



THE BIRCH BARK

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

THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

THE STAYING POWER OF SETH BREWSTER '67

By Francie Campbell, P '00s, T '00s

Seth Brewster is drawn to challenge like a loon to Lake McWain. A competitive swimmer in his youth at Deerfield Academy and Dartmouth College, his favorite event was the hardcore Individual Medley (demanding mastery of the butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle). For 35 years he's been a highly respected commercial litigator and trial lawyer in Portland, Maine. For nearly a quarter of a century, this grandson of Birch Rock Founders Chief and Onie Brewster has chaired Camp's Board of Trustees. In 2026, Birch Rock's 100th season, Seth will step down as Chair and pass the baton to his friend and longtime Birch Rock treasurer Mike Herzig ('70s, S '80s, T '90s, P '00s).

Endurance is a theme that explains much about Seth, in his athletic, professional and philanthropic endeavors. And in his personal life. "Speed dating" is a thing, but how about "endurance dating?" Seth, then a longtime bachelor, met a blind date at the trailhead of Mt. Washington in September of 2021. His date was Stefanie Bachhuber, who'd traveled up from Washington, D.C. for this — repeated for emphasis — blind date. Seth and Stefanie, set up by a mutual friend, had spoken only once before on the phone. Seth was a few minutes late that morning and near the trailhead Stefanie kept asking men in hats pulled low against the chill, "Are you Seth?" Stefanie was a bit nervous

because they hadn't checked in before that 7:30 a.m. rendezvous on September 11th. Seth had explained to her on their one phone call that he'd be "off the grid" before their hike (he'd been on an annual

*Stefanie Bachhuber and Seth Brewster*

backpacking trip out West with college buddies up until September 10th).

At 7:38 Seth and Stefanie found each other and headed off to summit Mt. Washington. And summit they did. The trek took about 8 hours, perhaps an unusual amount of time for a first date. And Stefanie hadn't realized quite how formidable the climb would be. But they hiked and talked and she appreciated Seth's patience and helpfulness. During their descent, Stefanie wondered why Seth wasn't asking her out to dinner. It turned out Seth had shopped the night before and presented a lovely spread of wine, cheese, fruit and other bites for Stefanie in the parking lot. *Salty Snacks*

à la Birch Rock never fail to impress the girl!

Seth had met his match, an adventurer like himself, and he was ready for the next big commitment of his life. They were married in June of 2023.

Seth and Stefanie now divide their time between homes in Maine and Washington, D.C., where Stefanie worked in finance until her recent retirement and where her mother still lives. It's come full circle for Seth, who worked for three years in D.C. on the legislative staff of U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, right after graduating from Boston University Law School in 1987.

Following his late 1980s stint on Capitol Hill, Seth and his young family moved back to his home state of Maine. In his illustrious career as a litigator, he practiced at a few big-name Portland law firms and is now a partner at Jensen Baird. Seth and his first wife raised their two daughters, Tory and Hannah, and their son Ben ('00s, T'20s) in Cape Elizabeth. Ben describes his dad as "tenacious and competitive" but also says, "He doesn't take himself too seriously and has a real joyous side."

Seth has two young grandsons, Hannah's 2-year-old David and Ben's baby son Kaiden. Kai, for short, was born in March 2025 and for the first several weeks of his life, Seth drove up to Brunswick from Portland to help

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STAYING POWER OF SETH...

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new parents Ben and Becky one night each week, cooking dinner and providing helping hands. Now he and Stefanie enjoy visiting Kai and his parents a couple times a month.

Seth's sister-in-law Becca Brewster (T '90s, P '00s), widow of Birch Rock legend Toby Brewster, described Seth this way: "He always gives 120%. He brings a positive, inquisitive energy to everything. Seth shows up. He is so dependable and loyal." The death of his brother Toby in 2023, who Seth eulogized as his "wingman," was a hard blow. It's made Seth and Stefanie draw even closer to Becca and her four sons, all Birch Rockers. Becca laughingly explained Seth's gung-ho approach to something as basic as cooking their annual Thanksgiving turkey. Simply roasting the bird in the oven is not up to snuff for Seth — he's perfected a wet-brined, spatchcocked turkey on the outdoor grill.

