

2024 Survey Responses to Your Thoughts & Questions

Hey Parents!

There's a lot going on at Liberty Lake, and a lot of new families the past couple of years, so I'm pulling out some great comments that I want to make sure EVERYBODY understands- Thanks to the 300+ parents who took the time to help us improve LLDC, and for the accolades (the best ones are at the end of this document.)

1. **“Elective process was tricky, as it took several weeks for our kids to get any of their top choices, due to us not fully understanding it.”**
 - a. This is an unintended consequence of the weekly “customization” that we do at LLDC. We will make sure to use all sources of communication to remind parents on Tuesday, that we export the elective choices and put them into our scheduling software at 9am Wednesday morning. Tracy has always sent Email reminders, but this year we will also have the [“Campanion App”](#) that you can download (now if you haven't), and we will send push notifications through that as well. We could text you- but have always preferred to use texting for more urgent types of contact.
2. **“Was disappointed that our child didn't elevate their swim level during the month they attended.”**
 - a. New rule at LLDC- If something like this is happening, or ANYTHING swim related, my advice is to Email your Division Leader ASAP. The division leaders are your concierge, and will go up to the pool during swim instruction to figure out what's going on, and report back to you much more quickly than the aquatics team who aren't checking Emails during the camp day. They can also set up a call with the Aquatics team if necessary. *Use the Division Leaders- They are here for you!*
3. **“My kids weren't happy about the food and food choices this summer.”**
 - a. Liberty Lake Day Camp's food service is one of the best in the business. I know this, because I eat it, I visit camps all over the country, and because MOST comments about the food were extremely POSITIVE. Food is like the weather- People (kids, in this case) love to complain about it. Last summer was the same food, and same caterers as the prior summer, yet from some of the surveys- you would think otherwise! Between the entrees, the awesome salad bar, pasta bar, sandwiches, yogurts, fresh fruit, desserts, ice pops/ice cream- There's lots of variety, with good quality. ***A couple of things we are planning on improving are:*** the Pizza on Mondays (they made the pizza in-house the past two summers), and integrating less hot entrees, given the summer heat we are dealing with more and more. If anyone has any suggestions for cold entrees, besides sandwiches and subs, and salad bar- please let us know, as we'll be meeting with the caterers soon to create next summer's menu!
4. **PHILLY BUS SPECIFIC- “Our bus was late almost every day, made worse by the lack of communication- you must figure this out.”**

- a. Two of our Philly buses last summer had chronic afternoon timing issues, coupled with a lack of communication from our staff on the bus- of which I only wish I knew about that aspect, as it could have been improved. In trying to eliminate the young staff from the equation if possible, I met with our Philly bus company last month, and they are currently working on three big things- **(1)** They are looking to make the routes more efficient, even if it means adding more buses to do so. **(2)** They are looking into giving us access to their GPS tracking software, so we can share it with you, and you can actually see where the bus is on the route. If they don't come through on this- Plan B- We will literally purchase an Apple Air-Tag for every bus, or something similar, and our staff will be better at communicating- as their jobs will depend on it. **(3)** First Student just purchased a NJ bus company- and NJ buses have seatbelts- So, they are seeing if it's possible to swap those buses into their Philly depot for us this summer. Thank you, Philly friends, for your awesome kids, and your patience- *We are on this, I promise you!!*
- 5. "I didn't like the constant reminders about tips"**
 - a. I will see that the division leaders lighten up on this in their Emails. Please know that from weeks 3-8, various campers are ending their summer seasons each Friday with us- so the tip reminders are for those specific parents. That said, thanks to NJ minimum wage laws (almost double PA), our staff pay is looking pretty good of late!
- 6. "My child came home with a bandaid on, and we never received any communication about what happened."**
 - a. Our Health Center sees around 100 campers each day, with all campers logged into our database with details of their visit- but we do not contact all 100 families. The nurses call or Email parents when they feel it's necessary- and it's often not- as 90% of their daily visitors leave with a bandaid, icepacks, or a comforting pep talk. So, if you don't get contacted when your child went to the Health Center, then the nurses (who are all moms of camp kids, themselves) made the decision that it wasn't something that you needed to worry about. The Nurses and Division Leaders are usually pretty good about contacting families when necessary. Thank you in advance for your trust with this. And if you want to ask the nurses about something specific, you can always Email them at nurse@libertylakedaycamp.com or call them on their direct line at (609) 372-4721 - just know that they may be busy with patients, and have to call you back at the end of the day.
- 7. "We wish that you still had Pre-week and Post-week to help our child care issues before and after your season!"**
 - a. So do we! But, the issue is STAFFING. In June, we are subject to the whims of the NJ public school schedule, which often runs late due to snow days, and recently added Juneteenth which extends their calendar. In Summer 2021, we ran our first week of camp with hardly any teachers ($\frac{1}{3}$ of our staff) - as they were still in school.) In mid-August, we are at the mercy of the colleges, which brought back their students earlier in August during the pandemic, and MANY NEVER

