reward their accomplishment of each goal in a series leading up to performing the crawl stroke with alternate breathing. Free swim follows the lesson.

The environmental education program features a different subject and major activity each week. Campers have an opportunity to plant, harvest and taste produce in our raised bed garden and “pollinate” a model flower. They catch insects and toads, dig for worms, and capture macroinvertebrates and float in the Brandywine. They learn about the cycle of life, and the interdependence of plants, insects and animals. They are introduced to the Native American value of living in harmony with nature. They also learn about the challenges facing the Planet, and what they can do to help protect the environment. The summer ends with a celebration of the Earth, featuring parachute exercises with an inflated globe and a “feast” of produce from the garden and other healthy treats. See: **www.phillyethics.org/camp-linden/camp-linden-curriculum**.

Each day includes a lesson on Camp Linden Values, which are: (1) Value Yourself - Keep yourself safe and open to learning; (2) Value Other People, especially your fellow campers - keep them safe and help them learn; and (3) Value Planet Earth and All Living Things, especially the creatures you encounter at Camp Linden - learn from them and leave things as you found them.

CKC camper helps her sister learn to float.



New in Summer 2024: *Lacrosse*

Over the July 4 weekend Sharon and Amy attended the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington DC, which featured Native American culture. The game of lacrosse was a major focus of the festival. We learned that the original version, identified as the “medicine game”, has deep religious significance to Native Americans, whose folklore claims that they learned it from the animals. The first game, according to this tradition, was played between the land animals and the birds. It was preceded by controversy over which team should include the bat, since bats have the power of flight, but no feathers. The bat ultimately joined the birds and made the deciding goal. We were inspired to include lacrosse in our Native American culture lesson. Amy shared the traditional story of the first lacrosse match, and our staff showed campers how to pass a ball back and forth with a simplified version of a lacrosse stick.



Picnic and Overnight

For generations members of the Philadelphia Ethical Society have held the Society's annual picnic at Camp Linden. The picnic is preceded by overnight camping. We invite our neighbors to an open house the day before the picnic.

We invited all of the Ethical Societies to attend the picnic and overnight last summer. Twelve people from the Brooklyn Ethical Society (BSEC) arrived on Saturday; including BCEC members, and recent immigrants from Peru and Venezuela BSEC members met through the Poor Peoples Campaign.

Amy led our pollination lesson, in which the children don insect hand coverings and reach into a giant model flower to retrieve candy representing nectar. After dinner Carol Love and Paul Lucot took turns setting off fireworks, which were spectacular. Then we sat around a campfire, singing, chatting and making and eating smores. Cliff made blueberry pancakes for breakfast Sunday morning.

Around noon more members of the Philadelphia Ethical Society and their guests, and several members of the Baltimore Ethical Society, arrived for the picnic. Approximately forty guests ate, socialized and went swimming throughout the afternoon. A good time was had by all. We hope to have even more members of sister societies join our picnic and overnight in coming years.

*Brooklyn Society for
Ethical Culture overnight campers.*



In the Woods

Paul Lucot, a member of the Camp Linden Leadership Team, has taken on responsibility for maintaining our woods. Paul has been cutting down the invasive vines threatening our trees. On a recent foray he was amazed to find a grove of two mature and several small seedlings of Umbrella Magnolia trees, including seed cones. Natural populations of Umbrella Magnolia in Pennsylvania are classified as rare and threatened. Connor, the naturalist from the Brandywine Conservancy, was enthusiastic about the find, and took seeds for planting on the Conservancy's other properties.



Umbrella Magnolia is a small tree that often has several trunks and grows up to 33 feet tall. The leaves are large (to 24 inches long), and oval to oblong in shape. The flowers, appearing in May, have large, showy, white petals that are up to 5½ inches long. The fruits are aggregated in a 3-to-5-inch cone-like structure, with an orange or red outer covering. Pennsylvania is the northern border of its natural range.

One Sunday in November we held a volunteer day in the woods and returned to the area where Paul had found the Umbrella Magnolia. We placed tubes around the seedlings to protect them from deer, collected seed pods, and removed invasive species in the area. We will return in May to see the flowers.



Job Opening

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is searching for a successor to its Leader, Hugh Taft-Morales, who is retiring in June. For details and/or to apply email: leadersearch@philly-ethics.org.