

Annual Report

# 2014

TRANSFORMING

# LIVES

Learners and Leaders



[www.ACAcamps.org](http://www.ACAcamps.org)



Tisha Bolger  
President

Thousands of campers left their indelible stamp on the collective psyche of the camp industry this past year. They came to camp excited (some of them a little afraid), ready to make friends, catch up with old ones, to try their hand at new activities, to conquer fears, to learn a little bit more about who they are as individuals and as members of their communities. And as they grew emotionally and socially before our very eyes, they infused us with excitement, a sense of pride in our current camp generation, and a swelling hope for the future of our campers and the continued potential of the camp industry.

Camp is a mutually beneficial relationship for all involved. It makes learning fun. It teaches campers and counselors alike to lead with confidence and to be more aware of those around them, like Twilight Park Day Camp camper Zanny Perrino, who said, "I learned to work towards and achieve goals .... Because of camp, I also learned to look out for campers who seemed less comfortable being there and reach out to them in friendship." That's transformation!

Ilya Pozin, *Forbes* contributor, said, "Good leaders are trailblazers, making a path for others to follow. Great leaders, however, inspire their people to reach higher, dream bigger, and achieve greater."

That's ACA's wish for every camper — that camp is a place of inspiration that encourages them to learn and then lead — to reach higher than they ever thought they could, to dream bigger than they ever dared before, and to achieve great things because they've discovered a confidence in their own abilities that tells them they can!

A handwritten signature of Tisha Bolger in black ink, written on a white background.



**ACA is a growing national association representing**

- 10,000 individual members
- 2,700 camps
- 2,400 ACA-accredited camps

# FROM THE CEO



**Peg L. Smith**  
Chief Executive Officer

As I write this letter, I am looking out my window enjoying beautiful fall colors. One of the aspects I love about nature is its ability to continuously transform, demonstrating with honor the passage of time — birth, development, alteration, rebirth.

Children and youth need to have the same opportunities — to grow, develop, and experience the beauty of each stage of living and learning.

Two thousand fourteen was another year of ACA camps transforming millions of lives. Camps offer opportunities for metamorphoses in many ways. I want to illustrate three:

- **Appearance** – when given the chance to watch children and youth participate in an extraordinary positive experience such as camp, you can visibly see a change in their appearance. Their style and manner of presentation are altered. Maybe they stand taller, smile sooner, or step up to help with greater confidence. The change in their ability to make a positive, strong impression is palpably modified.
- **Nature** – a quality camp experience can highlight personal qualities that help young people manage and direct their conduct in ways that demonstrate humor, heart, and humility. A can-do attitude or a “choose your mood” mentality emerges, empowering them and those around them to be and behave better.
- **Character** – giving young people the chance to lead and learn allows them to explore and discover their moral compass. Ethical attributes and ways of thinking are like a shield of armor in tough times — times we all experience in life. A camp experience with strong mentors and counselors provides the best environment for such growth in character.

It has been another year of transforming lives. To give children and youth a sense of unity and wholeness while having fun leading and learning are extraordinary gifts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peg L. Smith', written in a cursive style.



**The mission  
of the American  
Camp Association**  
is enriching the lives  
of children, youth, and  
adults through the  
camp experience.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN

### To Transform Lives as Leaders and Learners?

The camp experience and ACA have a profound effect on critical youth development experiences that 21st-century kids need more than ever:

- Time in nature
- Free play
- Meaningful relationships with mentors & peers
- Physical activity
- Face-to-face communication
- Problem-solving skills
- Teamwork
- Creativity

As campers learn from their counselors and other camp leaders, they also learn to lead — taking with them valuable skills and the confidence to move their lives in positive directions.

The ability to challenge themselves, to overcome obstacles, to try new things with a can-do attitude — these are the things that children gain from quality camp experiences. These are the things that transform them from simple learners to intentional, lifelong learners and accomplished community leaders.



### ACA's 20/20 VISION

ACA has committed to serve 20 million children by the year 2020. This is ACA's 20/20 Vision. Camps across the country are reaching out to campers from all cultural, economic, and geographic backgrounds to enrich their lives through the camp experience.

*Because of Camp...® I have learned valuable leadership skills that I will carry with me throughout my entire life.*

*Ian Keller, Hastings Lake YMCA*

## | TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS

ACA-accredited camps are strong supporters of the U.S. military and offer a safe haven for children and youth of military families to learn to express their feelings and often better cope with the fears and challenges associated with having an active duty parent or other loved one.