Seth's other passions include open water swimming from June until October in the Pine Point Estuary in Scarborough, downhill skiing, and yearly wilderness backpacking trips (last month Seth and a group of friends hiked the White Cloud Mountains in Idaho). He competed in the modern pentathlon in college and in 2000 finished an Ironman triathlon in Florida (featuring a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride and a 26.2 mile run).

Seth is a Birch Rock gentleman through and through, with his love of outdoor adventure and *Help the Other Fellow* ethos. Reflecting on Seth's 24-year stewardship of Birch Rock through much evolution and preservation efforts, Mike Herzig explained, "His style has always been conducive to collaboration and letting people express their creativity and love for Camp. In that sense, we could have had no better leader than Seth." Mike and Seth go way back, to the summer of 1979 when Seth was Mike's swimming instructor. After decades of shared Board of Trustee meetings, Lake McWain swims and personal difficulties, Mike said of Seth: "He's always been there for me like a brother."



Toby, Ben and Seth Brewster

Bob Cleaves ('60s, S '70s, P '00s, T '00s) is another Birch Rocker who shares an enduring friendship with Seth, starting in 1967 when the two Beavers were cabin mates in Cabin 1, now know as Bee's Hive. Bob remembers from the time Seth was 8 years old that he was "a fun, solid kid, comfortable in his own shoes. And I swear that kid hasn't changed."



Seth as Waterfront Director, 1979

Rich Deering (Alumni & Community Director '73) had this to say: "Growing up and working with Seth has been like flying with Superman. He has a superhuman strength of character to always do the right thing to help others. He is fearless when faced with adversity. Life challenges never get the best of him. Seth's power is balanced by his incredible self-deprecating humor."

100 year-old Birch Rock Camp is secure on the Hillside, with a 100 year lease signed by the Brewster family and two fourth-generation family members now serving on the Board of Trustees. Seth will remain on the Board and his devotion to Camp endures.

In reminiscing about their days on staff in the late 70s/early 80s after camp ended for the summer, Seth shared a favorite memory of his brothers Toby and Ben (who died in 1985): "In the evenings, in the waning days of August, the three of us would sit on the top of the hill, watch the night sky, and talk about Camp and plans for the fall." Seth summed up by saying, "Birch Rock is the place where I feel most grounded and where Lake McWain washes away the clutter of the outside world. Every time I drive on the campus, I feel like I am coming home."



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BIRCH ROCK BOARD OF TRUSTEES NEWS



After many years of invaluable service to Camp, **Steve Whittier**, **Maria Tringale**, and **Beverly and Bob Stone**, moved to Trustee Emeriti status this year. They will continue to advise and support Birch Rock Camp and promote our credo, *Help the Other Fellow*.

Four new trustees joined the Board at the summer meeting at Camp, bringing with them fresh energy and deep connections to Birch Rock.

Alexander McLaughlin

Alex is a former camper and counselor and the eldest of three brothers who attended Birch Rock. His parents Julie and Mark are former BRC trustees. Alex has an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management and a BA in Economics from Johns Hopkins University. He is recently married, lives in La Jolla, California and is a Director at MacKay Shields (a boutique investment firm, part of New York Life Investments Company). Alex's family owns the former Camp Waganaki just up McWain Hill Road from Birch Rock.

Rebecca Melvoin

Becca's parents have a house across Lake McWain so she grew up listening to Birch Rockers enjoying life on the lakeshore. As her sons grew she and her family thought BRC would be a wonderful place for them — Hunter Sherburne at age 12 just finished his fourth summer and Kieran at 10 finished his second at Camp.

Becca is Dean of Residential Life and Senior Class Dean and a history and social science teacher at Deerfield Academy in Deerfield, Massachusetts. Becca started her life at Deerfield as a faculty kid. Twenty years after leaving the Valley and graduating from Bowdoin College where she majored in Sociology and Africana Studies, Becca returned to Deerfield in 2009, having taught at the Lakeside School in Seattle and Beaver Country Day School

in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Prior to her return to Deerfield, she earned MAs from Brown University and Boston College in American Civilization and History, respectively. Later she earned her Ed.D. in Education Leadership from the University of Southern California. As the Dean of Residential Life, Becca works with students and faculty to make the boarding experience more rewarding. This year Becca is also teaching one course, African and Latin American History, and coaching softball.

Andrew Chase

Andrew, better known at Camp as Cheeser, first made his way from home in Yarmouth, Maine to Birch Rock in 1997. He was a camper for four summers and is proud to have gone on the inaugural Maine Wilderness Adventure trip 25 years ago! Andrew continued as a CIT and served on staff for three years.

