

# THE KOSHLONG

# Current

Spring 2022

## Andy's Message

We cannot wait to hear the sounds of talking and laughter over Koshlong Lake again this summer. After cancelling our traditional YMCA Wanakita programs in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID pandemic, we are thankful to be able to bring children and families back to enjoy the activities and fun experiences they know and love.

Gearing up for our Summer Camp Season has not been without tremendous obstacles and we have made some challenging decisions around how we operate this summer. Earlier this Spring, we made the decision to cancel our Day Camp Program, in favour of positioning our staff team in Overnight Camp and Family Camp positions. It was a difficult decision, but necessary.

And then this May, we announced changes to session durations.

Both of these were critical decisions based on the on-going staff shortage that camps are experiencing industry-wide. Making these changes will allow us to ensure the health and safety of the campers in our care and program quality. They have always been our top priority and we will not compromise on these priorities.

Campers will also see some improvements around camp this summer. While we have been limited in our program offerings over the past two years, our camp team has still been working tremendously hard.

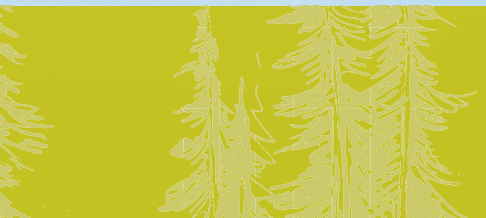
We are looking forward to sharing the memory and spirit of former camper Grace Lloyd, with the unveiling of Gracie's Grove, and introducing the first group of campers to this beautiful area in her memory.

We cannot thank you enough, our YMCA Wanakita family, for the on-going support, understanding and passion for camp that you've shared with us as we've navigated changes. This is going to be a summer too remember. See you soon on the shores of Koshlong Lake!

Yours in camping,



Andy Gruppe, Senior Regional Manager  
Camping and Outdoor Education



# Gracie's Grove

Lynn Korbak remembers picking up her daughter, Grace Lloyd after her first time at Camp Wanakita. Grace, who was just seven years old, had loved overnight camp.

"She didn't stop talking about how much fun it was. Then she just fell fast asleep. That happened every summer. We have photos of her from every year, in the back of the truck completely exhausted after having so much fun," Lynn says. "Camp was such a big part of her life. She would talk about it all year."

On February 3, 2020, Grace died unexpectedly after a short illness. She was 14 years old.

After that first summer, Grace returned to Camp Wanakita every year. In 2020, she would have been a first-year student counsellor. When she died, Grace's family asked for people to honour her memory with donations to Camp Wanakita. "We were overwhelmed with the support and we saw how many lives she had touched," Lynn says. "We are so grateful to everyone who has supported us."

Lynn, her husband, Chris Lloyd and Grace's big brother, Chip worked with Camp Director Andy Gruppe to decide a fitting place to direct the donations.

"One thing that I kept thinking of was a gathering place, where kids can be together and have fun being with friends," Lynn says. "The idea of a campfire area kept coming back to us." Gracie's Grove, which was completed in Summer 2021, will be a meeting place for student counsellors with seating for 100, a covered stage and a campfire circle.

**"Grace was 14. She was on the cusp of this. So this is where her story ends, but begins for others. They are going to carry on for her."**

Lynn visited the spot last summer. "I lit a campfire and I sat there taking in the space," Lynn says. "I could feel Grace there. I knew this would be something she would love."

And when Grace loved something, she showed it. "She was very expressive," Lynn says. "You knew when she was having fun or when her wheels were turning about an idea she had."

"She was bright and compassionate and really mature. But part of that maturity was knowing when to have fun," Lynn says. "The priority wasn't just getting things done. The priority was making sure that you enjoy every moment along the way. She wanted to have fun with people. She wanted to experience so much and she had plans to do it. She didn't wait for somebody else to make the plans."

Grace was always coming up with ideas for activities the family could do together, trips she wanted to take or fun things to do with friends, like when her camp friends from all ends of the GTA gathered at her house for a sleepover in January 2020.



Gracie's Grove *continued*

"She created this fun and positive environment," Lynn says. "Her friends still text me sometimes and a common theme is that 'Grace always had a smile on her face. She was nice to everyone and wanted them to be happy too. Whenever I'm down, I think of her.'"

This is why providing a spot like Gracie's Grove for student counsellors is important to Lynn and her family. "Grace was 14. She was on the cusp of this. So this is where her story ends, but begins for others. They are going to carry on for her," Lynn says.