### CAMP HOMETOWN HEROES YMCA CAMP MATAWA

The Camp Hometown Heroes program was launched in 2013. It is a national, free, weeklong overnight summer camp for children who have lost a parent, sibling, or other loved one who served in the U.S. military and passed away through natural or unnatural causes. During their stay at camp, the children have the opportunity to openly discuss their feelings and experiences. With the support of pediatric grief specialists, the campers can participate in art and music therapy programs and optional discussion groups.

The camp is operated by the Wisconsin-based charity Hometown Heroes. Collaborative partners include the program's host camp, ACA-accredited YMCA Camp Matawa in Campbellsport, Wisconsin, and Kyle's Korner, which provides pediatric grief counselors and art therapy programming.

Camper referral partners include Being There-Reaching Out, several American Legion chapters and American Legion Auxiliaries, Hope for the Warriors, Got Your Back Network, and many other local and national organizations.



**Camp Hometown Heroes Mission:**  
To provide children of the fallen with a community of support and, at long last, a path to healing.



*Since going to camp, he's not shy anymore; now he talks to people. He said he made so many friends at camp he wants to go back every year and someday be a counselor. We can't thank you enough. Camp changed his life.*

*~ Sgt. William Green, III*

## | TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS

### OPERATION SUMMER CAMP | CAMP SHOHOLA

Since 2004, ACA Keystone's Operation Summer Camp (OSC) program has enabled approximately 300 military kids to benefit from a free summer camp experience. Most OSC kids are first-time campers from families who are unfamiliar with the developmental benefits of summer camp or unable to afford camp tuition.

OSC parents are often shipping out for deployment, and campership donations by ACA members help their families emotionally, logistically, and financially.

In April 2013, ACA Keystone staff spent a day at the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 111th Fighter Wing base, introducing the troops to the camp opportunities available through OSC. Meeting with Staff Sergeant William Green, III, and his wife, Anna, they described how a summer at Camp Shohola would be a perfect fit for their nine-year-old son William. Tearfully, Anna expressed her fears, but together they agreed to send William to camp that summer. Months later, Keystone Field Office Executive Director Michael Chauveau saw Sgt. Green again at a 111th Fighter Wing Recognition Luncheon honoring ACA for the OSC program, where Sgt. Green enthusiastically thanked Chauveau for the valuable life lessons his son had learned at camp.



# 263

**EVERY MINUTE**

**at camp  
263 kids  
make new  
friends**

**based on 220,875  
campers daily**



## LEADERS: CAMP IZZA

### ACA-accredited camps celebrate diversity and emphasize to campers it's okay to be exactly who they are.

Camp Izza is a Muslim summer camp that launched in 2008 with a mission to focus on pride of identity. The word "Izza," in fact, means pride, and campers there learn pride in three distinct areas.

**Pride in Muslim Organizations:** A broad spectrum of Muslim organizations in America strive for excellence and gain hard-earned recognition for their service to the Muslim community and the community at large. And while the past decade has seen a number of Muslim summer camps, Camp Izza is the first to receive ACA accreditation. This accomplishment has been a source of pride for the Muslim community and for ACA, as it represents the wide range of campers ACA serves.

**Pride in Our Youth:** Camp Izza employs high school and college-age youth who all need the same thing: guidance and opportunity. Our professional standards for our staff — such as timeliness, appropriate behavior and attire, and attitude — are used to train them to become excellent employees. We know the standards to which we hold them empower them to be significant contributors to their community beyond their years at camp. We are proud of who our counselors become.

**Pride in Themselves:** Growing up Muslim can be overshadowed by a dark cloud of prejudice and hate. Camp Izza is a space where Muslim children can be proud of who they are. The camp's program focuses not just on faith, but also on giving campers a chance to try and fail and still be proud of their effort.



*It never fails – campers come in shy and unsure of themselves, and they leave confident and open. They are open to their own individual talents and gifts. They are open to the world and what they have to offer it.*

~ Dr. Omar Ezzeldine  
Director, Camp Izza



**125**

**EVERY MINUTE  
at camp  
125 kids  
learn to swim**

based on 104,500  
campers daily



## LEADERS: CAMP ARANU'TIQ

**Aranu'tiq staff always knew its campers had the potential for leadership; now they see it in themselves.**

In June 2014, Camp Aranu'tiq (of Harbor Camps) introduced its inaugural leadership camp for ages 16 to 18 in New Hampshire. The camp has been servicing transgender and gender-variant youth ages 8 to 15 for five years and was excited to be able to extend that.

