



# THE BIRCH BARK

P.O. Box 148, Waterford, Maine 04088

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Rich Deering '73, Alumni & Community Director • Michael Mattson '83, Camp Director

## THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

### BOB DONAHUE

Bob Donahue ('00s, S'10s, T'20s) dubbed the "Captain America of Birch Rock" by Mike Mattson, loves the 4th of July. Even when Bob's camper, counselor and head counselor days were in his rearview mirror, he'd excitedly make the long trek from the Midwest back to camp. Bob just couldn't miss the Whitchard Family's fireworks show over Lake McWain or the classic Waterford Independence Day parade. And it was the perfect week to pitch in on the Hillside each summer.

A few years ago, Bob was back for his beloved week at camp. Settling into Lion's Den, he laid eyes on something jarring and altogether unsuitable for that historical cabin. What did he spy but a newfangled internet range extender plugged into a socket, its dreadful green light glowing! This was the last thing traditionalist Bob wanted around, so he yanked the fiendish gadget right out of the wall and stuffed it in a drawer.

Meantime, Program Director Erik Joelsson was plugging into work at Semanas, just downhill from Lion's Den. He was suddenly confounded by yet another glitch in Birch Rock's notoriously temperamental internet. "What the heck??" Erik thought they had fixed the latest snafu by piggybacking the signal from Chief's Cabin to Lion's Den to Semanas with internet extenders.

It took some sleuthing, but Erik finally figured out the flub — and they both had a good laugh. Of course it was Bob, Birch Rock

traditionalist extraordinaire. Bob, who'd react to modernizing at camp with, "Do we really have to change that?!" For Bob, Birch Rock is a sacrosanct, land-beyond-time kind of magical kingdom. He wants campers to have the same enchanted experience that he had as a boy. And that means keeping technology OUT.



*Bob, Reese and Maura*

Paradoxically, Bob's career is as high tech as it gets. He's an engineer at Fermilab—as in the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, where top physicists build and operate particle accelerators, smash atoms and delve into dark matter. Bob, who holds BS and MS degrees in mechanical engineering from the prestigious University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, holds this title at work: Primary Machine Engineer for the Main Injector at Fermilab. He began his career with jobs at internal combustion engine companies. But he jumped at the big league change — to work

at one of the world's most important physics research institutes, and to master the structural and vacuum design for the main injector and recycler particle accelerators. Next time you see Bob, you'll have to ask him to explain that.

Bob works about fifteen minutes from the home in Geneva, Illinois that he shares with his wife Maura and toddler daughter Reese. Maura develops curricula for special education high schoolers, and is an enthused Birch Rocker herself. Bob grew up in Geneva and likes being close to his mom's home, especially since his dad Mike's death in 2019. Soon after their loss, Bob and his mom and sister set up the Michael J. Donahue Family Foundation to continue the philanthropic work of the pater familias. Inevitably in Bob's life, things circle back to Birch Rock Camp. For the summer of 2022, his family's foundation sponsored two fine young men from the Midwest to enroll at

Birch Rock.

COVID restrictions have kept Bob (and just about every other visitor) away from camp for a few summers now, but Bob brought Maura and Reese for a few days in September for his first in-person Board of Trustees meeting on the Hillside. A good time was had by all, especially with adorable Reese entertaining the grown-ups. As the newest member of the Facilities Committee, Bob was eager to take a good look around and offer his preservationist opinions for campus planning.

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*BOB DONAHUE...  
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Throughout the years Bob has brought so much to our camp community. We have Bob to thank for the “Country Bob’s Chicken & Biscuits” food truck tradition (some seasons re-styled as “Country Bob’s Hoedown”). But we also count on Bob to remind us what doesn’t truly belong on the Hillside. Back when he was head counselor, Bob put his foot down and banished counselor cell phones for cabin music. Instead, he found old CD players and made sure each cabin stocked CD’s (preferably ’90s Pop Punk) from Mike Mattson’s vast collection in the Lodge basement. Bob’s vision for Birch Rock — to keep it old-fashioned, pristine, timeless — will guide camp well into its second great century on the shores of Lake McWain.

