SUMMER@STARFISH

SEASONAL JOBS  INTERNSHIPS  FELLOWSHIPS

ONE SUMMER. A LIFETIME OF EXPERIENCE.
A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTORS

Every year, we have the honor and privilege of leading a team of over 100 inspiring and aspiring professionals; that is, young adults who commit to an intensive, amazing, engaging, educational, eye-opening and incredible summer (or more) at Camp Starfish.

It would be easy for us to “sell” the experience of being on our staff team as one which opens up new vistas of experience to those looking for a future career serving our youth. It would be no problem for us to proudly share that Starfish staff go on to post-grad experiences like CityYear, the Peace Corps, and Teach for America, or into careers at top schools and human service agencies in the US and several other countries. And it would be simple for us to say that the connections staff make while on our team lead to professional and personal relationships that last decades, or longer.

But, we would never ask you to take our word for it. Instead, we invite you to hear it directly from those who have learned all this and more through their time as Starfish staff. Whether you are searching for the summer opportunity of a lifetime for yourself, thinking about recommending a student or advisee to apply, or encouraging your college-age son or daughter to do something meaningful with their summer months, we feel confident that Starfish will top your list of considerations.

Starfish offers a summer of leadership development, professional skills growth, mentored learning, internship credit earning, certifications, resume building, making a difference, and, last but not least, career-enhancing, future-building awesomeness (okay, we had to get a little camp in there!). One recent member of our summer staff team said, “What this organization provides in terms of services to children with challenges, and mentoring and training for staff, is leaps and bounds above anything that I have seen elsewhere. Camp Starfish is a true leader in the industry in many ways.”

We invite you to learn more about us, and reach out to us if we can provide any further information about joining our team. The application process is competitive and we encourage anyone interested in pursuing this life-changing opportunity to do so soon! We look forward to sharing this journey with you.

Best regards,

Emily Golinsky
Executive Director

Jamie Mahnken
Camp Director

Laura Petersen
Director of Staff Experience

WHAT’S INSIDE

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EXPERTS FROM BUSINESS, ACADEMIC & PARENTING SECTORS AGREE: WORKING AT CAMP BUILDS SKILLS CRITICAL TO YOUR FUTURE.

IN A N.Y. TIMES PARENTING BLOG POST TITLED THE CAMP COUNSELOR VS. THE INTERN, DAN FLESHLER SHARED THE STORY OF HIS DAUGHTER’S “IMPASSIONED DEFENSE OF CAMP COUNSELORS,” WHICH SHE WON WITH ONE LINE:

“WHAT I DO THERE MATTERS.”

FLESHLER SAYS, “THE CLINCHING ARGUMENT CAME FROM MY DAUGHTER’S...OUTRAGE THAT SOMEONE GLANCING AT RÉSUMÉS WOULD BELIEVE THAT A 20-YEAR-OLD WHO FETCHES COFFEE AT GOOGLE IS MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN ONE WHO SPENDS DAYS AND NIGHTS NURTURING, TEACHING, ORGANIZING, COMFORTING AND INSPIRING. I HAD NO ANSWER, BECAUSE I COULDN’T COME UP WITH ANYTHING MORE IMPORTANT. NOR COULD I DISPUTE HER ADDITIONAL POINT THAT THE WORK WAS INCOMPARABLE PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE, REQUIRING THE SKILLS TO MANAGE GROUP PROJECTS AND MOTIVATE INDIVIDUALS, SET GOALS AND JUGGLE TIGHT SCHEDULES, AND STAY AVAILABLE FOR 24 HOURS A DAY, SIX DAYS A WEEK, IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH.”
“MY SON WORKED AT STARFISH FOR THREE YEARS. IT WAS A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE FOR HIM. THE FOUNDATION AND EXPERIENCE HE GAINED WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN HIS DEVELOPMENT AS A YOUNG MAN. HE WAS SO IMPACTED BY HIS EXPERIENCE THAT HE HAS SINCE GONE TO COLLEGE TO STUDY IN THE FIELD OF SPECIAL EDUCATION.”

- MOM OF A STAFF MEMBER
“My daughter became a counselor at Camp Starfish two summers ago. She is studying to be a special education teacher and this camp was just the job she was looking for. In all honesty, I have to say that this camp came as a total surprise to both of us. It is truly a "one of a kind" camp. When they promised a ratio of one on one, counselor to camper, I honestly didn’t think it was possible. There are amazing measures put into place to assure that this does work. Now, my daughter is returning for her 3rd summer. The life lessons she learned are immeasurable, not to mention the friendships she’s made and the relationships she’s forged with the kids at camp. She has endless stories, both happy and sad, but she has grown up so much since she’s taken this job. These people are sooooo compassionate about what they do. It’s not just a job to them, it’s a true calling. They are obviously not in it for the money, they are in it for love of the kids and what they do and that makes all the difference in the world.”

