

2017
NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION
EXCELLENCE IN
SUMMER LEARNING
AWARDS



national summer
learning association

2017 NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARDS

The winners of the 2017 New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning Award and Founder's Award show the power of summer to create brighter futures for America's children and youth. The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) recognizes this year's winning programs for demonstrating excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for low-income students.

Research shows that most children lose up to two months of math skills during summer breaks, and lower-income children also lose two to three months of reading skills without practice. This cumulative loss contributes significantly to the achievement gap, yet only one-third of households report having a child enrolled in a summer learning program. These award-winning programs strive to curb these losses, while employing research-based practices to build 21st Century skills for college, career and life success.

"We are proud to once again partner with the National Summer Learning Association to support the growth and visibility of top quality summer learning programs. Each year we look forward to honoring outstanding summer programs that exemplify excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development," Marlyn Torres, Corporate Vice President, Corporate Responsibility Senior Program Officer, New York Life Foundation.
"Every child deserves the opportunity to learn while staying safe and healthy during the summer months and these programs have demonstrated how enriching summer activities play a critical role in the lives of children."

2017 HONOREES

EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARD

Camp Good Sam

San Antonio, Texas

Camp Good Sam supports educational achievement by providing campers with literary-themed adventures during which they hone critical skills and develop a sense of belonging in a safe and enriching environment.

NSLA FOUNDER'S AWARD

Canoemobile

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Canoemobile connects students living primarily in urban areas to outdoor education events on local waterways, bringing learning out of the classroom and creating pathways for students to pursue educational and career opportunities in the outdoors.

Save the Children's SummerBoost Camp

Yucca Valley, California

SummerBoost Camp aims to break the cycle of rural poverty by engaging students in programs that promote creativity, team-building, and academic learning.

SummerCollab

Wilmington, Delaware

SummerCollab helps community agencies build their capacity to keep kids engaged in learning throughout the summer months, developing unique cultures at each site which reflect the surrounding community and make students feel welcome.



**NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION**

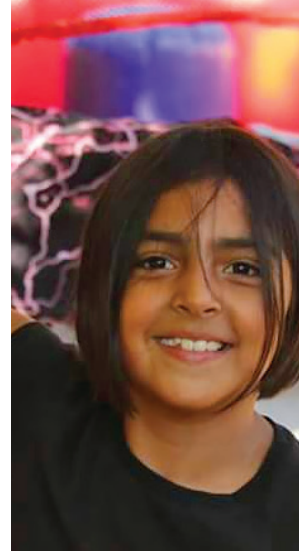
About the New York Life Foundation

Inspired by New York Life's tradition of service and humanity, the New York Life Foundation has, since its founding in 1979, provided \$240 million in charitable contributions to national and local nonprofit organizations. The Foundation supports programs that benefit young people, particularly in the areas of educational enhancement and childhood bereavement. The Foundation also encourages and facilitates the community involvement of employees and agents of New York Life through its Volunteers for Good program. To learn more, please visit www.newyorklifefoundation.org.

Camp Good Sam

San Antonio, Texas

Camp Good Sam is a part of the Good Samaritan Community Services (GSCS), which has served as a “good neighbor” to those living in the highly impoverished neighborhoods of San Antonio since 1951. Camp Good Sam supports GSCS’ mission of helping youth, individuals, and families to overcome the impact of economic poverty by ensuring that low-income youth are immersed in a rich, curriculum-based summer program aimed at keeping minds learning during the summer months so as to avoid the summer slide. Operating in five cities and at six sites across Southern Texas, Camp Good Sam serves over 1000 youth annually, 91 percent of whom are living in households at or below the federal poverty level. This program is structured around five key elements: supporting educational achievement, encouraging healthy decisions, exploring college and career pathways, leadership development, and family engagement.