Andrew earned his BS at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida and flew in both commercial aviation and in the New York State Air National Guard. He's currently Chief Pilot at Northrop Grumman Corporation and lives in the Washington, D.C. Metro area with his wife Rebecca and sons 10-year-old William (already a three-year BRC veteran) and 7-year-old Jack (who will start at Camp this coming summer).

Rebecca Chase

Rebecca didn't have a Birch Rock Camp-like experience during her childhood in Alabama, so Andrew started working on her when William was just a baby to get her sold on BRC (see photo of one-year-old William on his first visit to Camp). It didn't take long for Rebecca to become a Birch Rock enthusiast because 10-year-old William is a veteran camper now and his brother is coming up right behind him.

Rebecca earned a BS degree from Mississippi University for Women in Columbus, MS. She is a senior marketing operations manager for AlphaSense, an AI-based investment research platform, managing a team that makes sure their marketing campaigns run smoothly and reach the right people.



Rebecca Chase and son William

BIRCH ROCK SUSTAINS WINNING STREAK AT KEOKA LAKE REGATTA

By Jared Whichard, '10s, S '10s

What do you do when you find yourself in the most anticipated sailing event of the summer, and the air is as still as a stone? You persevere (and maybe yap on the walkie-talkie you were given for safety — because who doesn't enjoy a little banter while waiting for the wind?)!

This summer at the Keoka Lake Association's Camper Cup Regatta, three Birch Rockers took on the mirror-like surface of Keoka Lake, alongside our camp friends from Waziyatah, Fernwood Cove, and Wigwam. And each of our sailors returned with a prize, including the coveted Camper Cup!

Thomas Porter-Zuckerman and **Jake LeRoy** made quite the splash at their first regatta, taking home first place in the Sunfish category and a solid second in the Laser category! And returning champion, **Jack Manson**, navigated between the finish marks first overall for the second year in a row, bringing back the Cup and first in the Laser class!

While I make it out to seem like it was a completely windless day, we did have a few small gusts, and the Birch Rockers were ready to seize every little breeze that came their way. Overall, the day was



Thomas Porter-Zuckerman, regatta official, Jack Manson holding trophies, Jake LeRoy, Jared Whichard and Jonah Keates

a blast, filled with great sportsmanship and camaraderie among all participants. BRC Waterfront Director Jonah Keates and I had a great time overseeing the race from positions on committee boats, sharing stories, and enjoying a beautiful day with our Waterford neighbors.

And the crazy part: this was the fifth year in a row that we brought the Cup back to rest on the Birch Rock mantle in the Lodge! While part of me would love to see more camps get their name on the Camper Cup, we'll have to wait and see what next year brings, and for now, I think it looks pretty good right where it is!

JUNIOR COUNSELORS: A CADRE OF UP-AND-COMING TALENT

Under the leadership of Head Counselor Nick "Musc" Musciano, six hardworking 17-year-old gentlemen served the Birch Rock community last summer as Junior Counselors. The JCs are first-year counselors receiving extra training from various mentors before they come on staff as full-fledged counselors. JCs are vital staff members working as co-counselors in cabins and at the various activities they help instruct. This cohort of JCs won praise for truly outstanding work! The group includes from left to right: **Tim Ferraina**, **Roberto Martinez**, **Connor Polz**, **Charlie Lansdale** and **Eli Michaels** (Riley Woodworth is not pictured).



THE 2025 LEADERSHIP CAMPERS

Under the able guidance of Senior Counselor Peter Brewster, seven senior Birch Rock campers participated in our Leadership Camper Program, designed to teach essential skills for becoming camp counselors. Congratulations to these gentlemen from left to right **Javier Marquina**, **Lenny Calderon**, **Zac Mason** and **Jake LeRoy**. (**Liam Bamberger**, **Rowan Gallagher** and **Mario Perez** are not pictured).

Birch Rock has always benefited from our veterans stepping up into leadership roles to pass on our hallowed rituals and traditions. The Leadership Camper Program offers senior campers the chance to take on responsibilities in an accelerated way. The participants this summer received certifications in lifeguard training and first aid. They assisted counselors with instructional activities and mentored younger boys who needed extra attention. They served our community with distinction and are now highly qualified to be Junior Counselors.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK

By Rich Deering - Alumni & Community Director '73

With this edition of *The Birch Bark*, BRC kicks off its 100th anniversary year! Since 1926, campers have flocked to the Hillside to join our exuberant, non-competitive community. I think it's fair to say that boys' need for Birch Rock has never been greater, a century along.

