

Camp Agawam

October 2024

Dear Agawam Community,

It is with mixed emotions that I share with our community that the summer of 2025 will be my 17th and final season as the director of Camp Agawam. This is not a decision that I take lightly. Transitions are never easy, but I have given this a lot of thought and the timing feels right. It will be hard to leave, but it is time for a new chapter — both for Camp Agawam and for me.

Being the director of Camp Agawam was never just a job for me — it has been my identity. It has been all-encompassing and has meant more to me than I can adequately express. I started my Agawam career as a camper in 1981 and was a seasonal staff member for many, many years before becoming the director in 2009. I transitioned from an “Erik” to a “Yeoman” and finally to “Chief.” Beyond that, my father “Bos’n” was a camper and counselor in the 1950s and 1960s, and my son “Ranger” was also a camper and counselor. I love this place deeply — its mission and its people. I owe a lot to Agawam, which is why I can say that it is time to pass leadership to a new and energetic generation.

When I became director, I recall feeling an enormous responsibility stewarding Agawam into its second century. I knew our greatest challenge would be maintaining the unique spirit and culture of Agawam in a rapidly evolving world. Agawam always has been a camp that emphasizes character development, leadership, and interpersonal growth, and it is obvious that these values are even more important today than they have ever been. Over the past 17 years, we have seen so much change at Agawam and in the world in general, yet our core mission and values have remained the same. This is something in which I take great pride.

Agawam today is more inclusive and welcoming, and more open to diversity. I am enthusiastic to watch the continuation of that important work. We have made critical modifications to our programs, specifically our Council Fire ceremony, which have improved the camper experience. Our physical plant has changed and grown significantly for the better. And I am most proud that the spirit and traditions of Agawam remain strong, as integral to the Agawam experience as they ever have been. Any alumni visitor will recognize camp as the place that they remember and love.

One of the things that makes Camp Agawam so unique is its constancy amidst the blowing winds of change. Navigating today’s environment requires a different set of skills than the ones I brought to Agawam 17 years ago. As someone who cares deeply about Agawam, I recognize that my directorship is but one era in our long and storied 105-year history. I am honored to have been the steward of this special place for so many years, and my love for it will endure. I will be sad to leave, but it is time for the next generation to tend the Great Central Fire.

While this decision is certainly bittersweet, I step away with the knowledge that Agawam is as strong as it has ever been and will remain in great hands. Our leadership team is excellent, the Agawam Council is outstanding, and our alumni and friends base is unparalleled in their dedication and passion. As difficult as it is for me to leave, I am also energized by the prospect of new and dynamic leadership for Agawam and look forward to the next chapter.

In Agawam spirit.....



“Chief” Erik Calhoun
Director