- Mom of a Staff Member
Starfish Summer staff are interns and students who represent more than 100 professional fields of study.
ABBY
MSW, LICSW

UNDERGRAD: SOCIOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY
UNIV. OF VERMONT

GRADUATE: CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

STARFISH SUMMERS: 3
COUNSELOR, LEAD COUNSELOR, VILLAGE DIRECTOR

CRISIS CLINICIAN & CLINICAL PROGRAM MANAGER

Together on staff, 2008

BETH
MA, LPC, NCC

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & EDUCATION COORDINATOR

UNDERGRAD: PSYCHOLOGY, ENGLISH
CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

GRADUATE: CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

STARFISH SUMMERS: 4+
COUNSELOR, LEAD COUNSELOR, VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR, DIRECTOR OF VILLAGE LIFE, STAFF TRAINING CONSULTANT (CURRENT)

KAYLEN
MSW, LCSW

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NON-RESIDENTIAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM

UNDERGRAD STUDY: PSYCHOLOGY, ENGLISH
CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDY: CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

STARFISH SUMMERS: 3
COUNSELOR, LEAD COUNSELOR, PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR
JEFF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

CURRENT WORK:
PSYCHOLOGY INTERN
McLEAN HOSPITAL

CLINICAL FELLOW
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL

UNDERGRAD:
PSYCHOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY
GRINNELL COLLEGE

GRADUATE:
MASTERS, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF MA, AMHERST

ADAORA PRESCHOOL & KIDS CLUB ENRICHMENT INSTRUCTOR

UNDERGRAD:
PSYCHOLOGY, FRENCH
AMHERST COLLEGE

GRADUATE:
MASTERS, CHILD DEVELOPMENT
SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE

WORK EXPERIENCE:
TEACHING ASSOCIATE
CITIZEN SCHOOLS

TEACHER’S ASSISTANT
AMHERST COLLEGE

CHRISTINE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR
PEACE CORPS, NICARAGUA

UNDERGRAD:
COGNITIVE SCIENCE, PSYCHOLOGY & LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

“I HAD THE BEST EXPERIENCE EVEN THOUGH IT WAS ONE OF THE HARDEST [THINGS I'VE DONE]. I LOVED BEING WITH THESE KIDS THEY CHANGED MY LIFE, TAUGHT ME LESSONS THAT SCHOOL COULD NEVER TEACH ME. HANDS DOWN THE BEST SUMMER OF MY LIFE.”
ON STAFF: 3 YEARS
Waterfront Counselor, Camper Services/Administrator

CHRI$ HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER & HEAD WRESTLING COACH

UNDERGRAD:
ENGLISH LANGUAGE/LITERATURE
AUGSBURG COLLEGE, GEORGETOWN UNIV.

GRADUATE:
MASTERS, JOURNALISM
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

HINT: (THEY'RE OUT CHANGING THE WORLD!)

ON STAFF: 3 YEARS
Waterfront Counselor, Camper Services/Administrator

JULIE OUTREACH BCBA, BEHAVIOR CONSULTANT

UNDERGRAD:
PSYCHOLOGY
BOSTON COLLEGE

GRADUATE:
MASTERS, BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS
SIMMONS COLLEGE

ON STAFF: 1 YEAR
Waterfront Counselor

NICK ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF RECREATION TOWN OF DANVERS, MA

UNDERGRAD:
SPORTS MANAGEMENT
ENDICOTT COLLEGE

WORK EXPERIENCE:
ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT
PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY

CHECK OUT MORE ALUMNI STORIES, PLUS VIDEOS & LETTERS TO PROSPECTIVE STAFF:
WWW.CAMPSTARFISH.ORG
ANYONE CAN TYPE UP A RÉSUMÉ & GOOGLE “MOST ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.” BUT SOFT SKILLS SET YOU APART FROM EVERYONE.

“SOFT SKILLS” (/ˈsof skilz/): CHARACTER TRAITS & INTERPERSONAL SKILLS THAT CHARACTERIZE A PERSON’S RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PEOPLE. IN THE WORKPLACE, SOFT SKILLS ARE CONSIDERED A COMPLEMENT TO HARD SKILLS, WHICH REFER TO A PERSON'S KNOWLEDGE & OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS.

