

# THE CHIRRUP

January 2021 \* 99 Years of the Pioneer Spirit \* edited by Darcey Wijsenbeek

## Director's Notebook

Although you can't ski on it, my favorite snow is a little wet and four inches deep. That snow makes tracking animal neighbors just about perfect. The first tracks I found were many rabbit tracks to and from a big rabbit warren a few yards away. They are still able to find food to add to their winter stores.

Not surprisingly, the next tracks belong to a fox—carefully stepping in its own tracks to investigate what's happening in the warren, and look for a meal.

The fox's meal is most often a mouse or shrew, shrews are tough fighters, but a fox has an advantage. The shrew builds tunnels with rooms and branches just visible as humped lines under the snow. The fox will follow those lines to grab a shrew to eat.

Owls also follow those tunnels across open fields, and listen for the shrews and mice beneath the snow. With an incredible sense of hearing, owls can fly silently above the snow-covered fields or woods and find their next meal.

The last neighbors on my list are the squirrels and maybe a chipmunk or two. The squirrels hang out in the various pine and hemlock trees, eating seeds from cones, to add to their winter stashes of acorns and nuts.

— Mike

## Hey, Everybody! Guess What?

No, no. This isn't a birthday announcement. I just wanted to make sure I had your attention. There are a lot of changes coming to Sangamon and when you come back this summer, camp will look different to you. There are new buildings coming, renovations happening, and adjustments being planned to help us operate in our new reality. Not to worry though, you'll still recognize us, and we're excited to keep you updated on some of the changes as they happen over the spring.

Our first big change announcement is...*our new website!*



Its been a long time coming and we're excited for today's launch. That's right, we're live as of early this morning. My favorite part about it is that it was designed and built by one of our very own, Rob Anderson. Rob spent many summers at camp starting as a camper and making it all the way through to staff. (Yes, he is over 600 points!). His brother is also a Sangaman and the tradition has continued with his own son as well as his nephews.

Head on over and have a look: [www.campsangamon.com](http://www.campsangamon.com) and then share with your friends - word of mouth is still our best form of advertising! We'll be updating the site regularly with news, notes, and photos, so keep an eye out.



# Thoughts for the New Year

Hello from a wintry Vermont, everyone. It has been quite a start to the new year, and up here we're all pretty grateful to be starting with new hope for the future. The Sangamon community is a supportive one and this year has clearly shown the value of this. Many camp people have told me how they have leaned on each other and many have reached out to us to offer help and support as we all negotiate a very unpredictable world. I enter 2021 committed to a number of things on camp's behalf, and on my own behalf, and I thought that I would share some of them with you.



- What camp does is important. Every year during orientation I urge the staff to understand that we are a small, intentional community of people, and that as such we are not bound by the limits of the world at large. We can create and nurture kindness and empathy in ways that don't work in the anonymity of a larger group, and we can make our own rules as to what is acceptable behavior. Historically, we have chosen compassion and acceptance. We will continue to do so, regardless of how our country evolves.

- We will exist. A year away from what we do is challenging mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially. It was hard to see so many members of our community struggle, and to know that camp is often the balm that eases angst for so many of us, and to know that we couldn't safely operate. We hated it. The closure was also hard on our finances, but with the help and generosity of many individuals within our world, Sangamon is not going anywhere. We will exist, and if it is safe to do so we will run this summer. We expect that it will be, and we are planning for a 99<sup>th</sup> year of operations full of fun and comradery.

- We all need to do more. Your duty and obligation to the world largely waits for you to be older, but hopefully you take from camp the skills of living in community and caring for those around you. We hope that you have learned to reach beyond mere acceptance towards a celebration of all the wondrous miraculous diverse beauty of our camp family. We want you to try new things, help a friend, think through your actions, and have fun. Our duty as administrators and directors is to look beyond that, to educate ourselves about how to be more mindful in our pursuit of camp's mission to better the world through our behavior and leadership. We voted for change in the world, and in doing so we helped our country move towards compassion. Our duty does not end there. We need to find more ways to institutionally support those with less privilege than ourselves and find ways to widen the scope of our influence. We have taken time this year to start that process. We are reading, listening, watching, and planning. We will continue to rage against the meanness, the anger, and the devaluing of experience that has become so common of late. We will help you become young men who are not overwhelmed by the burden of changing the world but rather feel capable of great things and are able to influence communities outside of camp with what you've learned at Sangamon.

- What you have, as young people, is essential. Kindness, empathy, love, and acceptance are innate in humans. At 45 years old I do not, and cannot, doubt that. You are born good. Almost all of us are. The pathway to rage, hate, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia is not a natural one. It is learned behavior, and none of us has to engage in learning it. Our weakest, least proud moments as a nation were fed by fear, ignorance, and willful greed. Sangamon is a stronger community because it embraces all who would willingly participate in sustaining it, whether they come from here, another powerful nation, or a smaller country without agency in the world. The US, historically, has been made stronger by accepting and embracing difference, by evaluating contribution rather than skin color, actions rather than orientation, and behavior rather than national background. Instead of fear or hate we hope to help you learn love and understanding.

- We are here for you. These are challenging times and there are sure to be many questions and concerns in your minds about where things stand and how camp will work. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or concerns. We believe that camp exists far beyond the borders and boundaries of our physical campus and we embrace our roles as counselors and leaders year-round.



We are excited to see you this summer and we can't wait for the first Apprenti to arrive and ring in the start of summer!

— Jed





Sangamon!

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## **The list of campers for 2021 growing!**

We know there is still uncertainty, but we are hopeful!

Even if you haven't completely nailed down your summer plans, get in touch and let me know that you are planning to return.

You can reach me at (802) 665-7505 or by email: [darcey@campsangamon.com](mailto:darcey@campsangamon.com)

*"Hey Everybody! Guess what? We have a birthday!"*

**Happiest Birthday wishes being sent to the following Sangamen who celebrated a birthday in December or have one this month!**

Cameron Andrews, Jed Byrom, Jacob Crump, Max Derby, Robert Galpern-Levin, Asa Garcia-Derbes, Andrew Gogolin, James Golding, Tintin Harris, Ryan Hernandez, Alex Hernandez, Coltyr Jenike, Phin Kennedy-Mitchell, Jaden Lopes da Silva, Declan Murphy, Liam Murphy, Hillel Muskin, Ben Parsegian, Tupper Quenneville, Judah Shiffman, Jack Snelling, and Owen Zacherau.