



Camp Linden

A Program of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Winter Views

December 2025

Message from Dr. Dubb

In 2026 we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of Camp Linden's operation at our current site along the Brandywine in the rolling hills of Chester County. Last summer seven non-profit organizations serving children in low income urban neighborhoods brought a total of 183 children to Camp Linden for a program of environmental education, character building and swimming. Over the last century thousands of children have benefitted from exposure to nature at our bucolic campus.

Camp Linden and our parent organization, the Philadelphia Ethical Society ("PES"), have both undergone leadership transitions in the last few months. Amy Johnston, who has shared the role of Program Director with Sharon Wallis since 2012, was promoted to the position of Executive Director of Camp Linden. Former PES Leader Hugh Taft Morales retired and Phillip Lindsay has replaced him. Phillip has made Camp Linden a major component of his campaign to revitalize PES and attract energetic new members.

The mission of Camp Linden is to introduce inner-city children to the wonders of nature. That mission is embraced by our campers, who tell us how much they love Camp Linden and how many new things they do and learn about each summer. It is also embraced by our supporters, whose financial contributions make all of this possible. Thank you.

Have a happy holiday, and please remember Camp Linden when you make your end of the year charitable contributions.

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



Celebrate a Century



In 1926 Camp Linden began operating a summer program for inner-city children at our current location. We plan to commemorate the hundredth anniversary by engaging in the closing ritual of the Camp Linden program, when campers celebrate Planet Earth by lining up behind an inflated globe, singing the Camp Linden song, and marching to the field where they bounce the globe on a colored parachute. The parachute exercises are followed by a feast of produce from the garden and other healthy treats. We will also be giving tours and demonstrating other lessons from our environmental education curriculum.

SAVE THE DATES:

Anniversary Celebration Saturday, July 11, 2026;
Philadelphia Ethical Society picnic Sunday, July 12, 2026.

Members of all Ethical Societies and other friends of Camp Linden are invited to both events. Guests can camp on the Camp Linden property or stay at local accommodations Friday, Saturday and/or Sunday nights. We will host dinner, fireworks and a campfire on Saturday night. Look for more details in our next newsletter. For questions or assistance email camplinden@phillyethics.org.

Report on Summer 2025

Camp Linden partners with agencies that run summer camps in low income urban neighborhoods. Our community partners bring the same group of children to Camp Linden on the same week day for a six week program of environmental education, character building and swimming. Each weekday we serve children from a different agency, and each week we offer different subject matter in our environmental education program.

OUR CAMPERS

Last summer we served 180 school age children. Three high school youth from Coatesville also participated as counselors-in-training.

MONDAYS

On Mondays we served children from the West Chester area. The Intermediate Unit of the Chester County School District transported children from its summer camp as well as a group from the Melton Center. The Melton Center is a community center located in a low-income neighborhood of West Chester, with a long history of serving and advocating for its Afro-American residents. The Melton/IU group attended six weeks, starting June 30. Forty-seven campers participated.



TUESDAYS

On Tuesdays we served children from the school age programs of two day care centers operated by the Greater Philadelphia Community Alliance, a multi-service agency serving South Philadelphia, for six weeks starting July 8. Dixon Learning Academy brought 29 campers and Western Learning Center brought 15 campers - a total of 44 campers.

WEDNESDAYS

On Wednesdays we served 36 school age children enrolled in the summer camp operated at the Lenfest Center by North 10 Philadelphia, a community organization serving the Hunting Park and Tioga neighborhoods of North Philadelphia. North 10 was scheduled to participate for six weeks, starting July 2. However, they had to cancel the last two weeks because of transportation issues.

THURSDAYS

On Thursdays we served 17 school age children from Community Concern 13 ("CC13"), a day care center in North Philadelphia which has been bringing children to Camp Linden since 2000. CC 13 attended for six weeks, starting June 26. The one day they missed because of inclement weather was made up at the end of the season.

FRIDAYS

On Fridays we served 36 children from the South Philadelphia program of the Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia, starting June 27. They attended for only four weeks because their summer schedule ended in July. This group of primarily immigrant children and children of immigrants included English learners - most were Spanish speaking, but Arabic, Cambodian, and a French dialect were also represented.

COATESVILLE YOUTH INITIATIVE

Our new community partner, Coatesville Youth Initiative ("CYI"), assigned three students from its ServiceCorps to serve as counselors-in-training Monday through Thursday for eight weeks, starting June 23. Coatesville is a once thriving industrial center in Chester County which fell upon hard times with the decline of its major employer, Lukens Steel. Its ServiceCorps was created to provide a positive summer activity for Coatesville teens while also giving them an opportunity to engage in community service, develop leadership capabilities, grow as young adults, and gain work experience.



