



COMPLETE THE FLEET

CAMPAIGN CASE – Why we need your support

Island Transportation – the lifeline of YMCA Camp Lawrence and Camp Nokomis

At Merrimack Valley YMCA Camp Lawrence for boys and Camp Nokomis for girls, generations of campers and staff laughed, played, developed friendships, built confidence, learned new skills, and created memories. Our programs celebrate the value of each individual and challenge campers and staff to discover their potential.

Living on an island is magical. Anyone who has been a camper at one of our island camps understands this. The magic begins the first time you ride across Lake Winnepesaukee, escorted on The Bear, to a place that will change your life forever.

"During my first ride on the Bear to camp, I was nervous about leaving home. After two weeks, heading back to the mainland, I was crying because I didn't want to leave."

"I love being on the Bear with campers at the start of the session. Some are scared, some are excited. It's a great feeling watching returning campers, seeing the looks on their faces as they return to a place that they love."



"I'm the person I am today because of my experience at Camp Nokomis. At camp, I learned responsibility and matured. I wouldn't have been able to overcome tough times in my life without camp and the skills I learned."

Thousands of boys and girls made the crossing – both physically and emotionally – returning home more confident, more independent and more prepared to face life's obstacles.

Our island camps are special places.

Each day for eight weeks during the summer, the Merrimack Valley YMCA's two resident camps support over 450 children and staff: campers whose parents expect and demand that their children are safe and well cared for; staff who must have the tools that are necessary to ensure the well-being of children in their care.

To do this, takes a fleet – boats are necessary for campers to get to the island and for staff to run a functioning program. For most people, boats are a luxury. For island camps, boats are a necessity. Camp Lawrence and Camp Nokomis would not exist without boats.

The leader of our fleet, The Bear, has been carrying campers safely back and forth to camp for 58 years and has recently undergone a thorough renovation to ensure continued safe passenger operations. It has a design capacity of 100 persons. The remainder of the fleet,

the 26-foot Weekepeekee purchased in 1996 and the Glaspar, a 17-foot utility boat built in 1968, are nearing the end of their service lives.

The current fleet of boats supporting the island camps is not sufficient for sustained safe operation of the camps. The wellbeing of children in our care has always been the top priority of the Merrimack Valley YMCA. To ensure the safety and quality of our island transportation, an Island Transportation work Group composed of Y staff and knowledgeable volunteers worked diligently for the past year, assessing current and future island transportation and programmatic needs for Camp Lawrence and Camp Nokomis.

To ensure the welfare of our campers, maintain current and expected health and safety standards, ensure the longevity of the Bear, and provide modern water-sports programs, the work group has made the following recommendations:

1. Retaining the Bear as the primary 100-passenger vessel is paramount to operating the island camps. Renovations to the hull completed in 2022 and the repowering to replace the 80-year-old engine and update related systems will ensure that the Bear, with routine maintenance, will provide another 30-50 years of service.
2. Augment the Bear with a mid-sized 30 to 49 passenger boat. This will replace the Weekee and provide passenger transport during peak capacity periods.
3. Separation of logistic and passenger services is necessary for the health of our staff and campers and to maintain the health of the Bear. A primary logistics boat must be purchased to haul trash and other heavy/dirty cargo.
4. Each camp must have a small utility boat, with a capacity of 3-5 persons that will also serve as an emergency boat.
5. Two purpose-designed program boats for each camp should be purchased to leverage water sports such as waterski, chase and coaching boats. Depending on funding, additional program boats may be added to accommodate new water sports programs.

This past year, the Merrimack Valley YMCA was forced to complete the restoration of the Bear with existing funds. Due to the pandemic and immediate safety concerns, it was necessary to ensure this project was complete for the 2022 season. However, in order to keep the cost of our camp programs at an affordable level, updating and augmenting the current fleet must be financed by philanthropic support.

Our Board of Directors agreed to embark on a \$2M capital campaign to restore the island camp fleet. When the restoration of our fleet is complete the Merrimack Valley YMCAs island camps will be prepared to ensure the safety and enjoyment of its campers now and in the future. If you would like more information or would like to make a donation, please contact Joyce Grippen, Chief Development Officer at 978-651-3411 or jgrippen@mvymca.org.

***"Boats at Camp Lawrence and Camp Nokomis
take you to a totally different world."***