Words for the Wise

The impact of our Camp Wise Shabbat experience extends far beyond the bookends of summer. Each camper and staff member carries the meaning of our words, prayers, songs, and rituals with them as they move throughout the world the rest of the year.

If you have been to a Camp Wise Shabbat service in the last decade, you will likely have noticed that included amongst traditional Jewish blessings and songs in our Siddur (prayer book), we have camper-created artwork and supplementary readings and poems woven into nearly every page. We also create space for creative expression in our services each week, campers are encouraged to share a creative writing or poem with our community after learning about the parsha (Torah portion) of the week. This means they become their own meaning-makers, connecting stories from the Torah to their everyday life and experiences inside and outside of camp. Sharing poems and creative writings has become central to the Camp Wise Shabbat experience, and in many ways a rite of passage — campers find joy, excitement, and a sense of connection in accessing the prayers in their own way and sharing their interpretation with camp. This openness to exploring and approaching Judaism in diverse ways is one of the most fulfilling elements of the Camp Wise experience — campers are co-pilots of their Jewish experience.

On Saturday mornings, just before we start the Torah service, we read the poem “Hug O’ War” by Shel Silverstein. It’s intentional that this comes right after we sing Oseh Shalom, a blessing of peace. “Hug O’ War” focuses on what it looks like to play a game where everyone wins because everyone’s happiness is taken into consideration. When we read this poem, we are offering an interpretation of Oseh Shalom, an interpretation of what peace could look like. With actions like giggling, grinning, and hugging, it’s easy to imagine a space where everyone is welcomed and respected, and therefore can be themselves.

When campers or staff members finish reading “Hug O’ War”, it has been tradition that they hug each other in front of our entire community. A charming, albeit sometimes distracting new tradition that has developed from this over the past few summers is that whenever someone finishes sharing their creative writing or reading from the siddur, the camp community encourages them to hug others on the bimah. For us, celebrating and recognizing campers’ and staff members’ contributions to our camp Shabbat experience has become a defining moment, and hugging has become a beautiful expression of the community we build on a weekly basis. The act of hugging is now synonymous with a message of peace — we see you, we heard you, we value you.

I invite you think about how you are sending messages of peace to those around you. How are you building communities and spaces of peace and respect? We all know how important this is because of our time at The Home of Happiness, so as we look toward this upcoming year, let us all focus less on the game of tug of war and more on games of hug of war where “everyone wins.”

Hug O’ War

I will not play at tug o’ war,
I’d rather play at hug o’ war,
Where everyone hugs,
Instead of tugs,
Where everyone giggles
And rolls on the rug,
Where everyone kisses,
And everyone grins,
And everyone cuddles,
And everyone wins.

Shel Silverstein
**Summer program highlights**

While our summer days have come and gone in 2018, we are still thrifting off of our incredible memories from this past season! This past summer, our song sessions were filled with a few camp favorites including a throwback song, “Allstar”, and “Country Roads.” At any given moment, campers could be found challenging themselves in our new, creative, thoughtful pottery pieces, stand up paddle boarding on our lake, and many things in between. We had two incredible Maccababhs, Star Wars (Session I) and Sidekicks (Session II), as well as two all-camp plays, High School Musical (Session I) and Beauty and the Beast (Session II), where our campers shared their talent and creativity with us! Summer 2018 is one we will all remember for years to come. We cannot wait to see you in 2019!

**Chalutzim**

In Chalutzim, campers and staff could be found singing “We all live in a Chala,” Chalutzim, a Chala Chalutzim, to the tune of Yellow Submarine” in our camp village campfires, between Gaga games, and at our CW night celebrations in Summer 2018. Speaking of Gaga…Chalutzim love their Gaga! From Chalapalooza, a village-wide musical festival, to Nichilah in the Akron JCC Day Camp, SoLel at our Trivia Night program where their knowledge was tested in categories like Broadway Musicals, Olympic Games, Camp Chai history, and geography. Throughout the week, families had a blast spending time playing, singing, learning, and it is a highlight for all! Starting Friday evening, Natalie provides a foundational opportunity for our participants to provide opportunities for laughter, reflection, connection, learning, and individual coaching in a safe and caring environment.

**Ohalimers**

Campers (aka their counselors!). Ohalimers brought so much energy to all daily singing ritual to a new cheer second Wacky Weather, which became a first session to a whole new level! This past summer, they brought themselves with a sense of unity! Making the most of their time at camp, our Solcamps participated in Solcamps Specials which include making natural lip balm, enjoying evening programs like Shrek the Bac and Mario Kart, dove into impromptu dance circles, designed camp t-shirts, and became summer buddies with Chalutzim campers and campfires every night — from singing and dancing to playing music together and giving each other shout outs for being awesome, thoughtful members of the village community! The mighty village of Ohalim has taken ruach and creativity in on a weekly basis. All in all, one of the highlights of the summer was our annual Solcamps-buddy program. This year, our buddies co-created memory books that they would trade off decorating, drawing, and writing in on a weekly basis. All in all, campers in Chalutzim had a fantastic summer full of laughter, new friendships, and fun!

