



# CAMP MASON Message

YMCA Camp Ralph S. Mason

Spring 2011

## Summer's Just Around the Corner!

The ice is off the lake, the trees are showing their buds, and before you know it spring will unfold here in Hardwick. This always an exciting time of year, because now is the time when winter planning and preparation starts to turn into anticipation - summer is almost here!

We're excited about a number of encouraging signs coming into the 2011 season at Camp Mason. Our enrollment numbers are up, and interest in our programs continues to grow. More families than ever are coming back to camp – brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends – and our message of friendship, adventure, discovery and fun are spreading throughout the community. Don't miss your chance to come back to Camp Mason and grow along with us!

We're also looking forward to new activities this summer, including an expanded woodshop program (a very popular activity last summer), more animals at the farm (look for ducks this year), and an increased emphasis on the camp's natural environment (hiking, exploring, and discovery). Every summer is a new adventure at camp, and this year will be no exception!

Sharing the story of Camp Mason has never been more important. Families from all of our programs - Summer Camp, Ranch Camp, Adventure Bound, and Day Camp Shannon - share their love for this special place by telling their friends about what makes a summer at Camp Mason unique and meaningful. Carly Piwowarczyk, a former camper and current Day Camp Shannon staff member, shares this about her experiences here:

*"Year after year camp has helped me grow as an individual and learn life skills that I use every day. A co-counselor of mine and I have decided to go to college to work with children because of the great kids we've met here at camp. We enjoy showing campers that being kind and tolerant is the right way to be!"*

Sage Adams, a long-time camper, writes:

*"My cabin becomes my family and my peers make camp feel like home. I come away from camp with a sense of accomplishment. Because of camp I am a better person!"*

And Kenya Peters, a camper from the U.K. who found us through the efforts of a Mason staff alum, says this about her time at camp:

*"It's not the activities that make Camp Mason so special, it's the memories you make and the lifelong friends you hold in your heart."*

Thank you to all of the families and friends who have joined in this vision of a place where kids can be their very best selves, one summer at a time. Camp Mason truly does belong to all of you – families and staff members, friends and volunteers. All of you make the work we do here possible. Keep sharing your stories - and let's fill camp in 2011!



### YMCA Camp Ralph S. Mason - The Mason Message

The **Mason Message** is published twice a year by YMCA Camp Ralph S. Mason to share news and events with our camp families, alumni, staff, volunteers, neighbors, supporters and all who believe in and share our YMCA youth development mission!





**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

## A Brand New Y

Have you noticed that the YMCA is changing the way that it presents itself? The YMCA of the USA (of which Camp Mason is a chartered member) has undergone an extensive brand revitalization process. It's a fascinating endeavor, and it has yielded some excellent results.

The revitalization has included the unveiling of a new, more forward-looking logo with multiple color palette options. But, more important than the new logo and graphic design elements, the Y has adopted a new voice. And the newly-articulated Y cause – **Strengthening the Foundations of Community** and its three areas of focus: **Youth Development, Healthy Lifestyles and Social Responsibility** – is tailor-made for camp. In fact, in our (possibly-biased) opinion, there is no program within the Y that serves these three pillars better than camping!

In this and future newsletters, you'll read just how Camp Mason addresses these three pillars of the Y. We'll do so by sharing stories of the impact and importance of the camp experience. And we'd love it if you'd share your Camp Mason story with us! Look below for ways to do just that!



*Youth Development*



*Healthy Lifestyles*



*Social Responsibility*



### MISSION

*Through the transforming experience of outdoor camping – rich in bonding friendships, physical activity and fun – YMCA Camp Mason will lead youth, families and community to an awareness of our core traditions: environmental stewardship, spirituality and respect for our fellow man.*

YMCA Camp Mason  
YMCA Camp Seldon Shannon  
Mason Outdoor Center

23 Birch Ridge Road  
Hardwick, NJ 07825  
908-362-8217  
Fax 908-362-5767

**www.CampMason.org**

Camp Mason is a 501(c) 3 non-profit corporation. All contributions are fully tax deductible and go to program, facilities and scholarships that benefit the children directly.

*Camp Mason through all and any of its programs serves all children and families on a first-come, first-serve basis, without regard to race, religion, sex, national origin, economic situation or physical challenge. Families in need of financial assistance should contact the camp office for help and information.*

## We Want to Hear Your Camp Mason Story!

Everyone has their own story of their camp experience. It might be a memory of your first summer away from home, or the cabinmate who became a lifelong friend, or the counselor who helped you through a tough time. It could be from family camp, an outdoor education school trip, or summer camp. These anecdotes are incredibly powerful and can help to convey the real impact and value of Camp Mason.