Camp Good Sam has a literary-themed curriculum, where each site frames their camp culture around a children’s book series. Staff members work together with site coordinators to identify learning goals that originate from the chosen book and then plan the program based on those goals. Since the whole camp is reading the same book, having this literary-themed curriculum helps to engage all participants in a distinct program culture. For example, at a site based on the Harry Potter series, staff used magical spells to tell campers to line up, pay attention, and do other tasks. At the site based on the Percy Jackson series, campers were sorted into cabins that represented different Greek gods and goddesses based on character traits of the campers. They then participated in cabin competitions, created cheers and chants, and played capture the flag games. All of these activities worked to build campers’ strategizing and teamwork skills. Another book series that has been used as a theme is the Kane Chronicles. Students at this site studied Ancient Egyptian rituals and compared them to rituals today. When learning about mummies, students had the opportunity to make their own miniature mummies and to go to a museum where they saw real mummies and had the opportunity to talk to the museum curator.

78 PERCENT HAD AN INCREASED INTEREST IN READING



This kind of engaging learning pays off too! 78 percent of youth who participated in this program indicated having an increased interest in reading, and 90 percent of youth indicated that the program taught them lessons that they could use at home or school. Along with the academic side, data also shows that 87 percent of youth indicated improved self-esteem as a result of attending the program.



90 PERCENT INDICATED THAT THE PROGRAM TAUGHT THEM LESSONS THEY COULD USE AT HOME OR SCHOOL

Dee Howard, the Assistant Superintendent of Wimberley Independent School District said, “The progress that our kids have made when they come back from Camp Good Sam is tremendous. Teachers are noticing that students who participated in Camp Good Sam do not need to be retaught as extensively as the rest of the students.”



WINNING STRATEGIES

Rich and interactive literary themes create a fun atmosphere for students to learn in

Strong sense of community, keeping families connected with the camp year after year

Adult-youth collaboration in planning and running activities allows for the youth voice to be heard

Canoemobile

Minneapolis, Minnesota

“Many of these 5th graders were shaking in fright, some even crying, as they conquered their fears and boarded the canoes for the first-ever river experience. Those same children were giggling and joyous as they settled into the rhythms of paddling as a team and touring the harbor. It was really something to see.” —Warren, Canoemobile supporter.

Research shows that outdoor learning improves student performance, increases student participation in science, strengthens attention, and reduces behavior problems. Wilderness Inquiry has taken advantage of all of these beneficial factors of learning in the outdoors and created the Canoemobile program. With the goal of promoting inclusion, encouraging place-based, immersive education, and creating meaningful connections to the natural world, Canoemobile focuses on improving the whole student rather than just the academic side of them. Canoemobile serves thousands of youth in summer programs as well as through credit recovery programs, where the outdoors functions as an alternative to the traditional classroom. In previous summers, students have collectively earned over 200 credits in the subjects of English, Social Studies, and Science.



Canoemobile creates a balance between academic learning and extracurricular learning in their programs. At one point, students may be taken on Voyageur canoes to study cultural history, do water quality testing, or study ecosystem restoration. At another time in the program, students may rotate between academic stations and work with partners such as the National Park Service to learn about local ecology. No matter where the students are learning, staff members lead them through inquiry-based lessons. This kind of learning improves students' confidence, competence, and allows them to create connections between the things that they are learning. It also creates an organic opportunity for conversation and discovery. 83 percent of students reported having a greater appreciation of their own talents after participating in the Canoemobile program, and 87 percent of teachers reported that their students were more deeply engaged in learning after their experience. This outcome also stems from participating in activities that create a strong sense of community. With the options of single-day, overnight, and multi-day adventures, the Canoemobile program always includes some kind of team-building activity for participants, whether it be a short ice-breaker activity or a guided discussion so campers can get to know their tentmates. All of the activities at Canoemobile focus back to their goal of encouraging individuals to open themselves up to new possibilities and opportunities.

Canoemobile also places a strong focus on introducing students to careers that relate to the outdoors and the environment.

The experience of one student, Talon, shows just how influential learning experiences like this can be. Talon took a trip to the Mississippi River in 6th grade with his school, saying “I vividly remember the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers—to be on the water and see the rivers merge is burned in my memory”. Talon is now an Outdoor Leader at Wilderness Inquiry and plans to attend Augsburg College to study outdoor education and environmental science.