THE 10 MOST POPULAR SOFT SKILLS EMPLOYERS SAY THEY ARE LOOKING FOR WHEN THEY HIRE:

- 73% WORK ETHIC
- 73% DEPENDABILITY
- 66% SELF-MOTIVATION
- 72% POSITIVE ATTITUDE
- 60% TEAM-ORIENTED
- 56% GOOD COMMUNICATION
- 57% MULTI-TASKING
- 51% FLEXIBILITY
- 46% CONFIDENCE

“SAYING THAT YOU'RE A TEAM PLAYER IS NOT ENOUGH; YOU HAVE TO SHOW IT. PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU WORKED ON A TEAM TO ACCOMPLISH A PARTICULAR GOAL. PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE OF A HIGH-PRESSURE SITUATION THAT YOU HANDLED.”

- ROSEMARY HAEFNER
  VICE PRESIDENT OF HR
  CAREERBUILDER.COM
“I started working at Camp Starfish during the summer break following my sophomore year in college. I was immediately transformed by what I learned there and the experiences I had. Following 5 summers of service, Camp Starfish nearly single-handedly defined my career path and what it is I do. I went on to become a behavior analyst, working specifically with children with emotional, behavioral, and learning needs addressing problematic behaviors and helping to teach and develop functional alternatives. I employ the strategies and tools that Starfish gave me every single day. I have been so touched by the work that Camp Starfish does, and am forever grateful for having been a part of this amazing organization.”

“While I started the summer off nervous and scared, I don’t think I had ever been as strong as I was by the end of the summer. Besides this camp being a great place for personal growth, it also really does make a difference in the lives of the kids that the camp serves. It is one of the most rewarding experiences in the world to feel as though you have made a difference in someone’s life that has also made a huge difference in yours.”

“Personally, it was a huge influence on my career. I’m a mental health therapist now, but I got my start in psychology at Starfish and I think it really instilled the value of treating people as people and being positive-first.”

“From top to bottom Starfish is all about the kids and making a big difference to their lives. The level of consistency in the Starfish approach and the philosophy of the camp is ingrained into the training and into the staff. The level of engagement of the children is unlike anywhere else. The Starfish way works. The children want to keep going back and so do the staff. Since working at Starfish I have carried everything I learnt with me into other jobs. Nowhere else I have worked has come close to matching what Starfish does.”

“Camp Starfish helps foster the growth of each and every person that steps onto camp. This summer gave me the confidence to throw all my love out there in whatever job I have, work hard, and love what I do.”
DON'T LET ANYONE TELL YOU THAT THERE'S ONLY ONE PATH TO SUCCESS. (BUT THE STARFISH PATH LEADS YOU WHERE YOU WANT TO GO.)

THEORETICAL LEARNING

(LEARNING THROUGH THE PAST EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS...
...SUCH AS BY READING ABOUT IT OR BEING IN CLASS)

MENTORED PRACTICE

PUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE & TRAINING TO WORK WHILE KNOWING THERE'S SUPPORT RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE.

SPACE FOR MISTAKES

NOBODY GETS EVERYTHING RIGHT THE FIRST TIME. FEEDBACK, GUIDANCE AND ANOTHER TRY HELP SOLIDIFY SKILLS.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE LEVEL: STRATOSPHERE

RACK UP 10X MORE ACTUAL, HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE THAN OTHER SUMMER JOBS.

READY TO CONQUER YOUR FUTURE

(HEY, IT MIGHT BE CHEESY BUT IT'S ALSO TRUE!)

DESIRE TO DO MORE

A STARFISH SUMMER CAN HELP YOU TURN WORDS ON A PAGE INTO ACTUAL JOB SKILLS.

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

STARFISH STAFF RECEIVE 140+ HOURS OF ORIENTATION, JOB READINESS TRAINING, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & PROFESSION-FOCUSED LEARNING

SKILLS GROWTH

RACK UP TONS OF HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE IN SKILLS RELEVANT TO YOUR CAREER GOALS. #WINNER

You need a base of theory, but more than that, you need to put it to good use!
“I feel so privileged that I have received the opportunity to spend two summers working with such an inspiring group of young people. While at camp, a lot of the staff told me that they were in this line of work because they wanted to make a difference in people’s lives. I would just like to say to Camp Starfish and the inspiring campers I worked with: thank you for making such a difference in my life.”
DESIRE TO DO MORE

A STARFISH SUMMER CAN HELP YOU TURN WORDS ON A PAGE INTO ACTUAL JOB SKILLS.