We want to collect these stories and share them in newsletters and on our website. So – write them down and send them to us by email, fax or regular mail. Alternately, we'd also like to capture your memories via video and post these on the web as well. Please contact Dave DeLuca for more information about the **Camp Mason Stories Project**.



### LOOK WHOOO'S VISITING CAMP!

*This Eastern Screech Owl has taken up residence in a tree alongside our parking lot. He's been there for well over a month and shows no signs of leaving.*

# JOIN THE RACIN' FOR MASON TEAM 2011 - By Tom Mason

Punxsutawney Phil didn't see his shadow this past February. The snow has melted. Daffodils are poking through the ground. Summer camp is only two months away.

I have many memories of my time at camp. Trying new activities, seeing old friends and making new ones. I loved being outside at camp and still do. I've participated in the camp's Spring and Fall Work Weekends and always look forward to the summer board meeting at camp. Spending time at Camp Mason is one of my favorite activities. Another is riding my bicycle.

Now that the roads are no longer iced-over and the temperatures are reaching the 50's and higher I am cycling the country roads of Mercer and Hunterdon Counties. I am planning to make the 65-mile ride from my house in Hopewell, NJ to Camp Mason on opening day, June 26, again this year. Last year I made this ride solo on the bike with road support from my wife Emily, sister Karen and friend Bob Heil. We all wore our Racin' for Mason Team 2010 jerseys, and thanks to the generous support of our official sponsors, we raised over \$15,000 for our Annual Fund Campaign! Now what could be more fun, cycling, going to camp, and raising money for camperships to boot!

This year we hope to have a group of riders join in on this fun event. Campers, parents, alumni and friends are all welcome. Send me an email, tell me what you like to do at Camp Mason and what type of cycling you enjoy. Together we can help each other to be better cyclists as well as work towards the goal of raising support for Camp Mason. You can join me for all of the ride or the final portion. All team members will get a professional custom-made Racin' for Mason cycling jersey and have the support of our Racin' for Mason team.

We will post the race route map and other details on [Campmason.org](http://Campmason.org) once we hear from YOU and others who want to join the ride. You can also participate as a support team member... everybody is welcome!

June 26 will be here soon. Don't miss out on weeks of fun at camp. And don't miss the opportunity to be part of the Racin' for Mason Team 2011.

*Tom Mason is the Chair of the Camp Mason Board of Trustees and the son of the man for whom the camp is named. The Mason family has been involved with our camp for almost 80 years. Tom can be reached by email at [tommason@campmason.org](mailto:tommason@campmason.org)*



---

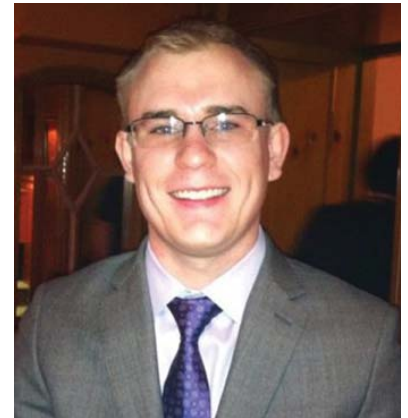
## Steven Bath Joins Camp Mason Board

The Camp Mason Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that Steven Bath has joined the board. It will be a family affair for the Baths, as Steve joins his father Dave, a longtime Mason Trustee.

Steve Bath says, "I'm excited to join the Camp Mason Board because with my help I hope that future campers can have the same wonderful experience I've had. Like other board members, some of whom went to the camp over forty years ago, I've made lifelong friends with people I never would have known otherwise. At a young age I learned to appreciate the activities associated with the outdoors. The camping, hiking and canoeing were especially interesting and the counselors had my best interest at heart when it came to teaching me skills and safety."

Steve lives in Newtown, Pennsylvania and works in the family jewelry business in Hamilton Square, New Jersey. He attended Camp Mason for eight years as a camper and subsequently spent two summers on the staff.

Regarding his camp experience, Steve states, "The camp broadened my horizons greatly as a young man and set me up for success later on in life. I use the tools that I learned at camp everyday in my relationships and in my business. It is of vital importance to me that the camp continues to prosper and influence the lives of our youth. I feel blessed to be a part of the wonderful and magical place we all know as home, Camp Mason."