87 PERCENT OF TEACHERS REPORTED THAT THEIR STUDENTS WERE MORE DEEPLY ENGAGED IN LEARNING AFTER THEIR EXPERIENCE



WINNING STRATEGIES

Rigorous academic standards and evaluation protocols support high program quality

Immersive, adventurous learning opportunities expose students to experiences completely out of their comfort zone

Sense of belonging and curiosity promotes inquisitive and successful learning

Save the Children's SummerBoost Camp

A National Program Model

As one parent of a participant shared, "I grew up in poverty. I know what it feels like to not have many learning opportunities presented to me. I am grateful for SummerBoost Camp because it was a great opportunity for my son and other children in the program. It opened up experiences that they wouldn't have received elsewhere. They continued their learning all summer long which is great."

Save the Children understands how difficult it can be for young students to have enriching opportunities during the summer, and as a result, have placed their focus on providing children in rural, impoverished communities with equitable summer learning opportunities. SummerBoost Camp was launched in 2012. Now partnering with more than 40 schools to serve students across multiple states, SummerBoost Camp offers participating programs resources and methods that ensure that staff are providing youth with exemplar programs.

While planning the summer activities, site coordinators work alongside students to gain a youth perspective. Students help coaches choose a theme for the camp and then assist in decorating the program's space based on that theme. The staff then takes the theme idea from the students and creates activities that connect with that theme. Being able to have their ideas incorporated into the summer plans keeps students excited about and engaged in the program.



OVER HALF OF PARTICIPANTS MAINTAINED OR IMPROVED THEIR READING SKILLS THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER

For academic enrichment opportunities, SummerBoost Camp focuses on reading and STEM activities. Every day, campers participate in literacy blocks, an hour of reading-focused time. These daily literacy activities have led to over half of participants maintaining or improving their reading skills throughout the summer. For math development, SummerBoost allots two 30-minute sessions of math practice a day, which is very beneficial to students. Seventy six percent of participants have shown improvement in their math score from the beginning to the end of summer. The percentages of students showing academic growth throughout the summer have increased over the years, proving SummerBoost Camp's focus on continuous program growth to be effective.

SummerBoost Camp also places a strong focus on making healthy choices. These physical health and nutritional lessons are supported each day in practice when campers are provided with a healthy breakfast, AM snack, and lunch. On "Fantastic Fridays," campers are exposed to outside sources of learning on field trips, at talent shows, or by listening to guest speakers.

Along with academic learning, SummerBoost places a strong focus on team building. Whether the activity is something small like playing a Minute to Win It-style game or something more time consuming like contributing to a community service project based on a student's passion, SummerBoost Camp stands by their motto of TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More.



WINNING STRATEGIES

Fast-moving and engaging schedule keeps campers excited and interested in learning

High-quality curriculum with a focus on both academic and life skills

Opportunities for students to make their own choices foster independence and a sense of purpose in students



SummerCollab

Wilmington, Delaware

Unite, ignite, engage, succeed. Using these four actions, SummerCollab ensures that all kids have access to extraordinary learning experiences by partnering with community agencies to help build up the necessary capacity to offer youth the specific support they need. As a plug-in program that other summer learning programs use, SummerCollab influences over two thousand campers in elementary and middle school.



SummerCollab identifies community programs' existing strengths to bring out and develop a unique culture that comes from the specific community. In order to keep improving programs, SummerCollab creates site-specific quality improvement plans, holding programs accountable for the goals that they have set. To help programs meet these goals for quality improvement, SummerCollab offers key resources such as a comprehensive curriculum, skilled staff, executive coaching, and data analysis tools and assessment.



**STUDENTS
DEMONSTRATE
SIGNIFICANT
GAINS IN PROBLEM
SOLVING ABILITIES**

SummerCollab administers quantitative pre- and post-assessments around literacy and critical thinking to evaluate student growth throughout the summer. A good amount of the data they collect is qualitative, giving youth the ability to complete surveys and to be interviewed in order to get their opinion on what kind of activities interest them.

The curriculum that programs implement makes it so learning reaches beyond just math and reading. For example, their Grand Challenges work to develop campers' critical thinking skills. These challenges are open-ended and encourage students to explore a new practice while immersing themselves in a creative environment. Campers may be given the challenge to become an engineer for the week with the task of designing and building a rollercoaster. Or maybe they will imagine traveling to Mexico to create a mural, or to Japan to write a haiku. No matter what the task, staff ensure the students are pushing themselves to grow in new ways.