CHANGED BACK. As a result, we've lost substantial revenue, but safety is our #1 priority, and we need proper staff available to offer the safety and quality you expect from us. If anything changes, we'll let you know!

8. **“Getting fruit at lunch was continuously an issue.”**
 - a. We have sliced fruit available for the campers most days- Assorted melons, pineapple, grapes, etc. If the counselor does not bring the fruit to the table, the campers (Sophs and older) are allowed to go get it themselves. We will make it a priority to do a better job of communicating this to our group staff and division leaders. Please contact your division leader if your child tells you this, and we'll designate them the “fruit deliverer of the table!”
9. **“There are some camp traditions that new families might not know about, such as having friends sign their LLDC T-shirts on the last day... please do a better job of giving parents a head's up about these ‘unspoken rules’”**
 - a. Yes, we have lots of fun traditions, and they are almost too many to list... But at LLDC, we actually try to- It's called the [Liberty Laketionary](#), and we send it to every new family, and post it on the Quicklinks webpage- updated every year. I just checked, and guess what- it does NOT say anything about the T-shirt signing tradition (damn!) - I promise to add it for next year, thank you!
10. **FROSH ONLY - “My son is a big sports fan, he would have loved to be able to sign up just for soccer or basketball, not just Frosh Multisport”**
 - a. Unfortunately, when we had the individual sports listed on the elective sheet for Frosh (for almost 20 years), we had the problem of rarely getting enough kids to sign up for EACH of them individually to be able to run them at all. In order to run most sports, we need at least 8-10 kids, even more for baseball/softball. Multi-Sport allows us to get all the sporty 6-7 year olds together to run a variety of sports with them. That's why we do it that way. When they become Sophs, it's a bigger division, with more sporty kids, and we can pull it off successfully. It's something else we are keeping our eye on!
11. **“Veggie burgers would be great at BBQ day”**
 - a. Veggie burgers ARE available on BBQ day, and they are delicious. We have substitutes for most every entree- vegetarian, dairy-free, gluten-free. If you have any questions about substitutes, you can always contact our dietary specialist at food@libertylakedaycamp.com
12. **“My child got the same electives two weeks in a row, which is annoying because he only attended for three weeks.”**
 - a. If you don't change the selection and order of your child's electives each week, they may very well have the same electives given to them the next week. The elective “Top 15” list was not meant to be static- it was meant to be updated every week by Wednesday morning at 9am- unless your kid just LOVES their schedule and wants to keep them the same (it happens.) I strongly suggest making it a Sunday night tradition, or Monday, or Tuesday!
13. **“My child did not feel comfortable changing with other people in the changing room, and I think he should have been allowed to change in a bathroom or somewhere else instead of wearing the same bathing suit all day long,”**