*By Francie Campbell P’00s, T’00s*



*Bob and his cousin Christopher Cogswell ’00s, S’10s*



## **Follow Us!**

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 [@www.facebook.com/BirchRockCamp](https://www.facebook.com/BirchRockCamp)



## **REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK**

*By Rich Deering  
Alumni & Community Director '73*

“The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.” Legendary NBA coach Phil Jackson summed it up beautifully, right? When you have outstanding players (CAMPERS) and tremendous coaches (COUNSELORS) pulling together, you’ve got a winning team — in our case, a powerhouse camp. This sums up Birch Rock’s phenomenal 2022 season!

A record 153 campers and counselor-in-training candidates flocked to the Hillside from as far away as the Middle East and as close as across McWain Pond. Over seventy percent of our campers returned last summer. Over sixty new boys joined for their first season in 2022, with the median age of ten.

Our indefatigable staff dazzled the lads with a full array of traditional daily activities, unique camping trips and exciting all-campus events. Pickleball and Gaga Dodgeball hit the Hillside, becoming instant favorites for all age groups. Our capstone 20-day Maine Wilderness Adventure celebrated its twentieth season with a rip-roaring program. Almighty Mother Nature graced us with warm sunny days in the high 70s, and cool, crisp nights in the lows 50s. What a blessing to have the perfect summer weather for our 96th season!

Thanks to your trust and support, Birch Rock continues to be a haven where boys can enjoy an old-fashioned boyhood in the Maine woods, nearly a century on. Our back-to-basics program provides a safe and thrilling environment for boys to unplug, tackle new challenges, make new friends, and learn both self-sufficiency and mutual support.

In the upcoming months, you’ll be seeing a vibrant new website, lots of Birch Rock stories on our social media platforms, and invitations to off-season events. As we look forward to Summer of 2023, we’ll continue to partner with families to keep Birch Rock values going strong in these young gentlemen. Our community stays connected year round to keep the campfires burning in our memories and hearts.

As ever, in the spirit of *Help the Other Fellow*,



## FOUR TRUE-BLUE GENTS CELEBRATE A DECADE AT THE ROCK

Community Director Rich Deering bestowed the coveted maroon BRC DECADE VESTS on **Theo Tringale, Jared Whichard, Josh Rubin** and **Jonah Keates**.

**Theo Tringale** of Medford, MA has stepped into his superpowers of leadership, creativity and musicality. As master of ceremonies and camp performances, Theo propels the entire camp community to perform at Saturday Campfires, collaborate with neighbors at BIRCHSTOCK performances on the Hillside, and create

art for the Birch Rock Annual Art Show. Theo not only shares his vocal and dramatic talents (not to mention waterfront skills), he motivates us to sing along, perform and create freely. Theo is a freshman at Tufts University in Medford, MA.

**Jared Whichard** might be our most devoted, hard-working Waterford neighbor, but he is also the die-hard Birch Rocker who cracks everybody up with his inspired silliness and hijinks. Plus, Jared coaches our two-time champion sailing team for the annual Waterford sailing regatta. A graduate of Champlain College in Vermont with a degree in cyber security, Jared's come up through the ranks of camper, CIT and counselor. He now serves as our "Special Ops" staffer – driving campers to wilderness trips, tackling our IT troubles, keeping boaters safe on Lake McWain, and much, much more. Jared soars up and down McWain Hill year-round with his incomparable talent for tackling emergencies, forging community, helping neighbors and inspiring campers to love the great Maine outdoors.

**Jonah Keates** has been fired up about all things Birch Rock from the moment he arrived a decade ago. Now an official Freeport, Maine resident, Jonah shares his zeal for *The Way Life Should Be* with his campers and fellow staff members. Driven by a passion for helping others, Jonah inspires campers to embrace wilderness adventure and get enthused about



everything Lake McWain has to offer. Jonah is a masterful juggler of purpose and performance. He triumphs on any assignment and has swept up most of the camp activity badges. Jonah currently attends Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

Look out for **Josh Rubin**, one of the first CITs to receive a decade vest in BRC history. Josh is a class act. Steadfast and kind, he has earned universal praise from his mentors, peers and campers for his deep commitment to passing on Birch Rock values and traditions. Josh really shines when working with young campers who are timid, homesick and not feeling an immediate connection. A keen listener, Josh has an amazing ability to help boys surmount their fears and open their hearts to the new adventures of residential camp. He is a senior at Berwick Academy in South Berwick, Maine.