The SummerCollab model has proven itself to be effective, reversing summer learning loss for 86 percent of campers in 2016-2017. Just over the summer, campers averaged three months of growth in literacy. SummerCollab students also demonstrate significant gains in their problem solving abilities. In 2017, the SummerCollab impact continues to grow with 12 Delaware-based agencies expected to inspire learning gains for over two thousand low-income campers.

In addition to its core model, SummerCollab offers middle school programming through Tyler's Camp, a centralized middle school academy. This program is a free-of-charge opportunity for high-need middle school students of Wilmington, Delaware. At Tyler's Camp, students choose from a variety of activities ranging from coding to ballet to wrestling. This allows students to explore a deep passion or to discover a new one while also developing leadership and academic skills. The supportive environment at Tyler's Camp embodies SummerCollab's mission perfectly: they unite the community, ignite students' passions, engage students' interest, and watch as students succeed.

CAMPERS AVERAGED 3 MONTHS OF GROWTH IN LITERACY



WINNING STRATEGIES

Data-driven approach for tracking youth progress allows for easy analysis of program quality

Availability of key resources such as a comprehensive curriculum, skilled staff, executive coaching, and data analysis tools and assessment facilitate quality improvement

Focus on programs' individual strengths makes each site unique and supportive of its surrounding community

IS AN EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARD IN YOUR FUTURE?

Apply Today!

Deadline is December 21, 2017

Winners will be announced as part of the National Summer Learning Day celebration - July, 2018.

Winning programs of the Excellence Awards demonstrate exemplary practices in overall programming, including professional development for program staff and collaboration with community partners in fulfilling shared goals for student and family engagement.

The Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment, developed in partnership with NSLA and the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. NSLA staff, in addition to education and summer learning experts in the field, review applications, conduct interviews and site visits with a short list of semi-finalists.

► Visit summerlearning.org/excellenceawards to learn more.

This year's winners were celebrated on local billboards donated by NSLA's national media partner: Clear Channel Outdoor Americas.



A DECADE OF EXCELLENCE AWARD APPLICATIONS HAS RESULTED IN A RICH COMPILATION OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIELD OF SUMMER LEARNING.

EXCELLENCE AWARDS FAST FACTS

Summer programs are found in every corner of the country, in many different settings. The average number of youth served per program were almost identical for urban and suburban programs, and only slightly lower for rural programs. Because choices are more limited in rural areas, students may be more likely to attend one particular program. The largest providers of formal summer programs tend to be school districts.

Though the Excellence Award is open to any summer program, we find that the vast majority in our network are serving students who are considered low-income (defined as eligible for free or reduced school meals).

- 80 percent of youth served are low-income
- 19 percent of programs report a 100 percent low-income population
- 53 percent report a low-income population of 85 percent or higher

Funding for summer programs is incredibly diverse. NSLA data show that on average, programs use funding from three different sources to make up their budgets, and these range across many

public and private types of funding. By far, the most frequently reported source of funding is private foundations (66%) followed by individual giving (36%) and program fees (31%). Considering that 80% of the students served by these programs are low-income, NSLA believes greater public investment is needed to ensure students succeed. The most significant source of public funding is the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) program (19%).

GREATER PUBLIC INVESTMENT IS NEEDED TO ENSURE STUDENTS SUCCEED



ABOUT THE NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARDS

The New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning Award and NSLA Founder's Award recognize outstanding summer programs that demonstrate excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for low-income children and youth between pre-kindergarten and twelfth grade.

Since 2004, the Excellence in Summer Learning Award program has been a critical strategy of NSLA to support the growth and visibility of high-quality summer learning programs. Over time, it has matured into a program with far-reaching implications for improving the quality and impact of the summer learning field as a whole.

In 2015, NSLA introduced the Founder's Award to further expand its reach and better document outstanding practices and unique informal or drop-in models for summer learning in the field. The awards overall provide a growing knowledge base that NSLA uses to educate policymakers, funders, and the public on best practices and standards of quality for summer learning. With in-depth applications from more than 600 programs serving more than 500,000 youth, the Excellence Awards recognition offers an unparalleled look at the summer learning landscape.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING ASSOCIATION

The National Summer Learning Association is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and advocates for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. NSLA's work is driven by the belief that all children and youth deserve high-quality summer learning experiences that will help them succeed in college, career, and life.



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