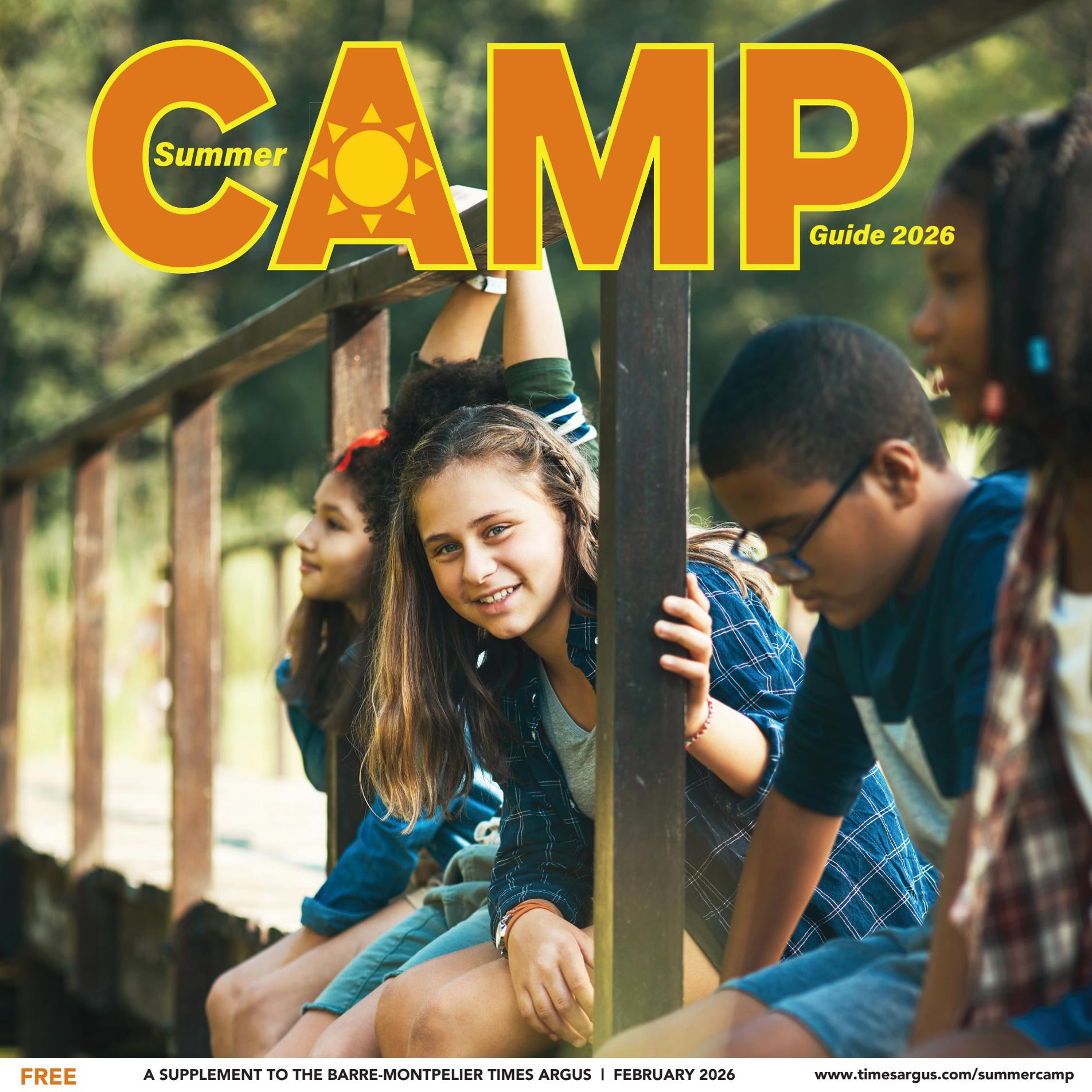


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JULY 13-17	ROCK 'N ROLL	AVAILABLE- 8AM-4:30PM
JULY 20-24	TINKER TALES (3-6 YO)	\$365 for 6-12YO CAMPS, \$400 for 3-6YO CAMPS
JULY 27-31	STEEPED IN NATURE (3-6 YO)	INFO@ALLOTOTHERNOWVT.ORG
AUGUST 3-7	THE FIBER LAB	20 WYVERN WAY, EAST MONTPELIER, VT
AUGUST 10-14	MAGIC MAKERS CAMP	
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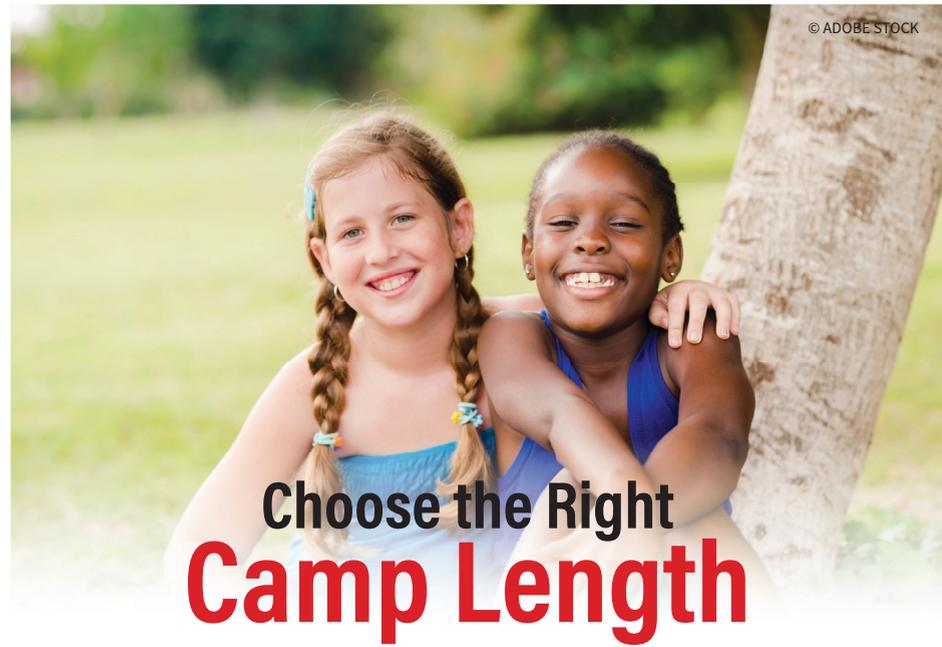
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Choose the Right Camp Length

The word “camp” covers a lot of ground when it comes to summer programs. They come in many formats from half-day programs to multiweek overnight camps.

Each option offers different benefits depending on a child’s age, personality, interests and family needs. Choosing the right length can make camp feel rewarding rather than overwhelming.

Matching Camp Length to Age and Experience

Younger children and first-time campers often do best with shorter programs. Half-day camps provide structure and fun without pushing children too far beyond their comfort zones. This format allows children to build confidence, form friendships and return home each day or week feeling successful.

Full-day camps can be a good next step for elementary-age children who are ready for longer stretches of activity and social interaction. They offer more time for immersive experiences while still maintaining the familiarity of home in the evenings.

Older children and teens may benefit from multiweek or overnight camps, especially if they have prior camp experience. Longer programs allow for deeper friendships, skill development and a stronger sense of independence. For some campers, the extended time helps them fully settle in and feel part of a community.

Considering Temperament and Comfort Level

A child’s temperament plays a significant role in determining the right camp

length. Children who adapt easily to new situations may thrive in longer sessions, while those who need more time to warm up may prefer shorter commitments.