- a. At Liberty Lake, very few of the campers actually “get changed” in the changing rooms. They come to camp in their bathing suits, and wear them throughout the day. If a camper or their parents want them to get changed, and they feel uncomfortable doing so in the changing room- first off, I hope that this is something that we can work on, like we do so many other things at camp- counselor can hold a towel up, etc. But if not, then yes- they can go to the bathroom or one of the extra changing tents we have, to get changed. PLEASE make sure that the division leader knows this, so that they can help the group staff facilitate this happening smoothly and discreetly- and if necessary, we’ll include our Success Team to figure out how to best support your child.
- 14. “I gave 3s for communication because I really haven’t gotten direct communication about my campers (just the group emails)----but honestly I think that is probably a good thing because it isn’t necessary.”**
- a. Yes, we agree :-) “No news, is good news + We’ll call ya, when we need ya!”
- 15. “My child got their Magic cards stolen or lost. While he (and we) understand that there is a risk in bringing them to camp, it was never made clear whether camp had taken any action.”**
- a. Oy, these magic cards. I was very close to making the draconian decision to ban campers from bringing them into camp, but in speaking with the older campers who LIVE for it- it’s just such a big part of the culture of Liberty Lake, that it would be very upsetting to them- more than replacing the bug juice with water! To be clear, we have camp-owned magic cards, and kids do not need to bring theirs to camp. When they do, and they disappear- We can not spend an inordinate amount of time acting like police detectives. We do our due diligence, asking the kids involved, and we notify the “magic staff” to look out for certain cards/boxes. But really, the best thing we can do is to continue to promote a culture of integrity, kindness, and respect. I am meeting with the magic card specialist next week, and will update our families if we update our policies.
- 16. “My kids had a hard time with the reward system of receiving fuzzies and beads due to their ‘perceived behaviors’ when the reality might be that their counselors or peers might not view them as such, which can be upsetting to the kids. Same with the rules of who receives a slushy- Who gets them? Who decrees them?” Are they a reward, or just birthdays? These items can be divisive, and a reward system doesn’t seem to be needed at a place like camp- it’s not school, so why set up ‘competition’ like this?” All should act and behave well, not rewarded for what should be considered basic expectations.”**
- a. Terrific question, that I will be sure to go over in more detail during my pre-camp Parent Zooms. At Liberty Lake, we do our best to create a culture of kindness, love, and support, along the lines of our Star Points- and it doesn’t just happen because we say so- it has taken a lot of intentionality. Last year, we put in a brand new system with different colored beads, so that the staff could be a lot more generous in giving them out, as the Fuzzies are meant for “bigger” more out of the ordinary acts of kindness. When the staff sees kids exhibiting the character traits of our star points, they are supposed to give out the beads. Last year was

our first summer with this new initiative, so as you can imagine, some staff took to it better than others. It should be much better next summer. Fuzzies are given out in front of the entire division (or the camp on Friday afternoon) and are for the “Wow” moments that we want to tell everyone about. It can be argued that the beads are being given out for behaviors that we expect- but the fact is that many kids benefit from seeing others being rewarded for these behaviors. That said, we’re always re-examining what we do, and are always seeking to improve.

- b. Slushies are mostly for birthdays, and all kids who return to camp get a mailed birthday card/slushy pass that they can cash in during the summer. Confusion is caused when the new campers do not have them (yet!) - which needs to be better explained, for sure (another one for the Laketonary, if it’s not there already!)
- c. When I first became a camp director, 25 years ago, it was the time of “everyone gets a trophy” and we worked hard not to hurt anyone’s feelings- you might say, to the detriment of society. Any time we reward people, we also run the risk of hurting other people’s feelings- and while we do our best to mitigate it (like adding the beads this year), it’s something that will happen to them for the rest of their lives. I give out a “staff of the week” for each division, every week of camp- and before I do it, I often explain how when I was a camp counselor, I NEVER won recognition at the camp I was at, and it legit infuriated me. One of my division leaders told me last week how she’s still upset that she was never chosen to be a Color War general! There is an arbitrariness in life that often can’t be avoided, unless we bubble wrap everybody. That said, we will continue to do our best to balance this, but as you can see at the bottom of this page- people LOVE our the values we preach and teach. Thanks again for this superb comment- by far my favorite!!!