"We wanted something lasting. We hope that people will say, 'This is called Gracie's Grove because of this wonderful human being and we should all aspire to hold her best qualities in each of us.'"

"The way to keep her alive is with our memories and sharing our stories. When I think of Grace, I can't help but smile, straighten up and throw my shoulders back. The strength that her memory brings is really wonderful."

**If you're reading this, you're an alumni. Former campers and staff are an integral part of Wanakita's future. Register as an alumni to receive decade-specific updates from camp.**

**[YMCAWanakitaAlumni.ca](http://YMCAWanakitaAlumni.ca)**

# Wanakita Weekend

## A family's first experience at Wanakita during the pandemic

by Abigail Cukier

Fifteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea of having a vacation anywhere other than your own home seemed downright magnificent. So my family was delighted when we had the opportunity to spend two nights at YMCA Wanakita during Family Lodge last summer.

While we were just happy to be going anywhere, we couldn't have asked for a better destination.

Our weekend was a taste of what 513 families enjoyed in July and August at Wanakita Family Lodge, which offered one-week experiences for families to enjoy activities including sailing, kayaking, canoeing, swimming, archery, low ropes and arts and crafts. The special offering for 2021 delivered a fun, relaxing family escape with activities modified to support enhanced health and safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When we arrived, my 12-year-old son, Evan, 11-year-old daughter, Hannah, my husband, Howard and I immediately hit the basketball courts and then played many rounds of tetherball. Then we rested on the dock looking out at beautiful Koshlong Lake.

The next morning, after an evening of board games and star gazing, we challenged ourselves on the low ropes course. I was amazed at how easy it was for Evan and Hannah to balance and climb across most of them. When Hannah had trouble on the swinging log, she kept getting back on until she made it across with ease. On one of the cable walks, I made it about halfway across but had to jump down. I vowed to try again.



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Dave Peer

## Handyman's Corner - Dave Peer

You may follow @wanakita\_facility\_dave on Instagram. If you don't, you're missing out on a look at what happens at camp behind the scenes, the hard work of its maintenance staff and some pretty cool finds around the grounds.

Dave Peer, facility services manager, is the man behind the IG account. Here's a chance to meet him.

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT YMCA WANAKITA?** I started in mid-April 2005. I worked in food services (East Kitchen) that summer. Before that, I was a cook in the Haliburton Hospital (Health Services) and a line cook at the Pinestone Resort. I had also worked for the Lakefield Maintenance Crew and Northern Construction Crew for Parks Canada and helped my father growing up with his business as a handyman in construction/carpentry repairs.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?** Wanakita has over 140 buildings...142 to be exact on 100+ acres that we have to maintain. Some responsibilities include:

- Painting buildings
- Repairing roofs, windows, doors, floors, decks and stairs
- Installing and removing docks from the lake
- Landscaping and winter road sanding and snow removal
- Cleaning buildings and washroom facilities
- Trail grooming and maintenance
- Training and managing maintenance staff
- Wood cutting for campfires and danger tree removal
- Inspecting and maintaining 9 septic systems
- Daily water testing
- Maintaining equipment of three water treatment plants and all distribution systems
- Sorting recyclables from garbage (from 750 plus people and two kitchens in the summer)

**WHY DID YOU START YOUR INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT?** My Instagram account started April 10, 2020 with the help of co-workers as an easier way to communicate with leadership staff. It was a way to show what was going on at Wanakita.

**WHAT HAS BEEN A FAVOURITE THING THAT YOU SHARED ON INSTAGRAM?** I share what I think others may like to see or what's going on at Wanakita. I like to show our accomplishments and the number of jobs we do or the strange things we find. But, my wife Linda said I like to show off how much I do at work.

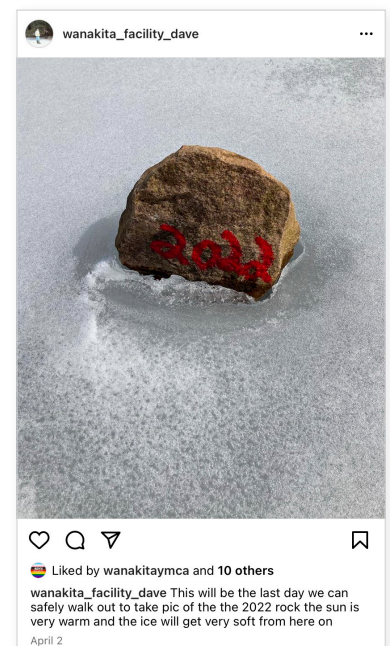
My rock challenge has been a favourite on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. I place a rock on the ice and the person who chooses closest to the date that the rock falls to the lake bottom, gets a Wanakita clock, which I make.