Consider how your child handles transitions, fatigue and downtime. High-energy children may enjoy full days packed with activities, while others may benefit from shorter programs with breaks built in. Another factor is how a child responds to being away from caregivers. Starting with a shorter camp can help ease anxiety and provide a positive first experience that builds confidence for future summers.

Balancing Camp with Family Schedules

Logistics matter, too. Work schedules, transportation and family vacations can influence which camp length makes sense. Half-day camps may require midday pickups, while full-day and multiweek camps can simplify scheduling for working families.

Some families choose to mix and match formats, combining a few short camps with a longer session later in the summer. This approach allows children to explore different interests while maintaining balance.

When evaluating camp options, ask about flexibility, such as extended care or the ability to add weeks if a child wants to stay longer.

There is no single right answer when it comes to camp length. The best choice is one that aligns with a child’s readiness, interests and family needs. With thoughtful planning, camp can become a positive and enriching part of summer, regardless of how long it lasts.

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The Role of Play

Play is often seen as a break from learning, but research and experience consistently show play is part of growth.

Through play, children develop social skills, emotional resilience, creativity and problem-solving abilities that shape how they learn and interact with the world.

In a time when schedules are increasingly packed and screen time is hard to avoid, opportunities for unstructured play are more valuable than ever. Summer camps can provide this kind of meaningful play, especially when they balance structure with freedom and encourage time outdoors.

Why Unstructured Play Matters

Unstructured play allows children to make choices, negotiate rules and follow their curiosity without constant direction from adults. This type of play helps build independence and confidence, as children learn to navigate challenges on their own or with peers.