It was important that the youth realize they could give back and be leaders in any area, not solely in areas related to transgender issues. Besides enjoying skill-building exercises, leadership games, and general outdoor camp activities, campers worked individually on a project or plan that they would take back to their home community. They presented their plans at the end of the week.

One camper decided she wanted to do advocacy work for the homeless by joining the ranks of an existing organization in her hometown, while another wanted to make his school safer for LGBTQ young people by leading a school-wide assembly to help educate others.

Aranu'tiq staff always knew its campers had the potential for leadership; now they see it in themselves.



### FIND A CAMP

In 2014, ACA's Find A Camp database received over 1 million page views from parents and families looking for the perfect camp experience for their child. Find A Camp allows families to search for camps based on session length, price range, location, activities offered, and more.



Many of our campers experience discrimination and hardships in their home and school communities based simply on who they are. At Aranu'tiq's leadership camp, these youth were able to gain self-confidence by learning that they could be leaders.

~ Nick Teich  
Director, Camp Aranu'tiq





# PUBLIC POLICY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

ACA continues to pursue two far-reaching public policy goals: to advocate for the value of the camp experience as an expanded learning opportunity with legislators and regulators; and to protect the safety of everyone participating in the camp experience. Specific achievements in 2013 included:

- ACA successfully mobilized the community to advocate for the continuation of the government program that allows for international visitors to serve as camp staff, thereby providing amazing cultural exchange programs for American kids and foreign nationals. This program was at risk during the Congressional debates regarding immigration reform.
- ACA partnered with others to include camp — and other out-of-school time learning experiences — in the language contained in the Senate Education Reform bill. While the education reform debate continues, we have been able to recruit legislators who understand the value of the camp experience in the year-round education of the whole child.
- ACA helped shepherd the reintroduction of the Child Protection Improvements Act into both houses of Congress. This bill will close the gaping hole in federal law that prevents camps and other organizations that work with children from gaining access to federal criminal background checks on employees and volunteers.
- As an important part of Great Outdoors America Week, ACA partnered with the Outdoor Alliance for Kids to sponsor the Kids, Youth and the Great Outdoors Festival and Walk on the National Mall to draw attention to the importance of increasing access and opportunities for kids and youth to get outdoors.



# 226

EVERY MINUTE  
at camp  
226 kids  
engage in  
intense activity

based on 190,000  
campers daily



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## ACA's Professional Development Center Helps Prepare Staff for Leading Campers in Great Camp Experiences!

ACA's Professional Development Center (PDC) continues to offer professional development opportunities for owners, directors, and all levels of camp staff and volunteers in multiple ways: online training, face-to-face conferences and events, and live webinars where ACA provides educational experiences to help make camp a powerful learning experience for all involved. Our professional development foundation of 13 core competencies is built on research findings for skills and knowledge needed by youth workers.

Last year, 6,750 individuals enrolled in invaluable learning experiences that contributed to quality experiences for campers. Some of these ACA courses included:

- Camp Is for the Camper
- Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
- Critical Things Staff Need to Know about Risk Management
- Critical Things Staff Need to Know about Bullying Prevention
- Creating a Sense of Community in Camp

Some of these learners also engaged in intensive, competency-driven staff training courses that resulted in Staff Certificates of Added Qualifications for program staff, middle managers, and camp directors!

Additionally, 868 individuals participated in more than 20 live webinars with subject matter experts from ACA partnerships such as:

- NASA
- Association of Camp Nurses
- Teach for America
- Certified Horsemanship Association

*The material was easy to understand and very comprehensive. It made me more aware of the potential issues counselors might face at camp, and I feel better prepared to interact with campers in various situations.*

~ Sarah Evancho



## ACA Awarded Over 40,000 CECs Last Year

We believe in giving credit where credit is due. Successful completion of a qualified ACA learning opportunity earns a learner continuing education credits (CECs). ACA awarded 40,293 CECs last year!

### ACA Is a Leader in Professional Development! *New and Trending This Year*

- Camps can customize their own online learning experiences! Directors can tailor learning opportunities and outcomes for their staff by choosing from ACA's extensive catalog of online courses and recorded webinars.
- ACA awards digital badges for completion of any Staff Certificate of Added Qualification (CAQ) course. Digital badges are a powerful new online tool in professional development arenas that identify, document, and validate a person's skills, knowledge, accomplishments, and competencies.
- ACA's Professional Development Center is accessed by learners from around the world. Last year we enrolled learners from more than 17 countries who applied new skills and knowledge learned from ACA courses to the improvement of their camp experiences for children throughout the world.