**Noar**

Noar brought some incredible creativity to CW this summer! Whenever they came into the Chadar, the entire camp felt it as they often came in cheering, adding new twists to their already-existing cheer experiences at any and all opportunitees! In first session, whether they were practicing being the Knights of Noar (“Hazah!”) celebratory, or preparing for Joseph’s (in his Technicolor Dream Coat) Bar Mitzvah, Noar campers had a blast together and soaked in the silly, magical moments of camp! In second session, campers participated in night Back to the Future, where our campers danced in a futuristic, techno disco party, and other programs that included a giant game of zombie tag and a life-sized, pirate-themed battle experience! From the 8th grade trip to Kent State University to the 9th grade trip to Ohiople, campers participated in a college tour, kayaking, went whitewater rafting, and met new people! Every night, you could find our campers and staff enjoying epic campfires downtown in the village.

**Solcamps**

In Summer 2018, whether the village of Solcamps was at camp having a blast together or on the road exploring new places, they always carried themselves with a sense of unity! Making the most of their time at camp, our Solcamps participated in Solcamps Specials which include making natural lip balm, enjoying evening programs like Shrek the Bac and Mario Kart, dove into impromptu dance circles, designed camp t-shirts, and became summer buddies with Chalutzim campers and campfires every night — from singing and dancing to playing music together and giving each other shout outs for being awesome, thoughtful members of the village community!

**Campopportunityford everyone**

All the fun and excitement of Camp Wise is not just for kids! In addition to the summer camp program at Camp Wise, we offer several programs to get all ages involved. With a Family Camp, a Women’s Weekend, and Camp Chai, our program for adults with diverse needs, we offer a program for everyone!

**Family Camp**

What could be more perfect than spending time with your family and enjoying a fun, active weekend at Camp Wise? Nothing! Cheering together and experiencing camp with other families! We are so grateful for the tight-knit community we get to create every year with our Family Camp families, and are already looking forward to Family Camp 2019!

**Women’s Weekend**

Life can be hectic, and sometimes all you need in life is a breath of fresh air, permission to relax, and a little time to do what feels best for you! This is what we like to call…Women’s Weekend! This weekend out at camp is all about choice. Women have the opportunity to participate in various camp activities including some bonus options like receiving a professional massage and wine tasting! Every day, our participants wake up and decide if they want to put on their sneakers to exercise, roll out their yoga mats, lay by the pool, canoe on our lake, climb the rock wall, read a book, or get creative in the Art Shack! In addition, we invite Educator-In-Residence, Natalie Goldfin, to join us for the weekend and it is a highlight for all! Starting Friday evening, Natalie provides a foundational experience for our participants to provide opportunities for laughter, reflection, connection, learning, and individual coaching in a safe and caring environment. The weekend is perfect for women of all ages to come together and enjoy all that Camp Wise has to offer! Don’t miss your chance to experience Women’s Weekend in 2019!

**Camp Chai**

The opportunity to come to camp is something we believe everyone deserves to experience in their lifetime! Camp Chai, a taste of camp for adults with diverse needs, provides this opportunity for adults who require varied levels of support. This summer, Camp Wise is a perfectly close-knit community we get to create every year with our Family Camp participants walk away with after their weekend at camp. With an incredibly dedicated group of camp staff, 2018 Camp Chai participants had the opportunity to experience so many camp activities including, boating, horseback riding, swimming, rock climbing, and an incredible talent show! It is a special experience for participants and staff alike every year, we are so grateful to share Camp Wise with our Camp Chai participants!

**Alumni Happenings**

The CW Alumni Committee has had a very busy year! Last fall, we launched the first annual CW Alumni Shabbat Dinner Program. Three alumni hosted dinners for over 250 people in five cities including Chicago. Dinners included bountiful night celebrations, the Britol with all the hand motions, and even some Shabbat creative writing! More Shabbat dinners for this winter season. There is nothing more interesting in becoming a future host, email Abby (akaufman@mandeljcc.org) for more information!

This summer we started the first-ever Adopt-A-Staff Letter Writing Campaign. Over 125 alumni participated, writing individual snail mail to each of the 155 staff, including all counselors, specialists, kitchen, housekeeping, finance, and admin staff! Our snail mail pooured into camp every day, and many staff wrote alumni back! The power of snail mail still exist! If you are interested in adopting a staff member pen pal for the summer of 2019, email Jennie (jennie.pioett@gmail.com) to get on the list.