What Birch Rock offers — so key to the healthy development of boys and young men — is a keen sense of belonging. Birch Rockers of all ages interact each day at Camp, get to know each other well, and bond over hallowed traditions and rituals. Bunkmates learn how to cooperate in their small, tidy cabins. Boys thrive on face-to-face contact with other campers and counselors all day — playing, talking, working things out. These are behaviors that help boys develop socially and feel good about themselves. Birch Rock excels at sparking “social electricity,” a term coined by *The Anxious Generation* author Jonathan Haidt to describe the feeling of being seen and understood by others.

Birch Rock knows that the way to supercharge this sense

of belonging is to keep life no-tech. Boys thrive in nature, minus the phones, online games and social media accounts. The thesis of *The Anxious Generation* is concerning: children born after 1995 have been under-protected in the virtual world, while at the same time overprotected and restricted in the real world. Birch Rock has an antidote to these problems. At Camp we build a culture of belonging and say no to digital devices. We help build confidence and character by saying YES to physical freedom and autonomy for boys. Birch Rockers leave camp each season a little healthier in body, mind and spirit.

This powerful sense of belonging can last a lifetime for Birch Rock campers. So what could be better than seeing old friends at a big reunion this coming summer?! All Birch Rockers — past, present and future — are invited to join us for our Grand Centennial Celebration Weekend on McWain Hill, August 14–16, 2026! See the notices in this Birch Bark for more information about the celebration.

ONE EXTRAORDINARY LEADER HONORED FOR HIS DECADE AT CAMP

Veteran Birch Rocker **Abe Tolkoff** stepped into the spotlight this summer. Director Rich Deering bestowed an embroidered maroon Birch Rock Decade Vest on Abe, recounted his phenomenal achievements and his history at Camp, and invited testimonials to Abe from fellow Birch Rockers. Decade vests honor the deep commitment and accomplishments of Birch Rockers in their ten seasons on the Hillside. The entire community celebrated the commitment and lasting friendship of Abe, a unique camp leader.

From Rich's remarks:

“Exceptionally kind, curious about all things, and dedicated to Birch Rock, Abe Tolkoff is our honoree today. We salute him for his deep commitment to keeping our community safe, healthy and fun for all.

At the age of eight, Abe was perhaps the first potential camper ever to call the camp directly and interview us about our program and traditions. That summer, Abe found his Birch Rock family and later recruited his brothers and cousin to join him at Lake McWain.

Abe recently graduated from Yale with a double major in Evolutionary Biology and the History of Medicine. He has worked as an EMT in New Haven, Connecticut and fortunately for us, here at camp and locally for the Oxford Hills community. This fall he is teaching biology in Madrid, Spain and honing

his fluency in Spanish as he prepares for medical school in the near future.

Abe, an accomplished sailor and wilderness trip guide, leads from his heart to help his fellow Birch Rockers be their very best in physical and emotional health.

Abe, we honor you today for 10 incredible seasons at BRC!”



A SUPERB SHOWING FOR 8 BIRCH ROCK TRIATHLETES

Eight competitors demonstrated their endurance, athleticism and grit in Birch Rock's annual triathlon, including from left to right **Milo Sonnenburg, Jaden Wallace, Kiran Farley, Ethan Neff, Emmett Cho, Gabe Engler, Anderson Garcia** and **Trip Elliott**.

The triathlon began with a swim across Lake McWain and down the shore to Camp Buck, followed by a four-mile bike course up the steepest section of McWain Hill Road, past Camp, all

the way down to Springers Farm. Racers wrapped up with a final one-mile foot race back uphill to Birch Rock and the toilet paper finish-line across our driveway. Counselor Josh Rubin led the triathletes and, as always, the whole camp cheered the competitors at the beginning and at the exciting end. Kiran Farley clinched the win at just under 35 minutes, with Emmett Cho in second and Ethan Neff in third place!