*The information is concise and relevant, and I can take what I heard/learned and put it to use. No translation required! Plus, of all the webcasts I have participated in, ACA does it the best. The technology works, the timing is correct, and the people know of which they speak. Many other agencies/companies could learn from [ACA's] professionalism.*

~ George Ann Barrett

## STAFF TRAINING New York/New Jersey

In 2014, staff from the American Camp Association, New York and New Jersey facilitated staff trainings to more than 3,000 camp counselors and staff.

Facilitators led discussions and group activities that helped staff provide an amazing camp experience for children. Training topics included:

- Being an Effective Leader
- Group Dynamics and Development
- Creating a Positive Camp Culture

While each workshop covered a specific topic, there was always a focus on empathy, confidence building, and stepping outside of one's comfort zone — central components of a child's summer camp experience.

As counselors discovered their ability to be leaders and contribute to a group, they became equipped to guide campers through a similar process. The tools and techniques that participants were given in these staff workshops helped them to shape the lives of campers they worked with over the summer.

By providing unique and engaging staff orientations, ACA, New York and New Jersey plays an essential role in the development of thousands of children each year.

# ACA'S 2014 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

## Transforming Lives: Capacity. Character. Community.

Each year, more than 1,000 members of our community gather at our annual, national conference. The meeting serves as an association-wide platform and provides the opportunity to share the latest research, talk in person about emerging issues facing our communities, societal issues, promising practices, and resources to make us more effective in our roles as youth development professionals.

One of the most beneficial and transformative aspects of the conference is networking. While most of us have taken social networking to great heights in our personal and professional lives, camp is an authentic, in-person, and kinesthetic experience.

As such, having the opportunity to talk face-to-face, share meals, laughs, challenges, and kinship fuels us to do this important work we do. In February of 2014, in the midst of a brutal winter, we could see the faces of our attendees simply transform in the mild Orlando weather.

### Highlights

- Keynote lectures that explored brain development and its impact on how we can effectively communicate with children and teens; character development, particularly through becoming a giver; and the power of outdoor experiences, whether remote or urban. A special closing session was devoted to “play” – with a special video highlighting its impact and activities that celebrated how play is for everyone.
- Exhibit Marketplace that featured more than 180 companies and organizations sharing everything from must-have footwear to cutting-edge technology.
- More than 180 breakout sessions and networking opportunities.
- Time with ACA’s visionary CEO, Peg Smith, champion of youth development, who reminded us why we do what we do — we are in the transformation business, impacting youth, expanding their capacity, building their characters, and in turn, improving our communities.



# 280

**EVERY MINUTE  
at camp  
280 kids  
make healthy  
food choices**

based on 237,500  
campers daily



# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

## NASA

ACA formed an alliance with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 2013. Through this alliance, ACA and NASA will broaden the science, engineering, technology, and math (STEM) related educational resources that are available to the camp community and enhance STEM-related professional development opportunities for camp professionals.

## Send a Child to Camp

ACA partners – Late July, Rocky Mountain Sunscreen, and Chaco, Inc. – have supported ACA’s Send a Child to Camp scholarship fund by donating a portion of their sales to send more than 400 kids to camp, giving underprivileged children the chance to have a camp experience.

## Member Savings

ACA has formed partnerships with FedEx and Trinity/HPSI to save members over \$2.4 million a year. ACA works with almost 300 businesses that supply camps and members with products and services.



# 212

**EVERY MINUTE**  
at camp  
212 kids  
learn 21st  
century  
leadership skills

based on 178,125  
campers daily



*Because of Camp...<sup>®</sup>, I have learned to build new relationships with people I might not ordinarily get the chance to talk to.*

*~ Anonymous – Homewood Parks and Rec Day Camp Program*

# STANDARDS

## More than 1,100 volunteers help make the ACA-Accreditation Program a well-oiled machine.

### Accomplishments

- Visiting 828 camps during the summer of 2013 (approximately one-third of all ACA Accredited camps, which receive an on-site visit every three years).
- Serving in key volunteer positions such as the Standards Chair at the local level to help keep things organized and moving – ACA accreditation is a true volunteer system.
- Serving on one of several Task Forces or Work Groups to look at the various components of ACA accreditation and how we can serve yet more and different types of camps in the future.

