structured, fun, safe & nurturing summer day & overnight camps for youth ages 5+ experiencing emotional, behavioral, social and learning difficulties.
2016 Updates

There’s lots of great stuff happening at Starfish! Below are some logistical updates that our returning families will want to read.

CampMinder: We’ve made a big move to an integrated online camp enrollment/management platform called CampMinder. You’ll see these changes on our website with log-in areas that allow you to create and update your account at your convenience—even while your camper is at camp! Most noticeably, you’ll have immediate access to financial and health records for your camper, be able to make payments at your convenience, and complete the entire application process online! To apply for camp in 2016, returning camper families should click on the Camp Application on our website, create a log-in account and select “returning camper” on the application when asked. It’s that easy!

Calendar: We carefully watch the school calendars when planning our summer dates, and like camps and summer programs across the country, we are making minor date adjustments that hopefully will take into account snow days and return-to-school (for both campers and staff!) in August. If your camper is attending the same session as last year, the dates may have shifted a few days - please double check! Session lengths have not changed.

Pioneers/Navigators: Our core program for all overnight campers ages 7-13 is now officially just Navigators. The Pioneers were our youngest 10-12 campers, who had their schedule created for them. After feedback from campers and staff, we’ve switched things up so all campers in every age group are able to personalize their own activity choices at camp.

Swim Lessons: As an outdoor camp, we’ve always insisted that our younger campers participate in daily swim lessons, while teens age 14+ have been able to opt out with parent/guardian permission. Starting this year, regardless of age, we will require all campers and first-time teen participants to take daily lessons until a minimum skill level is reached which ensures water safety awareness and basic stroke ability. After that time, if they wish to continue lessons we will encourage them to do so, but not require it. As always, if as a parent/guardian you want your camper/teen scheduled into lessons regardless of level, we will certainly honor that request. Because this is a change to the structure they are used to, returning teens who wish to continue opting out but have not yet reached the basic skill qualification should talk with a director about their schedule; it is our intention to honor their requests as well.

Respite Week: After an amazingly successful pilot in 2015, we are excited to again offer an extended Weekenders Respite week in August! A discount of $125 is available for any camper registering who also attends a 2016 summer camp session.

Beachcombers is Back!: After a short hiatus in 2015 to allow for site-work in the Grove where our adventure program teens live, Beachcombers is back!! This program, which runs during Session 1, is a 14-day outdoor experience that isn’t to be missed! If your camper is 14 or older and might like to try something a little different, check out this great program on page 7!

Camp Tuition: Our camp fees have not changed in the past 5 years. For 2016, we did need make a small adjustment to account for additional costs we are encountering (propane, food delivery, utilities, etc.). Traditionally, camp tuitions increase with the cost of living, somewhere around 3% annually. But Starfish isn’t traditional in any way—and we have made every effort to keep this increase minimal—for our first change in half a decade, we’ve increased overnight camp tuition about $7 per day (a 14-day session goes from $3850 to $3950). We are committed in this transition year to providing additional financial aid to cover this difference should it cause a hardship for any returning camper.
Re-enrolling for 2016

We encourage everyone to check out the dates (page 4) and figure out which session length, or combination of sessions, works best for you. Please note: Starfish is a small place, and spaces in each age group and program are always limited. Due to our intimate size and individualized programming, it is not possible to accept teen campers into a younger camper space or offer a Navigator camper a space which is reserved for a teen l.e.a.d.e.r. Every year, we have ended up placing returning campers on waitlists because session space fills up so quickly after the “returners only” registration period ends. We expect camp to fill just as quickly this year, and in fact, we have a number of inquiries already awaiting January 1, when new camper enrollment will open. We strongly encourage you to submit returning camper applications as soon as possible to ensure space in your preferred session and program is available.

If You’re Waiting to Re-enroll Because You Receive Agency Funding to Cover Camp Tuition Costs:

We know that agency contribution for camp fees is a major reason that many of you wait to complete returning applications. Agency fiscal years do not match with camp planning and many of the agencies we work with can’t tell families about funding until the Spring, and when it suddenly becomes available, it is too late to get a spot in camp. Each year, we hear from families who are disappointed to learn that agency funding became available “too late.” We don’t mind holding a camp space and waiting with you for agency news. Let us help!