Whatever you’ve chosen to do in the future, it’s likely that your excitement for it was sparked by an experience you’ve had, an injustice that you wish to see changed, or a topic that is personal to you. Maybe you know that you’re good with kids and want to do more with that. Perhaps you’re passionate in your belief that all children—regardless of ability—deserve to succeed. Or possibly you’re thinking about teaching — but you’ve never actually stood up in front of a group of children and taught, well...anything!

Starfish is a place where you can test those assumptions, try out your strengths, and most importantly, take what you’re learning in the classroom and put it to work in the real world. Make no mistake about it—you’ll be doing an important job and the care and safety of the campers is paramount at camp. But you’ll wake up every morning ready to take “Psychology 101” and turn it into “Helping Ben Have A Safe Day 101” or even “Katrina’s Successful Attempt at Speaking in Front of the Group 101.” Then, when you’re back to the books, you’ll have unlimited experiences to look back on—tangible moments of learning and teaching that will stick with you forever and inform your future successes. #signmeup

“I ATTRIBUTE MY STRONG LEADERSHIP SKILLS TO THE EXCELLENT, COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING THAT CAMP EMPLOYEES COMPLETE EACH YEAR BEFORE CAMPERS ARRIVE, AND TO THE TIME SPENT WITH CAMPERS AND COWORKERS THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER.”

“WITH STARFISH, I WAS ABLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN KIDS’ LIVES! I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR A CAMP IN WOODED NEW HAMPSHIRE TO CHANGE MY LIFE, BUT NOT A DAY GOES BY THAT I DON’T THINK ABOUT THE AMAZING CHILDREN AND THE INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE I GAINED THERE. IT’S TRULY AN AMAZING PLACE.”
I started my social work career at Camp Starfish. I spent 3 summers there and it played a significant role in my career path. I am now an MSW and mental health therapist, specializing in children and families. In my work as a therapist, I often remember back to much of what I learned at Starfish and apply it to my practice.

“I've personally used the “Starfish tools” in all kinds of settings since Camp, from therapy groups to mindfulness & meditation classes in prisons. The way that Starfish teaches people to interact with each other really wouldn't be a bad starting block for a society.”

“I was searching for something I had no idea where or how to achieve. On a gut feeling and some hope, I found myself applying to Camp Starfish to work there as part of the staff team. I still to this day do not know what I was exactly looking for, but I know I found myself there.”

“I had the opportunity to work with a variety of people from all over the world. Over the course of a summer, I saw the passion that the people around me shared for the children. We were helping the children have a wonderful experience at Camp Starfish and growing as people ourselves.”

“Camp life is a special thing and even more special at this place. Every day children are believed in and empowered through encouragement and positive reinforcement. The curriculum and teachings that I learned there are things that I still apply to everyday life.”

“Starfish is by far the most influential place I have ever worked. They gave me skills, memories, internship credit, advancement opportunities, lifelong friends, and so much more. I would give the world to go back for a third summer and interact with the amazing kids and staff. My favorite part about this place is that we believe in kids, camp is a safe place, and a place where everyone believes in everyone’s best intentions.”
PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

STARFISH STAFF RECEIVE 140+ HOURS OF ORIENTATION, JOB READINESS TRAINING, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & PROFESSION-FOCUSED LEARNING, CULMINATING IN CERTIFICATION AS A LEVEL I CARE SPECIALIST.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS
☆ Policy & Procedure
☆ Essential Elements of Character
☆ Working Assumptions of a Team
☆ Interacting with Parents/Guardians
☆ Professionalism, Appropriateness & Integrity
☆ Emergency Procedures
☆ Crisis Response
☆ Risk Management: Maximizing Safety
☆ Responsibilities of Childcare Workers
☆ Child Abuse Prevention & Disclosure Training
☆ Site Safety & Maintenance, 360° Reviews
☆ Unusual Incident Reporting

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE
☆ Foundations & Tools
☆ Stages of Child Development
☆ Diagnoses
☆ Sources of Behavior
☆ Primary & Secondary Needs
☆ Emotional Regulation
☆ Foundations of Social Development & Skills
☆ Scaffolding Interactions & Teachable Moments
☆ Social & Emotional Success Systems
☆ Resolving Issues of “Fairness”
☆ Implementation of a Level System
☆ Free Play and Developing Imagination

CARING FOR SELF/OTHERS
☆ Taking Care of You (Self-Care)
☆ First Aid Basics
☆ Awkward Questions Kids Ask
☆ Support Systems for Staff & Children
☆ Healthy Kids, Hygiene & Daily Living Skills
☆ Adults Role in the Teen Journey
☆ Boundaries & Expectations
☆ Homesickness/Separation Anxiety Management
☆ Identifying Strengths & Strength-Based Interactions
☆ Developing Responsibility & Independence in Children