When children invent games, build forts or create imaginary worlds, they practice flexible thinking and creativity. They

develop emotional skills, such as managing frustration, taking turns and resolving conflicts. These experiences support cognitive growth in ways that cannot be replicated through worksheets or screens.

The Scientific American reported free play is critical to children becoming well-adjusted adults — and cited a study of convicted killers that found the majority never played as a child. In 2005, it was found children's free-play activity time dropped by a quarter between 1981 and 1997. It's only gotten worse since then. Experts say kids need at least an hour a day outdoors and most U.S. kids today get only four to seven minutes a day outdoors. A 2018 study indicated only 30% of children get as much play time as their parents.

As schools were pushed to offer more instructional time as a way to raise test scores, they began reducing play time. The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention reported in 2025 up to 40% school districts have reduced or eliminated recess since the early 2000s. The National Institutes of Health say only 10 states mandate a minimum amount of recess time for elementary students.

Summer camp can help mitigate some of these losses.

The Benefits of Outdoor Play

Outdoor play supports physical health through movement, balance and coordination. It encourages children to engage their senses and connect with their environment.

Nature-based play can improve focus and attention while reducing anxiety. Whether children are climbing, running, observing insects or simply lying in the grass, outdoor experiences offer opportunities for discovery that feel natural rather than forced.

Dr. Katie Lockwood of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia wrote,

“Outdoor play helps children grow socially, helping them to develop healthy ways of forming friendships, responding to physical interaction and using their imaginations to entertain each other. It helps them solve problems, build relationships within their peer group and gain a respect for nature.”

Imagination as a Learning Tool

Imaginative play helps children make sense of the world. Pretending allows them to explore roles, express emotions and test ideas in a safe setting. Through storytelling, role-playing and creative games, children practice communication and empathy.

Camps that encourage imagination may offer open-ended art projects, dramatic play, storytelling circles or loosely guided games that leave room for interpretation. These experiences nurture creativity without focusing on performance or outcomes.



Policies and Safety Standards

Choosing a summer camp involves more than selecting activities and schedules.

Safety policies and operational standards create an environment where children can learn, explore and thrive. Understanding what to look for in camp policies can help families make informed decisions and feel confident about their choice.

American Summer Camps says many camps offer an orientation session for campers at the beginning of their stay to teach them safety policies, rules and protocols for camp. Families can ask for this information before the camp begins.

Staff Training and Qualifications

Well-trained staff are the foundation of a safe camp experience. Families should ask how counselors are selected and what training they receive before camp begins. This may include first aid and CPR certification, behavior management strategies, child development education and emergency response procedures.

Many camps provide ongoing training throughout the summer to address new situations or reinforce best practices. Experience working with children of similar ages or needs is another important factor, particularly for camps serving younger children or those with medical or developmental considerations.

Background checks are standard at reputable camps. Don't hesitate to ask about screening processes and supervision expectations for all staff and volunteers.

Supervision and Camper Ratios

Supervision ratios help ensure children receive appropriate attention and support. Lower camper-to-staff ratios allow counselors to monitor safety more closely and respond quickly when issues arise. Ratios often vary by age group, with younger campers typically requiring more supervision.

Ask how supervision works during transitions, free time and high-energy activities such as swimming or sports. Understanding when campers are directly supervised and how accountability is maintained can provide additional peace of mind.

Ask how camps manage group sizes and whether children remain with the same counselors or rotate among staff throughout the day.

Emergency Plans and Communication

Preparedness is a key indicator of a well-run camp. Camps should have clear emergency plans for medical incidents, severe weather, facility issues and other unexpected situations. On-site medical staff or access to nearby medical care can be especially important for longer or overnight programs. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends asking about how health care is delivered at camp, what are the swimming requirements, what the protocol is for applying and reapplying sunscreen and asking about vaccination requirements.

Communication policies are equally important. Find out how the camp will notify you in the event of an emergency or illness and who to contact with questions or concerns.



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Camps for All Abilities

Summer camp can be a powerful experience for children, offering friendship, independence and a sense of belonging.

For families of children with disabilities, sensory sensitivities or medical needs, finding the right camp may take additional planning. Inclusive camps are designed to ensure that every child has access to meaningful, safe and enriching summer experiences.

Many programs go beyond basic accommodations. They focus on creating environments where campers of all abilities can participate fully, build confidence and feel valued for who they are.

There are several resources for finding inclusive camps. Websites such as VerySpecialCamps.com list camps by state or province and by special need. Needs are broken into categories such as neurodiversity and learning, chronic health conditions, mobility and physical support, sensory and communication, emotional wellbeing and social support, and then “other” camps — sibling camps, therapeutic riding, transition programs, burn survivors and online camps.