Our suggestion: if you are planning to request agency funding for 2016 like you received last year, submit your camp application and $50 deposit to reserve a space for your camper, and begin the process of applying to the agency for consideration. Then, if the funding for camp never becomes a possibility, and Starfish aid and other sources are not enough to allow for camp attendance, we will refund your deposit. If the funding does become available and your child comes to camp, your deposit will be applied towards the camp costs (or returned to you if the agency payment covers the entire cost of camp). This leaves you in the position of planning for camp and later giving the spot to someone on the waitlist if it comes to that, rather than trying to get a spot from the waitlist when the agency gets approval for funding in the Spring.

As always, the team at Starfish will do everything we possibly can to help make sure your camper can attend, including working with your agency representative, providing whatever financial aid we can, and helping you work out payment options. If making the deposit pending agency funding confirmation causes a financial hardship, please ask us about a deposit waiver or a short-term payment plan. It’s important to us to take care of our returning campers and families!

Who is in the Office during Off-Season?

When you call our Stow, MA office in the off-season, you’ll usually be talking to our ED, Emily, our Camp Director, Doug, our Relationship Manager (and enrollment specialist extraordinaire!) Deana, or our Assistant Director, Jamie. From time-to-time, you may also hear from a member of our summer staff team, many of whom help with things like returning-camper check-ins and reminder calls. If you need anything at all, please give us a call! We’re happy to help and enjoy connecting with you!
Programs Offered for 2016

- **Day Camp** ages 5-13
- **Navigators** overnight, ages 7-13
- **Older Camper Program** overnight, ages 14-16
- **L.e.a.d.e.r.s.** overnight, ages 14-16
- **Beachcombers:** overnight travel/camping, ages 14-16
- **S.T.A.R. Corps** prior l.e.a.d.e.r.s., ages 16+
- **Crew** ages 17+
- **DCA** ages 16+

*Back in 2016!* Following the success of 2015’s experience, we are again are offering an extended Weekenders Respite Week in August. This 5-day, 4-night program includes field trips, self-selected activities on camp, and lots of fun and games. Need coverage for that busy August week before school starts? Sign up early—it fills FAST! Campers attending August Respite Week and at least 1 session of camp receive a $125 discount.

**How do I know which program to pick?**

Starfish has differentiated many of our program offerings to make sure camp continues to be supportive, challenging and rewarding for campers of all ages and interest levels. And, although it seems like there are finite differences between each program option, Starfish is very much an individually-focused program. As you look through the programs, think about the kind of experience you think your child is ready for. Just because a camper is 14 does not necessarily mean he or she is ready for the amount of choice included in older camper programs. And some teens who are ready for older camper programs may be interested in leadership and opportunities to mentor younger campers, while others might not be. No worries! We’ve got everyone covered, and we can adjust individually as necessary. If you’re not sure what to pick based on where your camper’s interest or readiness is, we’re happy to help you sort through the different options. *See pages 5-8 for program details.*

**Resident Camp Dates, Rates & Program Availability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Navigators boys &amp; girls, ages 7-13</th>
<th>Older Camper Program &amp; L.e.a.d.e.r.s. teens, ages 14-16</th>
<th>Additional Programs</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>WKNDR</td>
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**Day Camp Dates, Rates & Program Availability**

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Day Camp

*ages 5-13*

Day Camp is based on our traditional overnight camp program, and offered to those campers who live or stay locally during the summer, as well as those who are not yet ready for the overnight camp experience. Day Campers participate in a pre-scheduled rotation of activities which allows them to experience all that camp has to offer. All day campers participate in swim lessons each day. The day camp is our only program with a 1:2 ratio. Grouping for the Day Camp is generally based on social and chronological age, emotional and behavioral factors, camper/staff matching and many other factors. A maximum of seven campers are grouped together with four staff members.

Navigators—Overnight Camp

*ages 7-13*

This is our traditional camp program for younger campers. Campers generally spend the initial years of their Starfish experience participating in this program. We call our campers “Navigators” because, with the help of staff, they choose their activities in several-day bundles, allowing them to discover their interests and “navigate” the world around them. First-time and younger campers are strongly encouraged to choose from a wide variety of options; as they progress through the program, most begin spending more time in areas of interest to them and undertaking multi-day or even multi-bundle projects in those areas. All Navigators are scheduled for a daily instructional swim lesson until they reach a basic stroke and water safety proficiency level, at which time they may opt out of lessons or choose to continue expanding their skills. All Navigators also participate in a daily Elective where they choose a unique 45-minute activity that isn’t offered as part of the typical program.

This program offers our highest level of structure and is 1:1 at all times. With rare exceptions, most Navigators are paired with a staff buddy for the twice-daily Free-Plays. Bunking for this age group is generally based on social and chronological age, emotional and behavioral factors, camper/staff matching and many other factors. Pioneers and Navigators may be bunked together.