## A NEW MASTERCLASS OF CAMP COUNSELOR TALENT

Under the tutelage and leadership of Senior Counselor Peter Brewster and Lifeguard Instructor Trainer Erik Joelsson six outstanding gentlemen completed our Counselor-In-Training program, American Red Cross Lifeguard and Water

Safety Training. Congratulations to **Josh Rubin, Aidan Singer, Quinn Castelli, Issac Fenster, Braedon Pincher, John Flannery and Henry Skigen.**



## JUNIOR MAINE GUIDE PROGRAM IN 2022

Bob “Dancing Owl” Dow headed up the JMG program last summer, helping **Jamie Cluggish, Finn Oldenburg** and **Lev Tolkoff** prepare for their big week at the Junior Maine Guide Testing Camp in Stephens Phillips Memorial Preserve on Mooselookmeguntic Lake in Oquossoc, ME. JMG candidates undergo tests on a variety of outdoor skills including axemanship, canoeing, topographic maps, first aid, cooking, tree identification, preparing for wilderness trips and environmental concerns.

After the testing camp, comments from JMG staff members about the BRC candidates included, “They consistently prepared well balanced meals and took great care and pride in keeping their campsite organized and clean” and “Overall, the boys flourished at JMG and continued to improve their outdoor skills. With each challenge they demonstrated their eagerness and

enthusiasm despite some of the difficulties.”

Dancing Owl reported that he was impressed with the campers’ level of commitment, hard work and perseverance as they prepared for and tackled the 21 tests at JMG camp. The Birch Rockers strengthened their can-do spirits as they honed their wilderness skills.





## 10 COMPETITORS TRIUMPH IN FIRST SESSION BRC ANNUAL TRIATHLON

Hip hip hooray! And BRC cheers to the talented and tenacious ten Birch Rockers who participated this season in our annual BRC Triathlon. Beginning at the main swim dock with a half-mile DUCK swim across the pond, the competitors roared through a five-mile bike leg to Hidden Meadow Farm, and dug deep for the final road race up steep

McWain Hill Road to our driveway. The whole camp turned out to cheer the athletes across the finish line. Congratulations to Coaches Gus Tringale and Eric Traub and the following campers: **Micah Steingart, Niko Theriault, Lev Tolhoff, Liam Bamberger, Jackson Haskell, Gus Litowitz, Finn Oldenberg, Ben Kehoe, Fritz Johnson and Ben Angell.**



## MAINE WILDERNESS ADVENTURE 2022

Summer 2022 marked the 20th season of Birch Rock's Maine Wilderness Adventure. Under the dynamic dual leadership of Erik Joelsson and Sam Rotman, seven young gentlemen — **Luis Galvez, Fritz Johnson, Rainer Deise, Tiernan Jones, James Bison, Niko Theriault and Jackson Haskell** — explored the mountains, rivers, and seashores of the Pine Tree State. One of the many highlights included this season was lobster trapping in Bar Harbor.



Each year a group of full-summer 15-year-old boys emerges from the BRC community to join MWA. The program, which runs during the second session of camp, challenges boys to backpack

through some of the most difficult miles of the Appalachian Trail, canoe class III rapids on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, rock climb in Acadia National Park, raft down class V rapids in the Penobscot River, and explore the Downeast coast of Maine on a sailboat. This trip compels boys to leave their comfort zones, test their limits and work together as a team. During these strenuous weeks, participants live out of their backpacks, carry and cook all their food, and sleep in tents, lean tos and hammocks each night. MWA is the most challenging adventure offered by Birch Rock, and it is a rite of passage for many of our future leaders.