What Makes a Camp Inclusive

Inclusive camps vary widely, but most share a commitment to thoughtful planning and trained staff. Some camps integrate children with disabilities into traditional camp programs with added support, while

others offer specialized sessions tailored to specific needs such as autism, mobility challenges, visual impairment or chronic medical conditions.

Counselors may receive instruction in behavior support, adaptive recreation, medical protocols or sensory regulation techniques. Lower camper-to-staff ratios often allow for more individualized attention and flexibility.

Physical accessibility is another important consideration. Inclusive camps may feature wheelchair-accessible paths, adaptive sports equipment, quiet spaces for sensory breaks and clearly structured daily schedules to help campers feel grounded and secure.

Medical support can also play a role. Camps serving children with diabetes, epilepsy, severe allergies or other health concerns often have on-site medical staff and clear emergency plans. This allows campers to participate in activities while families feel confident about safety.

Supporting Social and Emotional Needs

Inclusion is about connection. Many inclusive camps emphasize social skills development, peer understanding and community-building.

Activities are often designed to encourage cooperation rather than competition, helping campers form friendships at their own pace.

For children with sensory sensitivities, camps may offer flexible participation options, visual schedules and predictable routines. These supports can reduce anxiety and help campers stay engaged throughout the day. Inclusive camps benefit children without disabilities by fostering empathy, patience and respect for differences. Shared experiences help all campers learn inclusion is a strength, not a limitation.

Choosing the Right Program

If you are considering inclusive camps, ask detailed questions during the selection process. Topics may include staff training, communication practices, behavior support strategies and how the camp adapts activities to meet different needs.

Discuss your child’s specific strengths, challenges and triggers in advance. Open communication allows camp staff to prepare appropriate supports and set realistic expectations. Some families may choose to start with shorter sessions or day camps before transitioning to longer programs. This gradual approach can help children build confidence and comfort over time.



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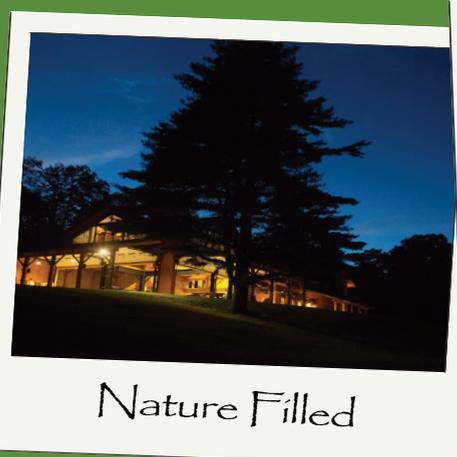
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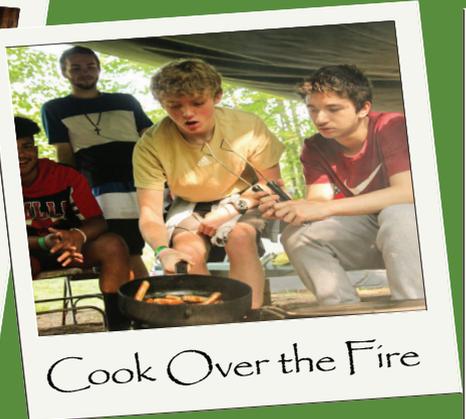
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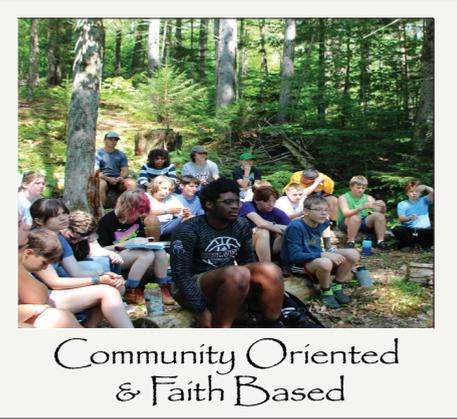
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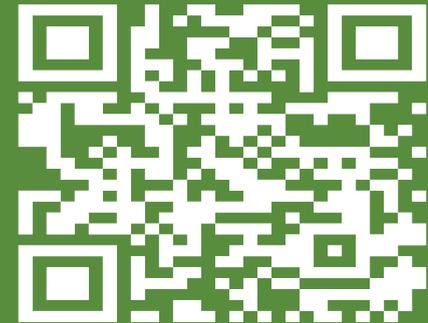
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