Environmental Curriculum

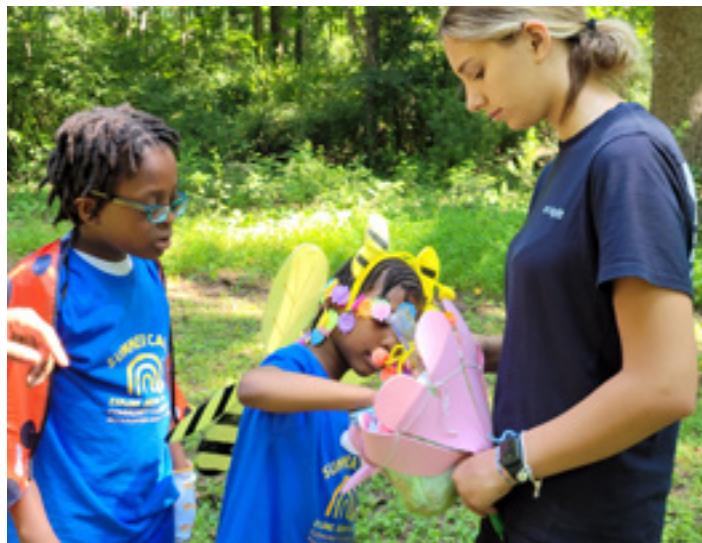
Week 1: Gardening and Nature Walk

Campers learned about the parts of a plant and their functions, photosynthesis, what plants need to grow, and why plants are important to us. Campers harvested, tasted and planted in our raised bed garden. On the nature walk they kept silent, like Native American hunters, communicating with hand signals, and then visited and fed goats and chickens.



Week 2: Pollination and Bugs

Campers “pollinated” a model flower and learned about plant propagation and insect pollinators. They caught bugs and toads and examined their catch before releasing them back to nature.



Week 3: Earth and Energy

Campers collected earthworms for our worm farm. They learned about decomposers and the cycle of life. This lesson also covered fossils, fossil fuel, climate change and renewable energy, illustrated by a solar powered flying pig.



Week 4: Natural Water and Water Pollution

In a lesson on watersheds campers sprayed “rain” on a model of Camp Linden and witnessed how it washed pollutants into the Brandywine. Campers collected macroinvertebrates in the Brandywine to test the water quality, and floated in the current.



Environmental Curriculum cont.

Week 5: Native American Culture and Values

This lesson focused on the traditions of the Lenape people who lived here before Europeans arrived, highlighting their value of respect for the Earth and all living things. Campers observed our "Three Sisters" garden bed planted in corn, beans and squash, in the Native American manner, an early example of organic gardening. They heard stories about the "Three Sisters" and the lacrosse game between the land animals and the birds, and practiced lacrosse toss.



Week 6: Closing Celebration

Campers harvested in the garden, popped popcorn and made kale chips. They celebrated Planet Earth with a parade and parachute exercises, and a feast featuring produce from the garden and other healthy treats. After interviews eliciting their response to our program, campers bid farewell to Camp Linden for the last time this season.



Swimming



Camp Linden can accommodate two groups of up to 30 campers each day. One group goes to the pool in the morning while the other goes to environmental education and they switch after lunch. Last summer we continued to implement a swimming instruction curriculum which has proved successful since it was introduced in 2022. This curriculum consists of a series of goals leading to mastery of the crawl stroke with alternative breathing. Colored wrist bands are given to campers to reward and document performance of each goal. Swimming instruction is followed by a period of free swim. The aquatic program also includes a focus on water safety.

While the pool was being filled last summer we discovered that water was leaking. A pool service contractor fixed the problem, but not before the first three groups on our roster had to be offered a slip-and-slide instead of swimming on their first day at Camp Linden. We also learned that our pool is in need of major repairs which should not be postponed beyond next summer. For more information about this issue and what we plan to do about it, see the Pool Restoration article on the last page of this newsletter.

Camp Linden Values

Each day includes a lesson on Camp Linden Values, which are:

1. Value yourself - Keep yourself safe and open to experience and learning
2. Value other people (especially your fellow campers) - Keep them safe and help them learn
3. Value the Earth and all living things (especially those you encounter at Camp Linden) - Learn from observing nature and leave things as you found them.

Leadership Transition

Amy Johnston

Amy Johnston has been promoted to Executive Director of Camp Linden, effective November 1. Amy joined the Camp Linden summer staff in 2022. At the end of that summer she was hired as Co-Program Director, working with Sharon Wallis. Sharon and her husband Leonard Weeks have been providing leadership for Camp Linden as volunteers since 2012. Leonard served as the Manager, with responsibility for overseeing the finances and maintenance of the property. Sharon coordinated the Children's Summer Program and developed its curriculum. Establishing a paid staff position for Amy, full time when camp is in session, and part time for the remainder of the year, was seen as the first step in the transition from volunteer to paid leadership. Now that the transition is complete, Amy has full responsibility for the property management and financial functions previously performed by Leonard, as well as all aspects of the Summer Children's Program. Sharon and Leonard will continue to volunteer as Associate Directors, providing support as needed.