## BIRCH ROCK CAMP TRUSTEES

Ryck Birch, '70s, S'80s, P'10s, Natick, MA  
Lisa Bozzelli, P'10s, Arlington, VA  
Becca Brewster, S'90s, P'10s, Concord, NH  
Ben Brewster '00s, Hadley, MA  
Eli Brewster '10s, S'10s Boston, MA  
Seth Brewster, '60s, S'80s, P'00s, South Portland, ME  
Toby Brewster, '60s, S'80s, P'10s, Concord, NH  
Francie Campbell, P'00s, New York, NY  
Michael Castelli, P'10s, Arlington, VA  
James Chalmers, P' '20s, Bridgton, ME  
Katelyn Chalmers, P '20s, Bridgton, ME  
Robert Donahue, '00s, S'10s, Geneva, IL  
Elizabeth Elliott, P'00s, Dallas, TX  
Michael Herzig, '70s, S'80s, P'10s, New York, NY  
Peter Herzig, '70s, S'80s, New York, NY  
David Neshier, '90s, S'00s, P'10s, Kennebunkport, ME  
Jennifer Rotman, P'10s, Westborough, MA  
Richard Rotman, P'10s, Westborough, MA  
Kim Rubin, P'10s, York, ME  
Zach Rubin, P'10s, York, ME  
Beverly Stone, P' '90s, Winchester, MA

Bob Stone, '60s, P'90s, Winchester, MA  
Maria Tringale, P'10s, Medford, MA  
Paul Tringale, P'10s, Medford, MA  
Arlene Whichard, P'10s, Waterford, ME  
Bruce Whichard, P'10s, Waterford, ME  
Steve Whittier, P'10s, Cape Elizabeth, ME

## TRUSTEE EMERITI

Geoffrey Alexander, P'00s, Cape Elizabeth, ME  
Lindsay Alexander, P'00s, Cape Elizabeth, ME  
Bob Cleaves, '60s, S'70s, P'00s, South Portland, ME  
Jojo Herzig, P'10s, New York, NY  
Fred Howard, '70s, P'00s, Scarborough, ME  
Julie McLaughlin, P'10s, Princeton, NJ  
Mark McLaughlin, P'10s, Princeton, NJ  
Allison Smith, P'00s, Scarborough, ME  
Win Smith, '70s, P'00s, Scarborough, ME  
Bob Tuffy, GP'00s, Hanover, MA  
David Weeks, S'70-90s, P'00s, Ellicott City, MD  
Libby Whitter, P'10s, Cape Elizabeth, ME

## WISH LIST

*BRC greatly appreciates your contributions to camp.  
Some items we wish for are as follows:*

Framed Backpacks (\$100 each)  
8 Pickleball Paddles (\$35 each)  
100 Pickleballs for Drills (\$200)  
12 Dozen Tennis Balls (\$150)  
New/Reconditioned Laser Sailboat  
New Aquatic Life Jackets (\$25 each)  
Medical – Digital Otoscope Camera (\$1500)  
Medical – Sure Temp Electric Thermometer (\$300)  
Outdoor Basketballs & Frisbees(\$25 each)  
3 to 4 Man Tents (\$250 each)  
Used Mountain Bikes (\$500 each)  
Art Supplies (\$100)  
New 2-Way Radio (\$300 each)  
Lodge Chandelier (\$1000)

*Birch Rock Camp is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation.  
All donations received are tax-deductible.*

Please contact us at [birchrock@birchrock.org](mailto:birchrock@birchrock.org) if you might be able to accommodate any of those wishes.

**BIRCH ROCK NOW ACCEPTS VISA/MASTERCARD  
and VENMO**

*Thank you!*

## CALENDAR OF BRC - IN PERSON ENGAGEMENT 2022-23

*MORE EVENTS TBD*

### Saturday, October 29th

Outing Club Hike Moultonborough, NH

### Saturday, November 19th

Bowling Event Arlington, VA

### Sunday, November 27th

Bowling Event Portland, ME

### Saturday, January 28th

Trustees Meeting Winchester, MA

### Sunday, January 29th

Bowling Event Lynnfield, MA

### Saturday, February 4th

Bowling Event New York, NY

### Saturday, March 4th

Winter Wonderland Birch Rock Camp

### Saturday, April 1st

Alumni Gathering Brewery in Boston Area

*For more information visit our website at [birchrock.org](http://birchrock.org)*