17. “Snacks for the after-care kids- My kids were starving at the end of every day.”

- a. If this was Family Feud, this would be the #1 complaint from last summer. We will double our purchasing of pretzels and corn chips for this summer- I promise. Also know that we are very concerned about allergies at this time, since the kids are not with their normal counselors- limiting the choices we can give out. So, we have to stick with the bland and generic snacks. In all honesty, we may end up charging a fee for before/after care in 2025, like they do at school, that will enable us to have more programming, purchase better food for the kids, and not have to spread that cost over the 90% of families who do not utilize extended care.

THANK YOU AGAIN for your input- If you’d like to discuss any of the above, please Email me when a good time to chat would be.

- Below are some affirming quotes as to what families love about Liberty Lake:

- *Best summer ever -- You delivered! For me, it's the ease. For them it's the fun. For all of us, it's the safety. My kids were engaged and safe and having a BLAST all summer long. I didn't have to drive them to and from, nor did I have to pack lunches -- it felt like a vacation for me too! And they came home talking a blue*

streak about the new things they tried. My oldest did archery almost every week and couldn't get enough. My youngest is just dying to get to pick his electives next year. THANK YOU for such a special summer!

- *Great attitude from everyone involved with the camp and a positive outlook that the kids can see and feel.*
- *Excellent programming; caring and attentive staff; great flexibility and communication*
- *Super high quality and culture. The staff is stable and consistent (We even had the same bus captain (shout out to Alex on bus D!) for two years. Incredible diversity of activities. And the kids come home so happy. and NO SCREENS - thank you for that.*
- *Amazing staff, electives, no screens, wonderful people*
- *Focus on values, inclusiveness and opportunities to try new things.*
- *My children love going to LLDC. The countdown to the first day of camp starts early in our house. I love knowing that they'll be outdoors, running around and doing anything that isn't involving a screen. They love having so many electives to choose from and always being able to find something fun to pick.*
- *Values of LLDC, inclusivity and appreciation for being outdoor. And variety of activities for the kids to learn and develop new skills!*
- *I love the diversity of people AND activities! There is truly something for every type of kid.*
- *It's a great place for my kids to challenge themselves physically and socially*
- *It has everything they could want to have an awesome summer, with great counselors and staff.*
- *Kids are tired and happy without their devices at the end of the day*
- *The memories the children are making. Supportive environment. Understanding of individual needs of the children.*
- *We really value the sense of adventure it is. Our daughter gets on a bus by herself, and spends the days doing new things with new people. We also really value that she is outside all day long. We hope she is really growing from it.*
- *The community, the engagement, the mentorship and fun activities- esp the lakes!*
- *The fact that my kid is happy to go to camp, that it's electronics FREE and my kid comes home happy and tired every day. The biggest factor is we are comfortable sending her to Liberty lake where we know she is well looked after. Great peace of mind for working parents.*
- *The fact that the camp is completely outdoors and offers a safe place for our child to explore and grow in her social and independent skills, we truly appreciate this.*
- *Our daughter has made new friends and gotten outside of her comfort zone – it was fun to see!*
- *Where do we start? LLDC truly has the campers best interests at heart. I know my son will have fun, be challenged, meet other great kids and staff - and not have an electronic in hand all day! While no one is perfect, Liberty Lake is pretty close and if something is not right, they work to fix it!*
- *It truly feels like a family.*
- *The genuine care the staff have for the campers. My children tell stories of their advocates, counselors, group leaders and staff interactions most.*
- *Lots of activities. No phones!!*
- *Andy does a wonderful job at ensuring a very diverse and inclusive camp experience for all campers.*
- *Inclusion is important, a focus on outdoors, swim and choice of activities and no technology*
- *The friendship bonds, the interactions between the staff and the kids, all the excitement every day.*
- *It's a safe and comfortable environment that allows kids to be themselves. The focus on kindness and positivity permeates the entire experience starting with the bus ride. Everyone, from the bus captains to the division leaders, to the nurse, creates a welcoming environment that allows kids to have fun, engage, challenge themselves at times or just relax and hang out with new friends in the shade.*
- *They get to experience so many things and learn and grow so much every summer!*
- *Seems like all that happens there is FUN! No room for boredom and incredibly conscious of the whole child.*
- *Our kids were prancing at the door every morning and couldn't get to camp quickly enough- even the kiddo who can be slow to warm to new situations. They felt comfortable immediately, and as a result they happily stepped out of their comfort zones and tried new things.*
- *Our son formed an incredible bond with his counselor that we hope will last for years. The diversity and inclusivity were just what our boy needed. We saw more growth in these eight weeks than we've seen at any other time in his development.*