Amy holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Mansfield University. She has been employed at Brandywine Red Clay Environmental Center as an environmental educator, leading programs for school groups, since 2011. Amy and her husband Cliff, a tenured professor of mathematics at West Chester University, have lived in the West Chester area for thirty five years, and raised their four children there. Both are active in the local community, especially in environmental causes and scouting. Amy was among the organizers of one of the first female BSA Scout troops when Boy Scouts of America changed its name and started serving girls as well as boys.

Amy is passionate about introducing children to the wonders of nature. Her hobbies include hiking, kayaking, gardening, baking, and raising monarch butterflies. She is inspired by Native American culture, and has studied the Lenape language with Chief Shelly DePaul of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania. For the last three years Amy has been building a constituency for Camp Linden in the local community, involving scouts, West Chester University, local environmental groups and other friends and neighbors.

Meet Philip Lindsay

Our parent organization, the Philadelphia Ethical Society ("PES"), has also undergone a leadership transition in the last few months. Philip Lindsay replaced Hugh Taft-Morales, who retired in June. Philip will devote part of his time to PES while he continues to serve as Director of the Democracy Innovation Hub of the Hannah Arendt Center ("HAC") of Bard College. There he educates public servants and community leaders on citizens' assemblies (also known as policy juries) and other forms of direct citizen engagement in policy-making.

Philip was raised in South Philadelphia. His father is a retired civil rights attorney, and his mother teaches Art History at Curtis Institute of Music. He earned his BA (cum laude) from Temple University in 2013, focusing on Latin American history and political economy. He is fluent in Spanish and has spent the majority of his career working in outreach for organizations serving Spanish speaking communities. (continued on next page).

Amy (in purple) and Philip (far right) with volunteers at Camp Linden



(Philip Lindsay continued from page 5) After graduating he lived in Mexico, working with a human rights organization. He then worked for two years at a foreclosure defense firm in New Mexico before winning a US State Department fellowship to live and work in Germany. Later he worked as a campaign field organizer for an environmental organization and also helped run a community health center in Brooklyn.

Philip is passionate about building collaborative teams and networks with a civic focus. He envisions PES as a place for a wide variety of progressive and cultural organizations to reach an appreciative audience. Philip's participatory style has already attracted many new members and potential members to the Ethical Society.

Philip has inspired a surge in enthusiasm for Camp Linden. He supports the mission of our Children's Summer Program. He also values the Camp Linden property for the opportunities it provides for PES members and friends to come together in a natural setting. Philip invited his musician friends to Camp Linden for the annual PES picnic, and organized two volunteer days since then - one in the late summer which included swimming, and one in the fall which concluded with singing around a campfire. He also hosted a picnic for members of a Hispanic children's dance group and their families at Camp Linden.

Pool Restoration

Swimming is a favorite activity for most of our campers. We are fortunate to have a beautiful 28 by 60 foot concrete in-ground swimming pool and pool-house with separate bathrooms for boys and girls. Every day campers spend the morning or afternoon at the pool, taking swimming lessons followed by recreational swimming.

While the pool was being filled last summer we discovered that water was being lost. A pool service contractor identified and fixed seven separate leaks. As a result of the delay in filling the pool, the first three groups on our roster played on a slip-and-slide instead of swimming on their first day at Camp Linden. We also learned that our pool is in need of major repairs which should not be postponed beyond next summer.

The expected useful life of a concrete in-ground pool is fifty years. We do not know exactly when our pool was installed, but we do know that it was more than fifty years ago. The pool has been well maintained, and it is in excellent condition for its age. The plumbing is sound. The surface has been repainted regularly in recent years. Five of the skimmers were replaced in 2018. However, many



of the capstones have come loose over time and the concrete below them has deteriorated, which causes the tile to crack and fall off. Performing the necessary work, which includes replacing the capstones, restoring the concrete and installing a new tile border, is an expensive proposition for a pool of this size. We are still getting estimates, but we expect the cost to be at least fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

We are preparing to undertake a capital campaign to cover the cost of restorings the pool. Our goal is to raise the necessary funds in time to have the project complete for the 2027 summer season, since we have been told it can be delayed for one more summer, but no longer. Our fund-raising effort will, of course, include soliciting individual donors. Contributions to the Richard Kiniry Fund will be prioritized to support the pool restoration. We will also be seeking grants from foundations, businesses and government. If you are willing to make a major contribution, or if you have a connection or idea which could be helpful, please email camplinden@phillyethics.org.

Support Camp Linden

To make a contribution by mail, use the enclosed response form and return envelope, or mail your check made out to Camp Linden to Camp Linden c/o Philadelphia Ethical Society, 1906 S. Rittenhouse Square, Phila. PA 19103. Contribute online by selecting the "Contribute" button on the Camp Linden page of the Philadelphia Ethical Society website, phillyethics.org/camplinden.

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