### ACA Standards in Action

**98** Ninety-eight percent of ACA camps intentionally target important youth development outcomes such as social skills (93 percent), character (92 percent), 21st-century skills (75 percent), healthy eating (73 percent), spiritual/moral outcomes (60 percent), environmental literacy (57 percent), civic engagement (44 percent), workforce development (41 percent), and academic content (33 percent).

**80** Eighty percent of ACA camps indicated their campers engaged in strenuous physical activity for more than the recommended 60 minutes per day.

**48** Forty-eight percent of ACA camps have a relationship with schools, including 22 percent of which partner directly with schools as part of their academic school-year program.

**113** ACA camps on average conserve (not to be developed or used in a program) 113 acres of land.

**41** Forty-one percent of ACA camps indicated they offer specialized programs or services for campers with special needs.

**67** ACA camps have an average returning staff rate of 63 percent and 67 percent for campers.

**44** Forty-four percent of ACA camps employ international staff who help bring greater cultural awareness to their programs.

*From ACA's Sites, Facilities and Programs Report: 2014*



### IT REPRESENTS RELEVANCE

***“Something very important happened the day Camp Izza received its accreditation from the ACA. We mattered more than just any other camp, more than just any other Muslim camp. We resisted isolation; we resisted “good enough.” We continue to strive for excellence and our accreditation is our badge... It means that we are proud of who we are and that we are committed to the larger community of camps. Camp Izza as an accredited camp is a source of pride for the Muslim community because it represents inclusion and high quality. It represents relevance.”***

*~ Dr. Omar Ezzeldine, Director, Camp Izza*

# RESEARCH

## Research helps ACA document and improve the quality of the camp experience.

### Research Efforts in the Past Year

- New ways for staff and parents to help document positive youth development outcomes (respect, problem-solving, independence, competence, teamwork, etc.) from the camp experience (*ACA Youth Outcomes Battery: Staff and Parent Measures*)
- Cutting-edge national research symposium focused on practical applications of research findings to improve the quality of the camp experience, staff training and performance, enhance programs, as well as articulate the value of the camp experience for positive youth and workforce development.
- Industry-level benchmarks established for sites, facilities, and programs, as well as trend data related to enrollment and staff recruitment.
- A national Raise the Bar initiative to collect, interpret, and disseminate innovative best practices and resources from 22 selected camps focused on 21st-century skill development and creating healthy lifestyles.



The Forum for Youth Investment recognized the ACA Youth Outcomes Battery as a leading youth outcomes measurement resource in *Soft Skills to Hard Data: Measuring Youth Program Outcomes*.



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For board member bios, contact information, and more, visit [www.ACAcamps.org/board](http://www.ACAcamps.org/board).

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Summer's Edge Day Camp  
Lorrie Syverson  
Tabor Academy  
Taum Sauk  
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Ellen Thomas  
Dr. Michael Thompson  
Denise Thomson  
Grechen and Randy Throop  
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Alaska Center Environment  
Scott Amer  
Rob Anderson  
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Maile Armstrong  
Lynn Arve  
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Danita Ballantyne  
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David Berlin  
Jon Biedermann  
Trina Blake  
Bob Braun  
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Richard Brown  
Shaun Bundy  
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Camp Nicolet, Inc.  
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Kyle Chones  
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Bonnie Dawson  
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| Denise McClure                      | Gabrielle Raill            | Dawn Speaks              | Elsie Woolam                 |
| Jean McMullan                       | Lynn Rivera                | Lisa Spittler            | YMCA Cedar Rapids Metro Area |
| Joe Merashe                         | Theresa Rivera             | Louis Steiner            | YMCA Greensboro              |
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| Peyton Murray                       | Emily Ryman                | Gina Stravic             | Dr. Anderson Young           |
| Thanhxuan Nguyen                    | S J Riding Camp            | Jill Stribling           | Phil Younts                  |



# ACORN SOCIETY

We are grateful to each member who believes in the purposes of organized camp and who wants to ensure that camp continues as a growing, educational opportunity for those who follow. The Acorn Society is a program to recognize those who include the American Camp Association and/or the American Camping Foundation in their estate planning or make outright gifts to the Endowment Fund. To qualify for the Acorn Society by way of cash contributions requires a minimum contribution of \$25,000 payable over a period of not more than five years.\*