I take photos of jobs before and after to show how it was done or remember how to put something back together. Some of the jobs that our volunteers have helped out with have been well documented, like when we rebuilt Outlook Inn, an original building that was on site before it was even Wanakita.

"To see the kids back at camp is the biggest, as it's the kids who we do all of this for."

**WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO ABOUT CAMP BEING BACK IN SUMMER 2022?** I hope to start using more of our natural forest resources for building materials instead of letting it go to waste or having to buy wood from the lumber yard.

But most of all it's having the kids back at camp, as I have noticed how quiet and lonely Wanakita can be when you are the only one on site. It's such a strange thing to experience. Even in the off-season, it's usually such a busy place.



## Dr. Tony Kerigan - In Memoriam



Photo Above: Dr. Kerigan and Carol perform at the Family Camp Talent Show

In Summer 2007, when YMCA Wanakita was short on volunteer doctors, Dr. Tony Kerigan of Dundas, Ontario, answered the call. Recruited by his son Pete, a Summer Camp Director at the time, Dr. Kerigan and wife Carol made volunteering in the Health Centre part of their annual summer plans for the next 13 years.

“Tony was an instrumental support to the Wanakita Health Centre,” says Andy Gruppe, Senior Regional Manager, Overnight Camp and Outdoor Education. “He was a true believer in the positive, confidence-building experience that camp provides for children and families.

Tony was always spotted sporting his classic Wanakita Toque to keep his head warm, always taking an opportunity to promote the place he was so connected with.”

Dr. Kerigan is remembered as a kind, compassionate doctor and volunteer who believed in the important developmental role that camp plays in the life of young people. “His time at Wanakita meant the world to him,” says son Pete. “His passion for life learning and values-based experiences were always met during his time at camp. He saw youthful leaders being developed and he wanted to support how ever he could.”

As a camp doctor and family camper, he enjoyed every aspect of camp life – from the ringing of the morning bell and polar bear dip to the daily challenges. He loved nature, hiking, being in the water, the beauty of camp and being surrounded by the campers and counsellors.

Dr. Kerigan passed away in January 2022 after a short battle with cancer. He will be dearly missed by his wife Carol of 52 years, five children and eleven grandchildren.

“Tony was a humble, caring man that truly embodied the values of Wanakita and the YMCA”, says Andy. “To say the least, Tony will be dearly missed.”

### Celebration of Life for Dr. Tony Kerigan

Saturday, July 16, 2022 • 1:00 – 3:30pm  
St. Augustine’s Parish Hall, Dundas, Ontario

The family kindly asks to RSVP by email to [Pete.Kerigan@gmail.com](mailto:Pete.Kerigan@gmail.com).

We can't  
wait to welcome  
families back to  
Family Camp  
this summer!

Wanakita Weekend  
*continued*

After lunch, Evan and Hannah tried stand up paddle boarding for the first time, quickly mastering the balance and technique needed. Howard and I even got to try something new. Though we have canoed many times, we had never kayaked. Now, we had our chance and we loved it. Even though we were only there for a few days, it reminded me of when I went to overnight camp for eight summers as a child. The experience gives you the opportunity to try new things and gain confidence as you acquire new skills.

On our last day, we got back to our paddle boards and kayaks. Then we returned to the ropes course. I attempted the cable walk again. When I started to falter as I neared the end, Evan, Hannah and Howard gathered around, cheering me on. This time, I made it!

Though we have had a ton of extra family time over the course of the pandemic, it was extra special to be together with no distractions, trying new things in the outdoors.



Calling all alumni and campers of all decades.  
Renew old friendships and create new memories as we  
CELEBRATE 70 YEARS OF YMCA WANAKITA

# save the date

## April 29, 2023

CARMEN'S BANQUET CENTRE  
1520 Stone Church Rd E, Hamilton, ON

Don't miss any upcoming event details.  
Add your name to our email list.

[YMCAWanakita70.ca](http://YMCAWanakita70.ca)

WANAKITA  
THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE - SINCE 1953  
YMCA



YMCA Wanakita, a branch of YMCA of Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford, is a year-round camp for children and youth, families, school groups and anyone else wanting to breathe fresh air and explore their limits. The YMCA endeavours to make YMCA programs and services a safe space for LGBTQ youth, gender expression and identity.

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