---

## Volunteer Work Day on May 7

Due to an unexpected early spring snowstorm, our March 25-27 Spring Work Weekend was unfortunately cancelled. It would have been quite difficult to take on such projects as planting, mulching and exterior cabin painting in 35-degree temperatures with ten inches of snow on the ground!

But we've rescheduled! We'll hold a slightly-condensed volunteer work day on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. We'll take on a variety of projects – carpentry, landscaping, painting and general cleaning – as well as enjoy the fellowship of a Camp Mason experience. And – most importantly – our spring work day will conclude in time for families to spend the May 8<sup>th</sup> Mother's Day holiday with that certain someone!

For more details about our volunteer work day, please call the camp office or visit our website.

# In Passing: Janet Robinson

By Marty Birkenthal

Mrs. R – Camp Mom to countless numbers of kids during the 1960s – slipped peacefully out of life during the wee hours of March 3, 2011. Born in Rochester NY of French-Canadian parentage, Mary Janet Belle-Isle was the seventh and youngest child of Janet and Joseph Belle-Isle. Jan spent her younger years attending school and living with her large family in nearby Brighton NY. Following her graduation from Brighton High School in 1940, Jan was employed by Eastman Kodak in Rochester as a secretary. It was there that she met Edward W. Robinson whom she married on October 2, 1943.



In 1950 and with three young children in tow – Donna, Bill, and Deb – Jan and Ed relocated the family to White Plains NY where Ed pursued his career in the YMCA. Through the decade of the '50s Ed's "Y" work spilled over into their home to which Jan lent a very willing hand and participated fully. From Hi-Y Club advisor to exchange student mom to, of course, mom to her own family, Jan readily gravitated towards and surrounded herself with what she later in life would refer to as "you good young people."

Between 1960 and 1969, Ed was Executive Director of Camp Mason, which was then known as Central New Jersey YMCA Camps. Jan officially joined her husband in his Y career and held the position of Registrar – the second of only three full-time jobs at camp in those days (the third full-time position was that of the Resident Manager). With their home in Kendall Park, Jan spent her work days between early September and late June at Camp's "permanent" office in nearby Princeton. During the summer season, she and Ed lived at camp in the apartment adjacent to the main office, one that is still in use as a residence. While her responsibilities – both official and unofficial – were numerous and multi-layered (secretary, registrar, dietician, bookkeeper, supplies purchaser, transport provider, etc.) it was her endearing role as Camp Mom that will be forever remembered, the one person who could take a homesick kid into her embrace and transform a frowning face full of tears to one having a bright smile. Weaving her special touch and tone with the wisdom and words of "Winnie-the-Pooh," she had the ability to uplift the most despondent of youngsters – and more than a few "older than youngsters" to boot.

A natural giver, Jan continued to work with kids after she and Ed left Camp Mason in 1969. She worked with Ed in camping through the mid-1970s and then, up to her retirement in 1987, in the student work-study program at South Brunswick High School. Her most challenging undertaking came after that, however, when she volunteered to work with terminally ill and HIV+ babies at Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Brunswick – a job she selflessly performed, putting in more than two thousand hours over a 12-year period.

Mary Janet Belle-Isle Robinson is now reunited with her eldest child, Donna Marie Rugg, who predeceased her in March 2008. She is survived by her husband of 67 years, Edward "Robbie" Robinson, son E. William "Bill" Robinson, daughter Deborah Jean Overholt, a very large and loving family, and thousands of "good young people," all of whom celebrate her life and mourn her passing.

So here's to you Mrs. Robinson, we love you more than you will ever know . . .  
*Marty Birkenthal was one of those "good young people" who was at camp during the Robinson years. He serves as a member of our board of trustees and is currently developing the Janet B. Robinson Campership Fund as a means to perpetuate the memory of this remarkable woman.*



## On the Road Again

By Dave DeLuca

As the days grow longer, so does the enthusiasm for another Camp Mason summer season. As a 25-year veteran of YMCA Camping, I love the feeling of anticipation that builds as we get closer and closer to opening day.

Of course, there's a lot happening at Camp Mason right now. The Mason Outdoor Center's spring season is in full swing. We've got a great crew of seasonal naturalists leading our programs. More than 50 schools and groups will visit us between now and the start of summer camp. It's wonderful to watch our guests enjoy all that our camp has to offer and to know that our programs have a real impact on their lives.

As for me – I'm looking forward to spending some time **away** from camp this spring. As strange as that may sound, there are some good reasons for this. I'm going to be out visiting our families, alumni, donors and friends in order to hear their stories about camp and to seek their guidance as we begin to shape Camp Mason's future. I know that it will be time well-spent.