- *Love the no cell phone, all outside time. Kiddo comes home tired in a good way and gets to try new things and meet new people.*
- *My boys have made great friendships - everyone is very nice - electives are very fun. As for us parents, we feel that our kids are in a healthy, safe environment with great counselors and fellow campers.*
- *Liberty Lakes has a great sense of family, teamwork, and community where kids get to be kids and do some many outdoor activities that they may not have the opportunity to participate in during the school year. Liberty Lakes allows kids to be themselves and embrace what makes themselves and others unique!*
- *It's the total package: Clear communication, easy transportation, daily swimming(!), excellent extracurriculars, obvious high level of work ethic and empathy from the staff, etc.*
- *Since the first day, both kids loved the all activities and the family feel. It's like being on vacation every day!*
- *The warm and welcoming environment for children of all genders, races, physical abilities and capabilities, the camp leadership, and last but not least, the sheer joy and happiness that it brings to our daughters.*
- *My kids always have fun and enjoy their interactions with the other campers as well as the staff. I love the fact that they spend their time unplugged and outside in nature!!*
- *So many to list. The elective program, the energy and positivity that Andy and the staff bring to each and every day. The honesty and integrity of a quality program that enhances my child's life experiences daily!*
- *A safe and fun place to spend the summer without electronics. Building relationships outside of electronics is so important.*
- *My child has the best time at camp every summer- she loves the activities and her friends. The staff is amazing and create a fun and safe experience.*
- *Liberty lake provides an amazing environment, both with staff and activities, for our children. Our children look forward to camp all year and truly love every day while there. Keep doing what you are doing because it's the best!*
- *Our son looks forward to being there everyday. I love that he gets to be outside all day playing, away from screens and having the opportunity to be more independent.*
- *Our boys look forward to camp every year. A place to make friends, try new things and gain independence.*
- *Our child's happiness, first and foremost. Our daughter explored new activities, made new friends and had so much fun!*
- *I know my daughter is getting first rate care and major amounts of fun while she attends.*
- *Our son has adhd and autism and Terry goes above and beyond for all kids to have a " typical" camp experience. We return to liberty lake for the inclusion aspect. Our son is just another camper at LL not a camper with special needs. We are forever grateful.*
- *It has so many different options for them as far as activities, keeps them busy, off their devices, allows them to learn and grow in a fun environment and gives them confidence, new experiences and lasting friendships.*
- *I have 2 kids with very different interests. They both LOVE going to camp. They spend their summer being active and outside. They make friends and do activities they don't normally do (liking boating and high ropes).*
- *There is just so much love and joy! An amazing place.*
- *This has been a summer staple for many years! My child loves her camp friends and has had the opportunity to experience many new activities throughout the years that have sometimes taken her out of her comfort zone in a safe, encouraging environment*
- *Screenless, enriching, diverse and engaged summer experience*
- *The family-like atmosphere and the care and attention the staff gives to each camper*
- *The joy from the moment they get on the bus, camp starts. I think that is very special and unique to LLDC. Everyone is involved with the bus cheers even the driver. It connects the campers across divisions. My kids can go anywhere for camp and they want to be at LLDC. They enjoy the all camp activities and it's always special when it's their counselor's first time at camp, too. They have a lot to share.*
- *The staff contribute to my children's growth exponentially. The staff always give 1000% percent and are invested in the kids, that is what makes LLDC a special place.*
- *The smiles on my kids faces when they come home every single day. They are just so happy at camp and love every minute of it.*
- *You're all so very special to us. We appreciate all of you more than you may ever know. See you next summer!*