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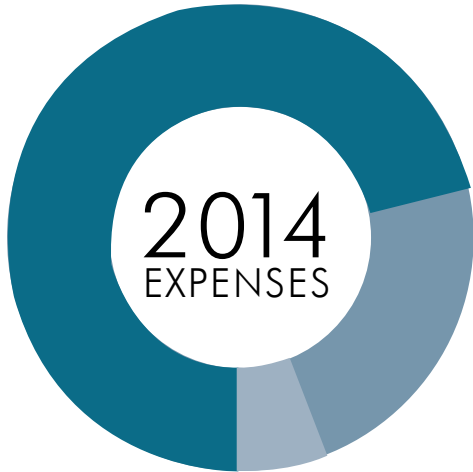
Robert Watkins

Jack Weiner

Nelson Wieters

Barbara Winslow

# \$ | FINANCIAL ANALYSIS



|                            |             |        |
|----------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Program Services           | \$5,095,273 | 83.51% |
| General and Administration | \$763,619   | 12.52% |
| Fund Raising               | \$242,652   | 3.98%  |



|  |             |        |
|--|-------------|--------|
| Dues and Fees                          | \$3,516,694 | 51.99% |
| Contributions and Grants               | \$1,076,418 | 15.91% |
| Program Services and Investment Income | \$2,171,499 | 32.10% |

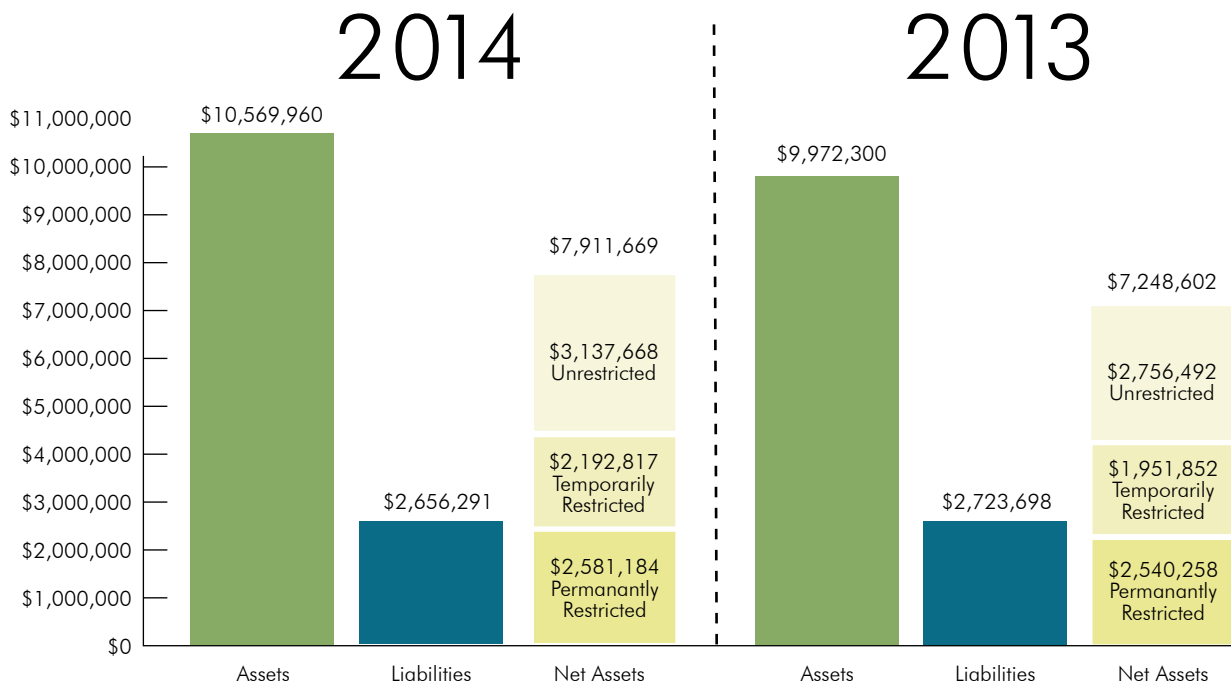


|                            |             |        |
|----------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Program Services           | \$4,804,525 | 82.67% |
| General and Administration | \$888,748   | 15.29% |
| Fund Raising               | \$118,256   | 2.03%  |



|  |             |        |
|--|-------------|--------|
| Dues and Fees                          | \$3,433,033 | 53.33% |
| Contributions and Grants               | \$1,192,578 | 18.53% |
| Program Services and Investment Income | \$1,811,864 | 28.15% |

# \$ | FINANCIAL POSITION ANALYSIS





american **CAMP** association®

5000 State Road 67 North

Martinsville, Indiana 46151-7902

phone 765.342.8456 | FAX 765.342.2065

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