100TH CELEBRATION AUCTION ITEMS NEEDED

*Please Donate to the
Live & Silent Auctions*

Stays at your lake, ski or beach houses ~ Vintage BRC signs or paddles ~ Classic BRC recipes for a cookbook ~ Original handwritten recipes from Albert ~ BIROCA Blasts of yore ~ Classic t-shirts and blankets with BRC logos ~ Vintage maps of Camp ~ your own creative ideas

Questions?

Contact **Jennifer Rotman** at
birchrockauction@gmail.com or 508-397-2299

GOING THE DISTANCE: OUR 2025 WHALES

We salute the athletic prowess and tenacity shown by swimmers **Brady Chalmers** (pictured below), **Kiran Farley**, **Rowan Gallagher** and **Javier Marquina**. The 5.75-mile circumference swim of Lake McWain is a grueling capstone tradition for senior BRC campers. Congratulations to these four gentlemen on conquering your Whales!



JUNIOR MAINE GUIDES



Birch Rock sent five stalwart, well-prepared gentlemen to the Junior Maine Guide Testing Camp this summer. Counselor **Jeffrey Naipier-Kane** (pictured on the far left) prepped the group, including from left to right **Trip Elliott, Ethan Neff, Jaden Wallace, Kiran Farley** and **Charlie Lansdale**.

Charlie Lansdale on his second try and Ethan Neff on his very first attempt passed as official JMGs this summer. Well done, gentlemen! Ethan said everything about JMG was highly difficult — practicing various testing parts at least twice each day at Birch Rock, studying

the written materials, and getting the pacing right during the five days at testing camp (with three days of actual tests). But Ethan loved the week-long canoe trip the JMGs took with Jeff and Max Naipier-Kane as preparation — “They both inspire me!” said Ethan. And Ethan really enjoyed peaceful walks around the Birch Rock campus with Jeff and the other JMGs to identify trees and other flora. Ethan was enthralled at the end-of-summer Chip Ceremony when Jeff bestowed upon him a cherished knife that will always bring back memories of his JMG summer.

The Junior Maine Guide program is a rigorous Maine wilderness camping skills program sponsored by Maine Summer Camps and the Maine State Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. JMG was created in 1937 to promote the use of wild Maine for recreation and to train young people in environmental conservation. JMG promotes wilderness leadership and character development, requires intensive preparation, and puts myriad skills to meticulous testing.

JMG certification requires proficiency in a broad range of abilities: canoeing, fire-building in wet and dry conditions, emergency shelter building, first aid, cooking over campfires, old-fashioned map and compass skills (for wilderness areas beyond GPS range), flora and fauna identification, ax use and more.

For more information on the JMG program, see “Junior Maine Guide” by Quinn Castelli ’10s, *The Birch Bark* Autumn 2024 edition.



GRAND CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION WEEKEND

Save the Dates

Friday, August 14, 2026
through
Sunday, August 16, 2026

Registration

Begins in January 2026

ALL HANDS ON DECK!

Birch Rock needs YOU to help us sign up young gentlemen for camp this summer for our 100th season! You are our BEST ambassador. Please tell prospective families about our website www.birchrock.org and put them in touch with Mike Mattson (mike@birchrock.org) or Rich Deering (rich@birchrock.org). Always in the spirit of *Help the Other Fellow!*



BIRCH ROCK CAMP

P.O. Box 148
Waterford, ME 04088



ACCREDITED
CAMP

American Camping Association®

Mark Your Calendars for 2026!



Camp Clean Up	May 16 (Sat)
BRC Summer Office Opens	June 1 (Mon)
BRC Staff Orientation	June 10 (Wed)
Junior Counselor Orientation	June 14 (Sun)
Leadership Camper Orientation	June 17 (Wed)
Opening - First Session & Cubs I	June 20 (Sat)
Cubs Camp I - End	July 5 (Sun)
Cubs Camp II - Start	July 5 (Sun)
First Session & Cubs II - End	July 18 (Sat)
Opening 2nd Session	July 19 (Sun)
Maine Wilderness Adventure	
Cubs Camp III - Start	
Cubs Camp III - End	August 1 (Sat)
BRC for Boys & MWA - End	August 8 (Sat)
BRC Grand Centennial Celebration Weekend	August 14-16 (Fri - Sun)

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It's Time to Celebrate 100 Years of BRC

Birch Rockers! Please share your beloved Camp photos, letters, poems, drawings, diary entries — anything that can be reprinted for the Grand Centennial Celebration!

Scan and Email Your Memorabilia to
brc100@birchrock.org