- *The amazing staff, classes, being outside all day, swimming lessons, a huge sense of community and the amazing memories made every single day of every summer.*
- *Amazing day camp. This isn't a place you dump your kids because you need to work. This is a place kids look forward to going to. The entire staff is trained, professional and there to help your kids develop social skills, learn how to have fun, but at the same time teaching kids to feel good about themselves and be part of a team. This camp is exceptionally well organized and goes above and beyond any children's program I've ever seen! The camp's grounds are impeccably maintained, the amenities are outstanding, excellent communication from staff. You always know what's going on. You can see how Andy and his team love what they do and the kids they do this for! Amazing.*
- *So many things. When they come off the bus crying on the last day of camp I know it is tuition money well spent. They love the camp experience: making friends, leadership from their counselors, the fun theme days, contests and events, and the variety of electives/activities - all in a safe, caring and fun environment.*
- *This camp has been and continues to be such a gift for our two kids. They both love their time at camp. It is a place we trust and it feels like home. It is safe, fun and memorable.*
- *My kids have created lasting friendships. We love the inclusivity. Despite the fact that more of their friends go to another camp, they consistently ask to go back to Liberty Lake.*
- *They love every part of it - swimming, food, electives, and on and on. For us, the progress they've made swimming is extraordinary.*
- *Our child genuinely loves going and is exhausted and happy at the end of each day*
- *It creates an inclusive environment for my child. The variety of activities suits all interests and the counselors really take the time to get to know my child.*
- *The friendships and memories are irreplaceable.*
- *My son has such an amazing time at your camp. It takes them a week to get adjusted in the other two he just enjoys himself. I love it because there's no tech involved.*
- *My child had a great time and we loved that she was outside all day away from screens and in nature.*
- *Our son had a blast! He really enjoyed the electives offered! He came home excited to share about his day, and was even more excited to go back the next day.*
- ***Liberty Lake Day Camp is a true utopia for kids of all ages where core memories are made through meaningful connections and a strong sense of belonging. LLDC has helped my son further discover who he is as a person by allowing him freedom of choice in personalizing his camp experience, and then providing him with the tools to support him throughout his journey this summer. Summer '22 was my son's first time at LLDC - he attended for two weeks and had the assistance of an advocate. Last summer at camp, he learned that he liked playing on team sports and he also had his first opportunity to go up on stage in front of an audience when he was asked to talk about the homemade costume that he made for superhero day. Although this may seem minimal for some, for him, this was life changing. Flash forward to the end of seven weeks at LLDC Summer '23, he performed flawlessly in LLDC's camp musical. He is signed up for his second season of flag football in our township's rec league, and he is looking to join a local theater group! I am so proud of the young man that he is becoming, and I have Andy, Terry, and the rest of Liberty Lake Day Camp staff to thank. They say raising a child takes a village. Thank you for being a part of his village and giving him these amazing opportunities and memories. You are all so very special to us. We appreciate all of you more than you may ever know. See you next summer!***

Almost 200 Days to Camp!