PROGRAM INSTRUCTION, DELIVERY & EVALUATION
☆ Program Objectives & Outcomes
☆ Developing Structure
☆ Proactive Teaching
☆ Goal Setting, Tracking & Achievement
☆ Recognition Systems
☆ Lesson Planning, Curriculum & Implementation
☆ Guiding Adjusted Participation by Population
☆ Scheduling, Theme Planning & Special Events

GROUP DYNAMICS & COMMUNICATION
☆ Teambuilding
☆ Communication Skills: Basics
☆ Leading Group Discussions
☆ Group Facilitation & Debriefing
☆ Mediation
☆ Empathy & Conflict Resolution
☆ Bullying Prevention & Advocacy
☆ Addressing Uncomfortable Situations
☆ Stages of Group Formation & Member Roles
☆ Managing a Group during Individual Behaviors
☆ Active Listening & Reflection

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT
☆ Decoding Behaviors
☆ Sensory Integration Strategies
☆ Behavior Basket System
☆ Collaborative Problem Solving
☆ 55 Strategies to Set Children Up for Success
☆ Behavior Management Plan (BMP) Basics
☆ BMP: De-escalation & Debriefing
☆ BMP: Resolutions & Fixes
☆ Behavior Roleplays Levels I, II & III
☆ Understanding Inflexible/Explosive Behaviors
☆ Behavior Management: Sticky Situations
☆ Trauma-Informed Responses to Behavior
☆ “Lines in the Sand” & Strategy Roleplays
Mentored Practice

Put your knowledge & training to work
While knowing there’s support right by your side

“Camp Starfish is truly where I am my best self. It fosters an environment that pushes you to grow, learn and have fun. They not only support campers, but they support their staff in ways that I did not know were imaginable. The directors teach you not only how to help campers but how to help yourself.”

“It is an accepting and loving environment like none I have ever experienced elsewhere. All feel welcome and understood. Campers and counselors develop strong, healthy and supportive bonds that achieve positive results in just weeks. After camp, I moved on to teach special education and work in a residential facility; neither place did the job as well as Camp Starfish.”

We’re serious about mentoring & support

Many of our campers don’t “need” a 1:1 staff-to-camper ratio 24 hours a day, but by providing it, we assure that they are able to find greater success, build skills faster, create stronger relationships, and have more fun. Similarly, our staff don’t “need” a supervisor every minute of the day. But, by having plenty of them to go around, we ensure that our staff feel supported so they can do their best work, more quickly build their repertoire of skills and, of course, have a great experience at camp. That’s why we prioritize staff supports, including:

★ 1 Supervisor for every 6-8 staff
★ Every staff included in a mentoring “Torchgroup” from Day 1
★ Routine & scheduled direct feedback
★ Unlimited opportunities for in-the-moment feedback & problem-solving
★ Goal setting, support & evaluation
★ Professional Reviews (“PRs”) each summer
★ Individual coaching
★ Nightly Co-worker Meeting & Supervisor check-in
★ Biweekly small group chats with a Camp Director—topics chosen by staff
★ Staff encouraged to attempt behavioral interventions first
★ Supervisors available and in sight/hearing distance at all times
★ Supervisors trained to support staff efforts
★ Consistency & One-voice policy: staff decisions with children are supported

“Not only do the campers leave feeling proud of themselves for all of their accomplished goals, but counselors leave feeling fulfilled. The directors are extraordinary leaders and supporters of their colleagues.”
SPACE FOR MISTAKES

Nobody gets everything right the first time. Feedback, guidance and another try help solidify skills.

“These children teach you patience, love, and how to care for those who don’t operate the same way you do... when the kids were difficult to handle, the staff were always there... I had a couple of rough days but on those days my co-counselors were there to pick me up... words cannot explain the love, hope and joy of the camp Starfish experience.”

Not Perfection, Just Perseverance and Predictability

Our campers are very aware of their extra needs, and you can be sure that they are not looking for perfection from you. What’s more important is that you are solidly, predictably present. That you listen and accept what you hear. That you are willing to be silly, friendly, understanding, empathetic, serious when needed, and a source of strength. Our campers make mistakes and work hard to pick themselves up with the support of the community we build around them. It’s an incredibly rewarding and teachable moment for campers to realize that their heroes and role models can do the same thing. Our staff start practicing behavior management and other interactions on day one of training with small-group role-plays. And as behavior happens for real during the summer, debriefing and follow-up helps you identify the best practices and become a behavior rock-star.