## HENRY PLATE 1925-2022

Birch Rock notes with sorrow the death on August 30th of our fine neighbor Henry Plate at the age of 96. Rich Deering explained how grateful Birch Rock has long been to the Plates:

“Henry and Joy have been faithful friends to Birch Rock since the first time I made a neighborly visit in the mid 1990s! Henry always extended his helping hand to me and BRC. We shared stories about McWain Hill, neighborhood relationships, vendor contacts, and most of all, building community connections. In 1999, Henry graciously gave up his coveted

50-plus year board seat on the McWain Pond Association so that I could be a member of the organization. He felt it was important that “the boys of Birch Rock Camp” were officially represented. As the camp grew in size, so did our need for field activity space. Since the early 2000s, Henry and Joy have allowed our boys to use their contiguous hay fields for our archery and soccer programs. What an incredible supplement to our campus! Most of all, what a terrific enhancement for the overall Birch Rock Camp experience! Henry would gleefully shout from his porch, “Make more noise, we cannot hear you enjoying yourselves! You need to be louder and continue to have fun!” I’d banter back to him: “Watch out, Henry—Joy may pack you a trunk and ship you over the Hillside for the summer with us!”



*Henry and Joy Plate*

Henry’s parents bought the property in 1940 when he was a camper at Waganaki next door. Young Henry took to farming like a loon takes to Lake McWain. He taught himself to farm,

planting fields of corn to sell to a local cannery. As his family reports, Henry planted gardens for the rest of his life but preferred growing vegetables to eating them.

Henry’s love of agriculture led him to the University of Maine, Orono, where he earned a BS in Animal Husbandry. Next came two years in the Army during World War II, then a return

to Orono for a MS in Agronomy (the science of soil management and crop development). He got a job at Eastern States Farmers Exchange (which would become Agway) retiring as Chief Agronomist after 39 years. Henry and Joy moved to Waterford full-time in 2005, and he enjoyed swimming, driving his tractors and fixing their spectacular barn.

Henry and Joy’s grandson Austin Shelnett was a BRC camper, and their granddaughter Kelsey Plate joined our kitchen staff in 2012 and 2013. Birch Rock Camp and our extended community extend condolences to the whole Plate Family for their loss of a stupendous man from the Greatest Generation.

## DUCKS, LOONS, SEALS AND MORE WHALES - A HISTORIC BRC AQUATIC SUMMER!

The 2022 season set a new record of 102 long distance swims in all four categories: **The Duck** (across the pond, half a mile) **The Loon** (across the pond and back, 1 mile) **The Seal** (length of the pond, 2.5 miles) and finally **The Whale** (the circumference of McWain Pond, 5.75 miles). Congratulations to the 2022 Whales: **James Crovitz, Jackson Haskell, Ben Kehoe, Gus Litowitz, Finn Oldenburg** and **Lev Tolkoff**.



# BIRCH ROCK CAMP

P.O. Box 148  
Waterford, ME 04088



ACCREDITED  
CAMP

American Camping Association®

## Mark Your Calendars for 2023!



Clean & Pick Up Saturday	May 20
BRC Summer Office Opens	June 1
BRC Staff Orientation	June 14
C.I.T. Orientation	June 18
Opening - First Session / Cubs I	June 25
Cubs Camp I - End	July 8
Cubs Camp II	July 9
First Session & Cubs II - End	July 22
Opening 2nd Session	July 23
Maine Wilderness Adventure	
Cubs Camp III	
Cubs Camp III - End	August 5
BRC for Boys & MWA - End	August 12
BRC Family Camp	August 17
BRC Family Camp - End	August 21

## It's Easy to Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to BRC by phone or email.
- Host a gathering of BRC alumni/prospects with Directors Deering and Mattson.
- Send us news to include in The Birch Bark's Alumni News Column.
- Ask us about our 'Wish List' before you have your spring yard sales.
- Update your contact information via [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org).