This past August, alumni returned to Taylor Wells Road to bask in the glory of time with your family and enjoying a fun, active weekend at Camp Wise? Nothing! Cheering together and experiencing camp with other families! We are so grateful for the tight-knit community we get to create every year with our Family Camp families, and are already looking forward to Family Camp 2019!

Friendships won need never die, Jennie Becker CW Alumni Committee Chair

**We like it, we love it, we want more of it!**

Highlights included a painting session for alumni to create their own portraits of the CW logo tree, lots of lake time, and hilarious karaoke! If you want to stay in the loop on all alumni happenings, contact Abby Kaufman, akaufman@mandeljcc.org. We are looking forward to another great year of programming, and we’d love for you to join us! Friendships won need never die, Jennie Becker CW Alumni Committee Chair
Want to share your appreciation for our staff? Please use the link www.campwise.org/giving to donate!

2018 Staff Scholarship winners (clockwise from bottom left): Maya Cohen, Jess Begg, Ryan Singer, Andrew Levy and Jacque Berkson.

Working at camp is a 24/7 job. Each and every staff member dedicates their summer to creating a warm, supportive and lively fun environment for campers. There is an annual tradition at Camp Wise called Staff Scholarship, which is a peer-based nomination and recognition honor. While there are other opportunities throughout the summer for staff to recognize one another, Staff Scholarship is awarded to staff who embody our camp values and show their dedication to our mission through their everyday actions. The staff who are nominated are known for being positive, creative, reliable and inspiring team players. In short, these people exemplify what it means to be a Camp Wise staff member. On the last night of camp, the honorees are announced at our end of summer staff banquet.

This summer, there were five Staff Scholarship honorees. In addition to receiving a bonus for their recognition, a portion of the Staff Scholarship fund is donated to camper scholarship!

The honorees for Summer 2018 were: Maya Cohen, Jacque Berkson, Jess Begg, Ryan Singer, and Andrew Levy.

Maya Cohen has spent 11 summers at The House of Happiness and is currently studying Early Childhood Education. This summer, she was a counselor in both Solel and Noar as well as 2018 Cornerstone Fellow. Cornerstone is a Fellowship Program offered to veteran staff through the leadership and educational training to camp counselors. For Maya, camp is all about “creating long lasting memories for the campers, so they can experience the best summer of their life, just like I did when I was a camper.”

Jacque Berkson has become CW’s very own “Mr. Fix-It.” Jacque has been at camp for 11 summers and this past year, in addition to being a cabin counselor in Noar, Jacque was the go-to person for everyone around camp to support them with everything from maintenance to IT issues! He is also well-known for building some of the best bonfires around camp! In addition to those roles, Jacque also had the privilege of planning second session Sidekick Maccabiah. When he’s not at camp, Jacque studies welding engineering at The Ohio State University. His favorite part of camp is watching his campers grow and change during the summer.

Jess Begg is studying Sports and Exercise Science at Shffield Hallam University in England. When Jess is stateside, you can find her working down at the ropes course at camp. Whether she is planning new routes and extreme challenges on the rock wall, coaching a camper through the high ropes course, or hanging with her campers in the village, Jess is always smiling and sharing her positive energy with all those around her. During first session last year, Jess also had a blast being the captain on the Yoda Green Team in Star Wars Maccabiah. Jess says CW is her home away from home — “it not only brings all types of people together, but it is a place where they can be true to themselves with no judgment whatsoever.”

Ryan Singer is studying Art with a concentration in Film at the University of Virginia where he throws discus for his school track and field team. In addition to his responsibilities as a cabin counselor last summer, Ryan planned and coordinated the nightly evening programs for the village of Noar as a Village Programmer. Given his love for camp and film, it’s not surprising to us that every program started off with an epic, hilarious, creative skit on stage at dinner! One of Ryan’s favorite memories from his 12th summer was having song sessions with his co-staff to help spark creativity for their cabin and village programming.

Andrew Levy is currently in his senior year at The Ohio State University studying political science. In 2018, he had three roles at camp! He was a cabin counselor and the Solel Village Programmer as well as a sing leader. In all that he does, Andrew’s thoughtfulness, compassion, and creativity shine through. For Andrew, “camp boiled down to making sure that my campers were having the best summer that they could possibly have — Solel is an incredibly special year, and I was glad to have had the opportunity to help them experience that.”

A very special “Todah Rabah” to all of our recent Camp Wise donors!

We are honored to recognize the families, individuals and groups who have chosen to make thoughtful and generous contributions to Camp Wise. Please let us know if your name was inadvertently left off the list.