“The staff are what make the camp such a special place for the campers. They are showered with positive attention and fun activities. The children especially feel the love when they make mistakes and need to talk it out and make amends.”
"Two summers ago I was the Camp Music Teacher. As a student studying Human Development at Colorado State University, I was thrilled to find Camp Starfish. They provided me with the opportunity to get a lot of hands-on experience with children that are differently abled. I have found that it is hard to get any real experience with this population without already being certified, or having past experience on your resume. Camp Starfish has a two week long training program that helped me feel capable and adequately prepped for when the children arrived. It was a wonderful environment for both campers and counselors. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to work at Camp Starfish."

"I gave swim lessons, lifeguarded, and participated in the other every day camp rituals. This summer I found who I want to be, who I can be, and all the potential I can give to the kids I hope to one day serve. I wouldn't have gained this knowledge anywhere else but Starfish."
I ARRIVED AT CAMP SHORT ON CONFIDENCE AND NOT REALLY KNOWING WHAT I WANTED FROM LIFE. HOWEVER, BY THE END OF MY SECOND SUMMER I KNEW I WANTED A CAREER JUST LIKE WHAT I HAD AT CAMP. SOMEWHERE I COULD HAVE FUN EVERY DAY, WORKING WITH SUCH AMAZING YOUNG PEOPLE. COMING HOME FROM CAMP STARFISH, I APPLIED TO WORK AT A COMMUNITY BASED RESIDENTIAL SETTING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM. WITHIN A YEAR, DUE TO THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE GAINED AT CAMP, I WAS PROMOTED TO A MANAGERIAL ROLE. I AM CURRENTLY TRAINING TO BECOME A LEARNING DISABILITY NURSE, USING THE STARFISH ETHOS AND VALUES EVERY DAY ENSURING THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF CARE. BEFORE ATTENDING CAMP, I WOULD NEVER OF ENVISAGED A ROLE LIKE MY CURRENT ONE.
“I started working at Camp Starfish during the summer break following my sophomore year in college. I was immediately transformed by what I learned there and the experiences I had. Following 5 summers of service, Camp Starfish nearly single-handedly defined my career path and what it is I do. I went on to become a behavior analyst, working specifically with children with emotional, behavioral, and learning needs addressing problematic behaviors and helping to teach and develop functional alternatives. I employ the strategies and tools that Starfish gave me every single day. I have been so touched by the work that Camp Starfish does, and am forever grateful for having been a part of this amazing organization.”

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THE STARFISH WAY

WE'RE THE ONLY CAMP THAT DOES WHAT WE DO, THE WAY WE DO. WE CALL IT "THE STARFISH WAY" AND WE'RE PROUD TO SAY THAT STAFF TAKE WHAT THEY LEARN HERE AND CHANGE CHILDREN'S LIVES WITH IT EVERYWHERE THEY GO.

THE STARFISH WAY CONSISTS OF TOOLS, KEYS, STRATEGIES & STRUCTURE, ALL OF WHICH COMBINE TO SET CHILDREN UP FOR SUCCESS. IT SOUNDS SIMPLISTIC, BUT THE MAGIC IS IN HOW A COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE COME TOGETHER AND COMPLETELY CHANGE THE WAY WE INTERACT WITH KIDS WHO ARE STRUGGLING.

TOOLS
A set of coping skills, community guidelines, and personal intentions which help campers put behaviors and feelings into context. Also, our camp values.

KEYS
A set of social skills which guide campers' interactions and help them navigate their relationships with others, setting them up for social success.

STRATEGIES
A guiding group of principles which form the basis of our consistent approach, behavior management philosophy and positive, people-first interactions.

STRUCTURE
A systematic approach to ensuring that everything at Starfish is specifically geared to meet the needs and abilities of each bunk, activity group, and individual child.
THE STARFISH WAY IS BASED ON OUR BELIEF THAT:

CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO DO WELL WHEN THE ENVIRONMENT IS DESIGNED TO ENABLE SUCCESS,

REGARDLESS OF THEIR CHALLENGES, ALL CHILDREN DESERVE TO SEE THEMSELVES AS VALUABLE AND VALUED INDIVIDUALS,

THE ROLE OF ADULTS IN THE CAMP ENVIRONMENT IS TO HELP CAMPERS FIND AND ENJOY SUCCESS,

PROVIDING FUN, STRUCTURED AND NURTURING PROGRAMS WILL ALLOW CHILDREN TO GROW IN POSITIVE WAYS,

ENGAGING CAMPERS IN A VARIETY OF TRADITIONAL SUMMER CAMP ACTIVITIES IN A SAFE AND PREDICTABLE ENVIRONMENT WILL ALLOW THEM TO BUILD SKILLS, SELF-CONFIDENCE, SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-DIRECTION.
JOINING THE STARFISH STAFF TEAM

1. CHOOSE YOUR PATH

There is nothing that requires you to get school credit to join our team. Our final summer team will consist of both those seeking credit and those simply seeking the experience. We do not prioritize one path to joining the team over another.