So – I'm grabbing my atlas (and my GPS unit) and hitting the road! My travels through New Jersey and beyond will help to better acquaint me with the greater Camp Mason community and serve to inform our decisions on a number of important topics. I hope that our paths will cross soon!

*Dave DeLuca is Camp Mason's CEO. He has previously worked at YMCA Camps in Massachusetts, Missouri and Vermont.*

## Janet Robinson Service at Alumni Weekend

During our October 7-10 Alumni Weekend, we will hold a memorial service for Jan Robinson. More information will be forthcoming as the planning for the weekend is finalized.

# Join Us at Alumni Weekend

Mark your calendars! Camp Mason's 2011 Alumni Weekend will be held October 7-10. We're looking forward to a great showing from our former campers and counselors – it doesn't matter if you attended Mason, Central or even Camp Wilson.

Early October is a great time to visit northwestern New Jersey and to reconnect with old friends. Hike to the fire tower, paddle the Delaware, take aim at the archery range and participate in all your favorite activities. Or, just relax and enjoy the camp environment. Share a cabin with your old bunkmates and enjoy meals and fellowship in the dining hall.

As noted elsewhere in the newsletter, our alumni weekend will also include a memorial service for Janet Robinson. We will celebrate the life of this remarkable woman who meant so much to generations of campers and counselors.

We want to fill camp with our alumni, so please reach out to others and encourage them to attend the weekend. You can find more information about Alumni Weekend 2011 – and an online registration form – on our website at [www.campmason.org](http://www.campmason.org).



## Donor Appreciation Day – Save the Date!

In 2010, Camp Mason received more than \$80,000 in contributions from our extended family of friends and supporters. These funds, in turn, allowed us to provide meaningful summer camp experiences to eighty-one children who otherwise would not have been able to be with us.

Additionally, charitable giving to Camp Mason helped to support our general operations and allowed us to finish 2010 with a financial surplus.

We'd like to thank the 200+ individuals who generously supported the Camp Mason Annual Fund in 2010. This summer, our donors are invited to visit camp on Sunday, July 17<sup>th</sup> to see just what their generosity has made possible.

Our supporters will meet with staff, trustees and – most importantly – the campers who make each summer come alive. We'll serve a tasty lunch and enjoy presentations by the kids. It's guaranteed to be an inspiring and fun event. The Camp Mason Board of Trustees will meet in the morning, before the program begins.

A more formal invitation will be sent out in May. For now, please be sure to save the date for Camp Mason's first annual Donor Appreciation Day!



*"We couldn't have sent the kids to camp without your help. I can't begin to tell you how much they enjoyed Camp Mason. They returned home with a much greater sense of responsibility and independence." - 2010 camp parent*

*"It was really, really fun." - 2010 camper*



## Camp Mason: More Than a Summer Camp

In 2011 Camp Mason will celebrate its 112<sup>th</sup> season of summer camping. For many, our summer program is what Camp Mason is most well known for, but that's only a part of what we offer.

Since the 1950's Camp Mason has been one of New Jersey's leaders in offering residential outdoor and environmental education opportunities. Over 75 schools from across the tri-state area come to the Mason Outdoor Center every year, staying from one to five days, and participating in activities and classes including archaeology, pond ecology, stream study and geology. But environmental studies are not the only reason that schools choose us for their outdoor education experience. Peer leadership groups and other youth groups also take advantage of Camp Mason's extensive high and low ropes courses, climbing tower and teambuilding activities which provide their students with opportunities that they might not otherwise be able to experience.

On weekends and holidays Camp Mason is a popular conference center providing retreat space for churches, schools, youth groups, karate schools, colleges and community groups. Our programs and ample outdoor opportunities ensure that our guests have wonderful experiences that keep them returning again and again.

Camp Mason also hosts several family camp weekends throughout the year. Families can engage in all of the activities that Camp Mason has to offer. Boating, archery, rock-climbing, apple baking, arts and crafts and hikes are just some of the many options available. Many of our family campers have been doing so for years; it's a thrill to see the children grow up. We even have parents that attended family camp as children and keep returning as adults with their new families.

As a loyal Masonite, we would like to ask... who do you know who might benefit from a Camp Mason experience? Are you a member of a church that participates in an annual retreat? Does your child's school undertake a school trip to a camp each year? Isn't it time your family took some time away from the TV and internet and spent a weekend in the outdoors? For all this and more, please keep Camp Mason in the forefront of your mind. We're much, much more than a summer camp!