**Day & Overnight Camp Activities include:**

- Swim lessons & Free Swim
- Canoeing
- Kayaking
- Beach time
- Gardening
- Arts-n-crafts
- Learning Center
- Game Playce
- Creative Writing
- Fishing
- Music
- Campfires & S’mores
- Group Games
- Special events
- GaGa Ball
- Sports & Rec
- Field games
- Dance
- Nature & Hiking
- Drawing & Painting
- Drama & Improv
- Small Animal Care
- Raft Building
- Woodworking
- Tumbling/Yoga
- Martial Arts
- Basketball
- Book Nook
- Evening Programs
- and so much more!

*Depending on session dates, program length, weather, individual choice and other factors, campers will participate in a selection of these activities but cannot be guaranteed to experience all of them during every camp session. This list is an example, and is subject to change.*
**Older Camper Program (“OCP”)**

**14-16 year-old teenagers**

The OCP is our Overnight camp program with additional choice built in, and a slightly more “relaxed” feel to the structure as appropriate for older campers. The ratio of staff to campers is still 1:1. Teens choose their activities from the Navigator options daily or can opt to participate in 3-day bundles.

OCP teens choose activities daily, with the added incentive of being guaranteed their first choices so long as they maintain a certain OCP Level. All teens are scheduled for a daily instructional swim lesson until they reach a basic stroke and water safety proficiency level, at which time they may opt out of lessons or choose to continue expanding their skills. OCP teens also participate in the daily Elective where they choose a unique 45-minute activity that isn’t offered as part of the typical program. OCP teens may have a staff buddy for the twice-daily Free-Plays or may be an Explorer during this hour—traveling around camp without a 1:1 staff member, though still in sight and hearing of staff at all times. Being an Explorer is a privilege and must be earned.

OCP teens are automatically scheduled to participate daily in the OCP Chat, a discussion- and project-based activity that focuses on issues facing teens such as safe choices, how to figure out if someone is being a good friend, peer pressure, boy/girl drama, social appropriateness and similar topics. *Participation in the daily Chat and an ability to follow the basic Starfish expectations for safety are required for campers to maintain Level status and therefore earn the privileges that come along with OCP* such as 100% choice in activities and having their music players with them at camp. If participation in Chat is not of interest, teens should be signed up for the Navigator program even if they are technically old enough to be in OCP.

OCP teens usually bunk together with l.e.a.d.e.r.s. teens, and sometimes with older Navigators, depending on session enrollment, emotional and behavioral needs, camper/staff matching and similar factors.

**l.e.a.d.e.r.s.**

**14-16 year-old teenagers**

This program is similar to OCP (see daily activities, swim lesson, Electives & Free-Play details above), with a slightly different focus. Campers who are in the l.e.a.d.e.r.s. program are building their self- and peer- leadership skills, and are beginning to receive guided opportunities to build work skills on camp. Their daily Leaders’ Forum is similar to the OCP Chat but also adds more detail towards setting personal goals for leadership in their own lives, their school, their home and their community. A credit system provides opportunities for regular self-reflection, feedback on goal achievement and clarity around their readiness to take on additional responsibilities around camp.

This is a good program for teens who want to spend a period each day as a “big brother” or “big sister” to a younger camper and who may be interested in participating in S.T.A.R. Corps or CREW down the road. L.e.a.d.e.r.s. participate in off-site community service. Additionally, *they are expected to be able to not only follow the basic guidelines for safety at Starfish, but also to help other campers and teens enhance their own ability to do so through positive role-modeling.*

l.e.a.d.e.r.s. usually bunk together with OCP teens, and sometimes with older Navigators, depending on session enrollment, emotional and behavioral needs, camper/staff matching and similar factors.
Beachcombers
outdoor living & adventure for 14-16 year olds

Beachcombers is different than other Starfish programs. When on-site, campers live in platform tents with cots and sleeping bags, cook 2 of 3 daily meals outdoors (the other is eaten in the dining hall), and follow a completely separate schedule to the rest of camp. The living accommodations are rustic and simple platform tents, with a washhouse nearby that has with toilets, showers, running hot/cold water and privacy. The Beachcombers experience is about being willing to try new things; teambuilding; working together on camp chores like wood collecting, food prep, fire building, shelter maintenance, and such; growing their skills in canoeing, hiking, camping and other outdoor pursuits; and experiencing off-site camping, hiking and rafting trips. Beachcombers swim and mingle with the main camp programs at least once daily when on site. They experience plenty of adventures, including hiking Mts. Monadnock, Sunapee and Watatic; rafting the Zoar Gap, mini-golfing, camping on the beach, and more.