We DO ask that all applicants for any role be serious about making a full-summer commitment. Camper success is largely contingent on our ability to provide a 1:1 ratio and individualized programming throughout the entirety of the summer. For that reason, we hire only staff who can work the full season.

SUMMER STAFF

This is the way to go if you’re interested in joining our team for a summer. A little over two months to change your life and theirs! If you enjoy camp and you want to come back in future years, that’s certainly encouraged, but this initial commitment you’ll be making is for early June through mid August. Specific dates are available on our website, www.campstarfish.org and vary a little bit depending on if you would like to come early for extra certifications or stay late to work with groups after camp.

...WITH INTERNSHIP CREDIT?

If you are planning to use your time at camp to gain internship credit, we strongly recommend that you speak with your advisor, etc. to determine the necessary steps to apply for credit at your particular institution. We will work with you and the school to make sure the right forms are filled out, but as every school is different we rely on you to guide the process. We also recommend you apply as early as possible to give both you and us enough time to get everything organized. If you join our team as an intern, you will automatically be placed in our Interns Seminar that meets online twice before camp, and once weekly in person at camp, designed to ensure you complete your requirements in style.

15-MONTH FELLOWSHIP

We offer a limited number of spaces on our team to individuals interested in making an extended commitment to Starfish from the get-go. The Fellowship program consists of a first summer on the team, during which we will work with you to develop a funded project that you will take on over the course of the following year, coordinated from wherever you attend school or work. Fellows local to the Starfish year-round office in Massachusetts are welcome to pursue projects which assist with our local enrollment, recruitment and fundraising work. Fellows are invited to join us for a Fellows Conference in the spring where professionals representing agencies and job opportunities will be available to meet and talk with you about your future interests. Then, when you return for your second summer, you will take on a leadership role at camp. In addition, you will be a Mentor for first-year Fellows. You will implement your project at camp, help lead staff training, guide new Fellows through their summer, and assist in leading our Intern Seminar. The commitment you are making if you apply to this program is for one summer, including two online meetings prior to camp, then an “independent study” style project (with support from our year-round directors), followed by a second summer of camp. Fellows are considered first for advancement opportunities that arise on the summer team and where possible, are invited to represent Starfish for campus recruiting events across the country. Additional credit for fieldwork and independent study may be available depending on your school’s requirements.
2. CONSIDER A ROLE

All first year staff receive the training, hands-on, mentoring, and experience that can result in their Level 1 Care Specialist Certification. All staff live and work with children, helping ensure their time at camp is beneficial and growth-oriented. During the day, campers participate in activities and staff are spread out in several roles across camp which facilitate this.

During your application and interview process, you will be asked what role(s) you are interested in, and have the opportunity to share your skills and relevant experience with our directors. More information about the many options is available online at www.campstarfish.org. Roles generally fall into 1 of 2 “tracks,” Camp Life or Program.

CAMP LIFE TRACK

Group Specialists
Responsible for supporting a camper group throughout the day, including encouraging participation, helping achieve goals, and monitoring individualized behavior plans. Includes Residential, Day Camp, Crescent, Beachcomber, Teens and TIDES staff teams.

Camper Services Staff
Support campers’ experience by contacting parents about successes, coordinating goal progress and rewards, and more.

PROGRAM TRACK

Program Instructors
Responsible for curriculum and teaching of a specific activity area, including:

- Athletics
- Activate!
- Music
- Dance
- Drama
- Discovery
- Challenge
- Xplore!
- Martial Arts
- Arts-n-Crafts
- Learning Center
- Small Animals

Waterfront Staff
Lifeguards, WSIs, boating and swim lesson instructors; supervise safe fun in the water.