*Read on to learn about two new Mason Outdoor Center offerings: Women's Wellness and Quilting Weekends!*

## New Fall Outdoor Center Programs

This fall the Mason Outdoor Center will offer two new weekend programs. On October 14-16 we will host our **Women's Wellness Weekend**. Our participants will enjoy programs and activities designed to enhance health, well-being and friendships – all taking place in our beautiful outdoor setting during the spectacular autumn season. Leave the family behind and escape for a weekend of fun and fellowship!

Our first annual **Quilter's Weekend** will take place on November 11-13. Quilting is a growing avocation and we'll provide aficionados with an opportunity to share, learn and socialize with other quilters. In addition to these opportunities, we'll provide tasty meals and other recreational activities.

More information on these and other Outdoor Center programs may be found on our website or by calling the camp office.

# Goats and Chickens and Tomatoes

## Camp Mason's Farm & Garden Program

During the 2010 summer, our campers seized the opportunity to really get their hands dirty! Camp Mason's farm and garden program - in its second year of existence - was a big hit.

We grew tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini and corn, as well as a colorful patch of wildflowers. Our animals included a rabbit (yes - just one!), two chickens and MaryAnn and Vanilla - a mother-daughter pair of goats. Our chickens free-ranged, gaining more confidence as the summer progressed. By August it was not uncommon to find them just outside the pool fence - peering longingly at the unpecked lawn inside.

We're planning to expand our program in 2011; we'll add ducks to our animal menagerie and a number of other flowers and vegetables to the garden. The addition of a composting area will allow us to utilize food waste from the dining hall to create new soil. Our goats will benefit from a climbing structure within their pen. And eventually we'd like to extend our farm and garden beyond the summer camp season. Certainly a number of our spring and fall outdoor education schools would enjoy this programmatic option.



## Upcoming Events

- April 30 Family Day at Camp - an open house with a variety of activities plus tours for prospective summer campers (12:00-4:00)
- May 7 Spring Volunteer Work Day - an opportunity to help us prepare camp for another summer
- May 15 Open House at Camp - for prospective summer camp families (12:00-4:00)
- May 17 Summer camp promotional slideshow at the Edison YMCA (7:00-8:00pm)
- May 18 Summer camp promotional slideshow at the Princeton Family YMCA (7:00-8:00pm)
- May 19 Summer camp promotional slideshow at the Central Bucks YMCA (7:00-8:00pm)
- May 27-30 Memorial Day Weekend Family Camp
- May 28 Family Day at Camp - an open house with a variety of activities plus tours for prospective summer campers (12:00-4:00)
- June 26 Opening Day of Summer Camp!
- July 17 Donor Appreciation Day at camp (& summer board meeting)
- Sept. 2-5 Labor Day Weekend Family Camp

Please contact the camp office for more information about any of these events.

## Join our Online Community!

Last spring we unveiled the newly-redesigned Camp Mason website: [www.campmason.org](http://www.campmason.org). It was a big hit; we regularly receive compliments from our camp families, alumni and others who stop by the site. Visitors have found it to be attractive and informative.

We're also on Facebook! The Camp Mason page has more than 1,000 followers and helps to connect our worldwide family. And if this isn't enough, we've got our own YouTube channel and Twitter feed. These can be accessed from our website homepage.

Both our website and Facebook page are regularly updated with news, photos and other items of interest. Stop by and visit - it's the next best thing to being at camp!



# Summer Registration in Full Swing!

Every day we're receiving registrations for resident camp, day camp and our teen trips program, Adventure Bound. Please don't delay if you're interested in enrolling a child in our summer programs. We're currently **35% ahead** of last year's registration pace.

If you know of families that are looking for a fun, high-quality summer camp experience, please tell them about Camp Mason and share this newsletter with them. We've got a full calendar of promotional events – open houses at camp and informational slideshows in community YMCA's – happening this spring. Check out the full listing on page 7.

A number of our camp families and alumni have volunteered to host in-home slideshows to help promote Camp Mason. If you'd like to have Camp Director Don Jennings hold such an event in your home – and you can attract one or more families interested in learning more about camp – please contact Don at [don@campmason.org](mailto:don@campmason.org).

Let's work together to fill camp and ensure that every child can have a Camp Mason experience!



Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 22  
Behlvere, NJ

**CAMP MASON**  
YMCA  
23 Birch Ridge Road  
Hardwick, NJ 07825