



May 30, 2026

Dear Northern Lights Community Members,

There is a special kind of silence beaming with anticipation that settles over the shores of Bear Island Lake before the first families of summer arrive.

The cabins are swept and waiting. The canoes are tucked neatly along the shoreline. The Northwoods trails are quiet — for now — and the whole camp feels like it's holding its breath, waiting for the first splash in the lake, the familiar smell of woodsmoke, and the sound of shared laughter and singing that defines a summer at Camp Northern Lights.

That moment has arrived.

As I look out across the water, I'm reminded that what we do here is more than just provide a vacation. In a world that feels increasingly loud and "plugged in," you help us provide a sanctuary, a space to connect with community and the natural world. Because of your support, families have a place to set down their phones, pick up a paddle, and rediscover the simple joy of being together while taking in all that nature has to offer.



Before the docks fill and the first campfires are lit, I want to invite you behind the scenes. Here are a few highlights and updates I'm excited to share with you as we head into this season:

- Over the past year, Camp Northern Lights surpassed its **\$120,000 Annual Fund goal**, helping make camp accessible for more than 80 families through scholarships and tiered pricing — ensuring that **cost is not a barrier** to experiencing the connection, growth, and renewal that camp provides.
- Even amid a **year of transition** — including welcoming a new Executive Director, Program Director, and Property Manager — our team has remained deeply committed to delivering high-quality, mission-driven programming, while also bringing fresh ideas to **expand accessibility** and enhance year-round use of camp spaces.



- Camp continues to be a place of meaningful impact, as seen in our **fully enrolled S.T.E.P.S. program**, where 48 families secured summer sessions. The excitement is heightened this year, with one participant sharing how camp offers their family the opportunity to "relax and breathe without having to worry about what's happening at home – something to look forward to during challenging, tumultuous times."

- Programmatically, we are working to continually expand beyond the summer season to meet growing community interest, with **new seasonal offerings** like a Fall Women’s Retreat in September and a Mother-Daughter Retreat in March, creating more opportunities for individuals and families to experience camp across all four seasons.



- This summer, we’re excited to deepen camper experiences through the **return of naturalist programming** for all age groups, a **revitalized nursery space** for our youngest campers, and a renewed partnership with **Tofte Lake Center**, bringing artist-led experiences that spark creativity and connection with nature.



- Donor support continues to be essential — not only in sustaining our Annual Fund, but also in advancing our **Capital Campaign** to build a kitchen and dining hall, a critical next step in enhancing program quality and supporting future growth. Additional support also fuels our **Impact Weekends**, where volunteers help prepare and improve camp spaces, ensuring a welcoming, high-quality experience for every camper.

These updates represent more than just projects or programs; they represent the growth of a community that you help sustain. Your generosity is behind every first-time camper finding their courage to try something new and families from all walks of life having a seat at our table.



Looking ahead to summer and beyond, I am filled with gratitude. Together, we are stewarding a legacy of connection and belonging that stays with people long after they leave the Northwoods.

Thank you for being the heart of the Camp Northern Lights community. We are honored to have you by our side as a partner and friend, helping to keep our mission and all it carries shining bright.

Here’s to another unforgettable summer!

In gratitude,

Isaac Patterson

Isaac Patterson, Executive Director