3. REVIEW THE BENEFITS

★ EXPERIENCE & RESUME-BUILDING SKILLS
★ EXTENSIVE TRAINING & MENTORING
★ CERTIFICATION AS A LEVEL 1 CARE SPECIALIST
★ SALARY WITH EXPERIENCE-BASED INCREASES
★ CREDIT FOR SCHOOL, IF DESIRED
★ ROOM (HOUSING) & BOARD (ALL MEALS) INCLUDED
★ WEEKLY LAUNDRY SERVICE
★ PAID TIME OFF DAILY & WEEKLY
★ TRANSPORTATION TO/FROM CAMP FROM BOSTON
★ WORK WITH PASSIONATE, DIVERSE TEAMMATES
★ MAKE A DIFFERENCE! CHANGE LIVES!

4. APPLY

Our application process is competitive, and spaces on each year’s team are limited. We recommend applying as early as you can. Applications are cumulatively reviewed on a rolling basis, with positions being filled as successful applicants are identified and hired.

We offer interested applicants the unique opportunity to connect with current and former staff prior to applying. Details are available online.

TO APPLY VISIT www.campstarfish.org/staff

The application is completed & submitted online. We look forward to hearing from you!

Questions before you apply? Email us!
iwanttowork@campstarfish.org
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STARFISH AND A "TYPICAL" CAMP?

The biggest difference is that instead of providing camp for the sake of camp, we utilize camp as a milieu environment to help special-needs youth grapple with, manage and build skills to overcome their significant challenges.

Camp “looks” like camp. We canoe, eat in a dining hall, swim in a lake, hike, and sleep in bunks. However, behind the camp magic is a very intentional scaffold which ensures consistent learning and growth. When we come together at the campfire, it’s as much about teaching social skills (taking turns sharing roasting sticks, for example) and creating a community where children feel connected and safe, as it is about making a s'more and having fun singing songs (which we also do, of course!). When our campers are at athletics, there are as many adults as there are kids on the field. The activity starts with the entire group revisiting the expectations and ends with a circle-up where campers and staff discuss how the “Tool of the Day” was used and what Keys they saw others using successfully during the game. During the activity, campers may need to take space or have direct staff support to deal appropriately with feelings of frustration—whereas at a “typical” camp, kids would probably just keep on playing the game when their kick didn’t result in a goal.

Starfish is also significantly more structured than a “typical” camp. Staff have more responsibility and are held to a higher standard of camper care. Staff are asked to complete daily logs that track camper’s progress, meet daily with campers to score and discuss goals, and write up incident reports as needed. Those aren’t responsibilities general counselors have in most programs, which is one of the reasons that a Starfish summer prepares you so well for your future endeavors. While you will get to tie-dye a t-shirt at Starfish, you might not learn twenty different ways to do it. You’ll make friendship bracelets—and teach kids how to as well—but you will also actively practice mediation, conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, advanced behavior management techniques, communication strategies, and so much more. So really, the biggest difference at the end of the day is that it’s not “just” a camp counselor job. It’s a very solid investment in your future.
WILL I WORK WITH PEOPLE I LIKE?

Well, hopefully! As in any work environment, there will be people on the team you become good friends with, those you stay connected to and who become part of your growing professional network, and those you simply work alongside. If you’re the sort of person who is open and willing to meet new people, is respectful of those from different cultures, walks of life, and backgrounds, and is a team player, then yes, you will get to work with people you like. Our staff come from across the United States and all over the world. They are dedicated, hard working individuals who want to be part of an intentional camp community, so if that sounds like you then you’ll likely have a lot in common!

WHAT MAKES A GREAT STAFF MEMBER?

There are so many things that go into making a “great” staff member! Experience working with children and enthusiasm for the job are certainly factors. Additionally, Starfish seeks out staff who honor their commitments and have integrity, solid judgement and a positive, can-do attitude. Flexibility is key as well—camp is a busy place and from time to time things don’t go perfectly. Being able to go with the flow yourself in those moments—and keeping things on even keel for the campers—is essential. We’re also looking for staff who understand that camp has policies and procedures in place to keep everyone safe, and who are willing to follow them. These include things like not drinking during the length of your summer commitment with us if you are underage, or keeping your cellphone stored in the staff-only area when you are on-duty with kids. Our best staff members are those who throw themselves whole-heartedly into the experience and who put the kids first.

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Get in touch with us! Because so many of our staff stay on the team and/or remain connected to Starfish, we are lucky to have plenty of folks who would be happy to talk with you before you apply. You can call our office and speak with one of the directors, or you can go online to www.campstarfish.org/staff and sign up for a time slot to speak with a staff member. Staff are happy to share their experience with you and answer questions you may have about camp. There are no strings attached—feel free to reach out!

CHECK OUT MORE FAQS, DETAILS ABOUT THE STAFF EXPERIENCE, AND INTERVIEW TIPS: WWW.CAMPSTARFISH.ORG/STAFF