Important things to know when selecting Beachcombers:
 Teens do not need to be outdoor-savvy to participate in Beachcombers, but they do need to active and willing participants in the program. Teens should be fully aware that they are being enrolled in this program, and what it entails. Your teen should have the ability and willingness to hike a one-mile uphill trail with plenty of breaks, carrying a backpack similar to but a little larger than one they would use for school. They must be willing to try camp food that is different to what is prepared in the dining hall and be offered alternatives that are simple but filling. They will get a little “dirtier” because of their outdoor-based experience and will be more routinely faced with new challenges. The schedule is tightly structured, though different daily and susceptible to changes due to weather, therefore less predictable than the overnight camp structure. Unlike in younger camper programs where they are scored and discussed daily, Beachcombers’ individual goals are supported and managed in the greater context of group living and safely navigating the outdoor life.

Because the Beachcombers program goes off-camp and requires campers to be able to safely travel, hike, camp, and participate in camp chores off-site, a level-system called the Waterways is strictly enforced. All campers start in a neutral level upon arrival (“Ponds”) that enables them to participate fully in the experience, and they may also quickly earn additional privileges by demonstrating teamwork and making safe choices, moving up into the “Lakes” or “Oceans.” There are two lower levels —“Rivers” and “Streams” — where campers may be placed based on unsafe choices or inappropriate participation. Campers are given clear guidance from staff surrounding the expectations for each level. Campers must be at Waterway 2 (Rivers) or above to participate in off-camp excursions and at the neutral Waterway 3 (Ponds) or above to participate in overnight off-camp excursions. If campers are not able to maintain the basic safety and participation expectations, and their level reflects this at the time of final planning for trip departure, camp staff will notify parents/guardians and discuss options, one of which may be to remain on camp and participate as a Navigator or Older Camper (if living space is available on main camp). Both the camper and his/her parent/guardian must sign a Waterways Agreement before the start of the session.
S.T.A.R. Corps  *ages 16+*
(“Summer Training & Responsibilities”)

This program for teens ages 16+ is a work-based opportunity to grow skills in the areas of leadership and child care, as well as develop essential transitional and job skills. Successful S.T.A.R. Corps Apprentices are teens who are ready to live in a cabin of younger campers and be a 24/7 role-model while engaging in various projects on camp and giving back to the Starfish community. Apprentices are Starfish campers who are growing up, and the expectations placed on them are individually adjusted. While there is still significant staff support, including an individual mentor for daily check-ins and a daily Corps Forum which offers ongoing training, S.T.A.R. Corps Apprentices must be ready for a more demanding camp experience than they have previously experienced. Apprentices must be able to understand their unique role (no longer a camper and also not staff) and maturely make decisions and use good judgment, accordingly. A system of credits encourages self-reflection, allows for guided mentoring, and regulates promotion through the program. Apprentices receive time off each evening before bed, on camp, and have a curfew set a certain time after camper lights-out, at which time they must check in with the Village Administrator on Duty. Most Apprentices complete two or more years of S.T.A.R. Corps. Tuition for the Level I Apprentices lower than the camper fee; once Apprentice level II is reached, there is no cost for participation and teens are able to earn a small, performance-based stipend. In addition to the camp application filled out by a parent/guardian, Apprentices must complete their own S.T.A.R. Corps-specific application.

Crew  *ages 17+
DCA (Day Camp Assistants)  *ages 16+

Young adults who have completed the S.T.A.R. Corps program (or a similar experience not at Camp Starfish) and are ready to help at camp in the capacity similar to a “junior staff member” may apply to be part of Crew or DCA. Counselor and non-counselor positions (such as maintenance and kitchen work) are available. Crew members, known as “Interns” on camp, participate for the entire summer and may earn a stipend based on a credit system similar to that of S.T.A.R Corps. A daily meeting of Interns and their staff mentors provides ongoing training throughout their time at camp. A full application and interview is required for these programs.

Interns live on camp in a camper cabin and follow the overnight camp schedule. They are scheduled for days off during each session. DCAs typically live locally off-site and participate mainly with our Day Camp groups. They work Monday to Friday during daytime hours. DCAs sleep over at camp 4 times during the summer to assist with the camp-outs which happen on alternate Thursday evenings.

For additional, detailed information & guidance about camper readiness for these programs, we recommend reading the “Starfish Guide to Teen Programs,” online, and/or contacting one of our Directors.
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