Community Funding and Foundations
Scott & Amy Bilsky Family Chetvey Fund
Robert & Elwen Sill Family Foundation
Harold Grinspoon Foundation
Melvin P. & Eleanor N. Gals Family Foundation
The Roth Family Charitable Fund
Melvyn P. & Eleanor N. Galin Family Foundation
The Bnai Israel Community Foundation
Harvard Community Foundation
The Demboski Family Fund of Akron Community Foundation
Tridel Jewish Community Foundation
John Andrew Latt Philanthropic Fund
Dr. Herman C. Smith Memorial Fund

A Milestone Summer

The last week of each session, on CW Night, we recognize staff and camper who have been at camp for 5, 7, 10, 13 years and beyond. Five years are recognized with a 5-year bag, seven years earns you a cool 7-year shirt, after 10 years you receive a sweet Camp Wise Crazy Creek Chair, and 13 year staff are honored with a CW sweatshirt blanket. Staff that have been at camp for 15 years or more has a tree planted in a designated area on Camp in Pico home.
“I’m tryin’ to tell you somethin’ ‘bout my life…”

C.I.T.s (Campers-in-Training)

We are proud of you, I said we are proud of you…uh!

When someone celebrates a big day we all stand on our benches and cheer about it! Here is a big CW cheer for all those campers, who with their families have celebrated their BT mitzvah since our last newsletter. Please let us know if we’ve missed you and we will include you in our next issue.

Bhei Mitzvah

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We love our CW volunteers

Toda rabah to our wonderful camp families who donate their time to camp each summer. Our volunteer doctors helped to keep camp healthy and our host families showed our international staff Cleveland hospitality on their days off. We are always looking to add to our dedicated list. If either of these opportunities sound like something you’d like to do in 2019, please let us know wisedkids@mandeljcc.org

We are the Camp Wise Story, what would be one of your years at camp?

What do you miss most about your camper days?

That About Cathy!

A Fond Farewell

B-E-C-K-E-R, Cathy is our Registrar!

A sign of respect at camp is when you enter a space and the entire room erupts in a cheer for you. Cheers are created to honor someone’s dedication to camp, and Cathy Becker’s dedication to Camp Wise has been unmatched. Serving Camp Wise for over 20 years, Cathy started her career with CW in 1995 supporting the camp office in the summers only. By 2001 Cathy moved into a full time job as our first year-round registrar!

Cathy will tell you she worked with one camp director and then trained the 5 others to follow. She certainly has been known as the person on the team to turn to when you have questions about anything from camp history, to what to pack, to enrollment and bunk assignments. Anyone who has been a parent or staff member in the last 23 years certainly had the privilege of sharing Cathy’s wisdom just by talking to her. You may have never met Cathy in person, but her voice brought a sense of comfort and familiarity whenever you called the Camp Wise office. And as Cathy likes to say “I’m not on Facebook so I don’t have Facebook friends, but I have tons of phone friends!”

This past summer we celebrated Cathy in front of all of camp and now we want to celebrate her with all of you with “I Bet You Didn’t Know That About Cathy!”

What do you miss most about your camper days?

I attended camp for 9 years. I miss the excitement of trying new things and being able to push toward goals. I miss the comradery and relationships I created with my counselors. I loved getting to know people I thought were so old and wise.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

I’m 72 years young, before working for Camp Wise I was a teacher for 30 years. I taught 4-6th grades in both Shaker and Cleveland Heights.

Share with us a memorable moment from your years at camp.

One of my favorite parts of this job has been the privilege of watching campers grow up and give back to camp as staff.

If you were writing the next edition of the Camp Wise Story, what would be one chapter you’d be sure to include?

The name of the chapter would be Parent Questions. It would include all of the wild questions I’ve been asked (and answered) over the years. I have loved supporting parents in their choice to send their campers to Camp Wise.

What are your plans for retirement?

I want to find a good balance of volunteer work and learning to take life a little slower!
Inside this issue
Thank you Cathy
Alumni Update
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Todah Rabah
Winter Overnights

5th & 6th Grade Weekend:
Sun, Jan 20 - Mon, Jan 21
Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend
Enjoy a jam-packed overnight filled with snow games, sledding on the Camp Wise hills and more! When it’s cold we’ll head inside our cozy rec hall to hang by the fire and enjoy delicious kosher meals and treats. Campers will stay in our comfy, heated cabins!

Buses Depart from The J
Sun, January 20 • 11:30 am
Buses Return to The J
Mon, January 21 • 5 pm
FEE: $120
Registration Opens:
Mon, Dec 10 • Deadline: Jan 11

7th & 8th Grade Weekend:
Sun, Feb 17 - Mon, Feb 18
Presidents Day Weekend
Join us for an awesome winter get-away. We’ll head out to camp for dinner, an evening of fun camp activities, and spend a warm night in our heated cabins. The next day starts with traditional camp activities and will conclude with an afternoon of tubing at a local ski resort.

Buses Depart from The J
Sun, February 17 • 4 pm
Buses Return to The J
Mon, February 18 • 5 pm
FEE: $120
Registration Opens:
Mon, Jan 7 • Deadline: Friday, Feb 8