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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Dear Families of Tamarack Camps,  With a very heavy heart, after extensive thought, research, and careful deliberation, we have made the very difficult decision to cancel all upcoming Tamarack Camps programs for the summer of 2020.   As you know, the coronavirus pandemic has had a profound impact globally, nationally, and locally, and will continue to pose significant challenges into the foreseeable future. We are saddened by its devastating effect on so many – including those within the circle of our camp community. This decision, ultimately, was driven by science and medicine, based upon the recognition that the known and unknown risks of transmission could significantly compromise the hallmark of our organization, an unyielding commitment to health and safety.   For your child(ren), we understand this news will be unsettling and recommend that you allow the expression of emotions and validate the loss. Hopefully, the positive spirit of camp and its many blessings will also be part of the conversation. And, for our parents/guardians, we also recognize that you may have questions regarding how this decision was reached, its financial implications, future action steps, and more.  Please see the section below ("Additional Information") for further details on the above. We also invite parents/guardians to join us for virtual town hall meetings (beginning this afternoon), where we will be available to share this information live (see schedule below).   For over a century, Tamarack Camps has been home to transformational experiences that create wonderful memories – wrapped within the gift of lifelong relationships and a love of Judaism. Having prepared all year to embrace another summer together, we share in the sadness of this separation. As we teach at camp, it is important to support each individual – and look forward to continued connections with our campers, staff members, and families, even if it looks different for now.  As always, we remain grateful for our Tamarack Camps families – yesterday, today… and into the future. When the time is right, we can't wait to meet again, continuing the important engagement of a Tamarack camping experience. Until then, we strive to remain a beacon of light – full of hope for a brighter tomorrow.    We extend our best wishes for health, safety, and peace – and, together, let’s go from strength to strength.    Steve Engel Chief Executive Officer, Tamarack Camps <email>   Lee Trepeck Director, Camp Maas <email>   Carly Weinstock Associate Director, Camp Maas <email>   Jackie Yashinsky Director, Travel Trips & Outpost Camps <email> | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | ***ADDITIONAL INFORMATION***  In this unprecedented situation, filled with complex information, we realize that there may be questions. We hope the below provides helpful insight.  **FINANCIAL OPTIONS REGARDING CAMPER FEES** We recognize these are difficult economic times (for our families and for Tamarack Camps). We want to remain financially sensitive and offer a range of options to meet the various needs of our community.   **Option #1:** Rollover payment to next summer… we want you back! All balances remain as a credit on your account for future programs. This option helps stabilize Tamarack Camps’ financial position as we begin to plan for Summer 2021. Families that roll over payment will “lock in” 2021 enrollment fees at the 2020 rate. (Note: at this point, we have yet to finalize the parameters for 2021 priority registration and are unable to guarantee placement in a particular program. During registration, we will use our best efforts to accommodate your preference; in the event a desired program is unavailable for Summer 2021, we will provide a full refund.)  **Option #2:** Pay it forward… if you are in position to help. As you know, Tamarack Camps is a mission driven, non-profit organization. Through the generosity of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF) – All Together Now Matching Grant for Jewish Summer Camp  –  a donation of all or any portion of your camper payment will be matched dollar for dollar. These matched (tax deductible) donations will ensure that Tamarack Camps has incoming funds to reimburse families in need and enable the agency to continue its mission of building a vibrant community by providing enriching Jewish camping experiences for children and families, respectful of financial ability for years to come. Donating in full or in combination with Option #1 will entitle you to also secure 2020 rates, as set forth above.  **Option #3:** Full refund… these are difficult economic times. Upon request, we will refund the full amount that you have paid toward enrollment for the summer of 2020. We will work our best to expedite your request; please recognize that processing payments may take up to 60 days.   **Option 4:** Combination of the above… each option resonates. In whatever way this feels most comfortable, please select a combination of Option #1, Option #2, and/or Option #3 (roll over, donate, refund). Please know that, prior to (and throughout) the COVID-19 crisis, Tamarack Camps incurred significant expenses in order to prepare for the summer; thus, any ability to roll over or donate (with HGF matching funds) is greatly appreciated.  All 2020 enrolled campers will be considered returning campers and are deemed priority registrants for Summer 2021.  Please [click here](https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/uBz5CNkGwrhD1p6c46EMQ) to submit a form, which identifies your preferred option. If you have any questions, contact Jeannette Levene directly at <email> or <phone #>.  **OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT** We are in this together – and remain available. For the immediate future, we have already scheduled times to meet.  **For Parents and Guardians** Beginning later today, we invite parents/guardians to join us for town hall meetings, where our leadership team intends to offer further insight to its decision, provide additional medical information (including suggestions on how to best navigate camp's closure with your child), and answer additional questions.   * Zoom meetings (intended for parents/guardians): please join for the option that best fits in your schedule:   + Monday, May 4 at 4:00 pm: Camp Maas Brighton/Mid Side Villages   + Monday, May 4 at 5:15 pm: Outpost Camps and Travel Trips   + Monday, May 4 at 6:30 pm: Camp Maas Senior Side Villages   + Tuesday, May 5 at 5:30 pm: Camp Maas Villages, Outpost Camps, and Travel Trips   Please register for the above (via the link provided). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing a direct link to the meeting.  ***For The Entire Tamarack Community*** Also, even in our separate homes, let's spend Shabbat together – where Rabbi Ben’s spiritual presence, our campers, staff members, families, alumni, and extended community can stand together as one. That's the essence of camp.   * Friday, May 8 at 6:00 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat * Saturday, May 9 at 9:30 pm: Havdalah   **CONTINUED SUPPORT** This is a sad day; again, we are absolutely heartbroken. Our strong relationships extend beyond the summer months and we are here for you now. We want to help manage these sensitive and emotional conversations and our camper care team is available to offer assistance. Should your child require support, please contact Carly Weinstock (Associate Director, Camp Maas) <email address> to schedule a time with one of our camp social workers.  **SOURCES RELIED UPON IN SUPPORT OF OUR DECISION** Shortly after the outset of this crisis, we formed our own COVID-19 Task Force, comprised of medical professionals, including emergency medicine specialists, pediatricians, nurses, a child psychologist, and an emergency crises coordinator. In close consultation with these medical professionals, we have also received ongoing guidance through state and local health authorities, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), American Camp Association (ACA), Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC), and other experts in the field. Our professional and board leadership have carefully evaluated this information and it has become clear that we are unable to provide a safe environment — at camp in Ortonville, in the rural areas of our outposts, and throughout various regions traveled by Western and Alaska Trips. We also feel a responsibility to protect areas beyond our summer occupancy.  **THE DECISION TO CLOSE BOTH SESSIONS… AND THE POTENTIAL TO RE-OPEN LATER IN THE SUMMER** Since we are managing the complexity of so many unknowns, we concluded that, at this time, it is most prudent to cancel all summer programs. We are mindful that “punting decisions further downfield” may provide additional anxiety – with, most likely, the same conclusion.  Even still, information about this global pandemic is fluid and the situation can rapidly change. Working closely with our medical team and various authorities, we will monitor the status of the coronavirus outbreak. If it becomes apparent that we could gather safely, which would mean that the existing medical challenges have been resolved, our team will jump! Although the summer would be modified from the original plans, our teams have carefully considered and prepared multiple scenarios for various options.  **THE RIGHT DECISION FOR OUR CAMP** We recognize that each camp will reach its own independent conclusions – some planning to remain open and others offering partial experiences. Every outcome is based upon the unique environment, circumstances, and timeline of separate communities – and we respect the various conclusions. For our purposes, with the specific medical data in our area, we are confident that today’s cancellation was aligned to ensure the well-being of our entire camp community.   Our primary concerns for containment of the coronavirus include the following risk factors (as identified by our medical, health, and safety professionals):   * Oakland County is still deemed a “hot spot” * Social distancing remains in effect with 6’ guidelines * Camp Maas is a very large community, heightening the concern of prevention * Our outpost camps are in remote areas * Our travel trips move beyond Michigan into different states and jurisdictions, where we have less “real-time” information and increased uncertainty * Vibrant testing programs are not established * Therapeutic treatments are not proven * Contact tracing mechanisms are not in place * The virus can be asymptomatic and we are concerned about transmission into other areas beyond the summer   **THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER DAY CAMPS, POWERED BY TAMARACK** At this point, the status for summer programs at the JCC Day Camps, powered by Tamarack, has not been decided. An official update is forthcoming.   **PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE** In the absence of meeting in person, we still want to hear from you directly. You can expect an upcoming call and an opportunity to add your voice to important conversations. This valuable information will help our team strategize and implement the most prudent ways to plan for the future – including the possibility of some spring and summer virtual programs and “off-season” gatherings (for example, we are uniquely positioned close to metropolitan Detroit and have winterized villages, which potentially opens the door to fall and winter Shabbatons).   **FINAL THOUGHTS** We hope this email was helpful. Of course, should you have any additional questions or require further information, please know that we remain available.  We are so appreciative of your ongoing support and we will get through this together. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | [Watch a video message from our team.](https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/ls0TCYEZLJiEPX9SwMQmy) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Please remember that the agencies of the Jewish Federation are here for you. Visit the [online resource](https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/CnJECZ6gMKuryYjHmnh7X) page for help, connection, and other information. And remember to call JHELP directly at 1-833-445-4357 to connect to services for those in need. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | |
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