

Camps



Summer is a great time for families to take the learning out of the classroom and into the great outdoors. Whether it's a day camp in Fredonia or Whitefish Bay, or overnight camp in the Wisconsin Northwoods, the JCC provides safe, inclusive spaces where children and teens can explore interests, build communities, demonstrate values, and experience the power of play

jccmilwaukee.org/programs/camps

Camp for the Next Generation

Day camp is an incredible experience for kids in our community throughout the summer. At both the Albert & Ann Deshur JCC Rainbow Day Camp in Fredonia and the JCC Day Camp programs in Whitefish Bay, kids get to spend their summers playing with friends, gaining independence, and building their confidence. Once campers reach 3rd - 6th grade, many families begin to look at overnight camp options as a component of their summer to further that growth. But how do you know if your child is ready to take that next step?

For many years, the JCC's Trip to Interlaken has offered day campers a taste of what it would be like to go to overnight camp by allowing them to spend 4 days and 3 nights at the Steve & Shari Sadek Family Camp Interlaken JCC in Eagle River with a small group that begins their journey at JCC Rainbow Day Camp. This year, camp offered two separate trips, one in July, and one in August, due to high demand from families.

One of the young campers who went on the trip in July was Lola Wagner who was new to Camp Interlaken, but camp was not new to her family. Her parents, Danielle & CJ, were longtime Interlaken campers who met at camp 19 years ago. "Since Lola, our oldest, was born our house has been filled with Interlaken camp songs, chants, and memories. We sent Lola on her way so eager to hear what she would think of a place that means so much to our family," recalls Danielle.

Accompanying the campers on their trip up north were familiar day camp counselors. One of these counselors from JCC Rainbow Day Camp, Josh Melton, shared "As the bus pulled in, we were met with cheers and a big camp welcome. The kids

were able to experience many of the camp favorites including tubing on Lake Finley, waterskiing, ropes course, zip line, and archery – 3 of the kids even got bullseyes!" The campers were also introduced to a game that originated at Camp Interlaken called Tushball.

What made this experience truly different from the activities participants were used to doing at day camp was the evening programs. During the visit, they were able to attend a carnival called Sha'arnival which is put on each year by the Sha'ar campers (8th & 9th graders). The Trip to Interlaken group also had their very own Maccabiah (color wars) experience which gave them a taste of one of the most exciting parts of overnight camp.

Toni Davison Levenberg, director of Camp Interlaken JCC, made sure the visiting day campers had an opportunity to experience a special Camp Interlaken tradition that typically happens on the first and last nights of camp. "We shared a campfire with s'mores, songs, and wishes. Each camper was invited to make a wish and throw a stick into the fire. Many of the kids wished for everyone to come back to camp next year. Another special camp moment happened as the kids and their counselors settled into their cabins for bedtime and were serenaded to sleep by songleaders on guitar."

At the end of their journey, when the Wagners picked Lola up from the camp bus, she had a big smile on her face and reported, "It was so fun, and I can't wait to go back next year!" Once they got home, Danielle emptied her duffel bag onto the kitchen floor and had the familiar experience of hearing Lola's camp stories, seeing her crafts and letters, and feeling the sand sprinkle out of her luggage. She loved hearing Lola speak about her short time at camp with such joy and enthusiasm.

"It has now been so nostalgic to compare our own memories with Lola's experience, share our old camp pictures, and hear about new Interlaken traditions. This amazing shared experience has given us a new way to connect and bond with our daughter. It is clear that between her experience and ours, one thing remains the same – Camp Interlaken is a magical place. We can't wait to see what Lola's Interlaken future holds," said Danielle.



Danielle Sectzer-Wagner 1991



Lola Wagner 2019