



Journal

Fall/Winter 2023 - 2024

78 Years of Joyful Community, Stewardship, and Nature Connection



I'm thrilled to announce the completion of Glen Brook's solar array! We are so grateful to everyone whose philanthropic support made this project possible. The panels have begun producing both clean energy, as well as savings that will go directly to our Campership Fund to support a socio-economically diverse camper population. It is incredible to see what is possible with the support of our community.

So much of the Glen Brook experience is interactive hands-on discovery, and we're excited to have our solar panels as an educational offering. This fall I've watched students spend time in Gabriel's Field harvesting carrots, potatoes, pumpkins, greens, apples, berries, and more—wondering at the bounty and delighting in the feast that follows their hard work. Students and gappers enjoy watching Grant run the wood mill and create lumber from the latest batch of storm-felled trees, then working that wood with hand tools to lovingly transform it into a canoe paddle, treasure box, or toy boat. We're excited to take people to the solar array (past the sheep who will be mowing the grass) and teach them how these panels work to create the electricity that powers all our lights, fans, and before long our vehicles. They will provide one more Glen Brook experience of where things come from.

It is a joy to welcome so many people to this wonderful place each year: I hope you're able to join us to discover, work, play, sing, and share some home-grown, home-cooked meals together. In the meantime, please enjoy reading some of what's happened here in the past year.

 Mark Stehlik • Executive Director

School Programs

Before school even began, Glen Brook welcomed members of the 9th and 12th grades for the annual Orientation trip. On this short trip, 12th and 9th graders buddied up to work and play together. There were activities to help students get to know each other, and to share details about each other's identities. They engaged in Stewardship by clearing stone walls of overgrowth, shared meals, sang together, and climbed Gap Mountain. The weather cooperated and allowed for swimming. By the final evening, down at the Granite Ring, I noticed that students were intermingling and had really found connection with each other. It bodes very well for the coming year.

The small but mighty 8th grade spent their week swimming, blacksmithing, cooking, harvesting food from the garden, caring for the animals, challenging themselves on the high ropes course, swimming some more and sharing an evening with Gap at Glen Brook participants.

Members of the 10th grade climbed Mt. Lafayette in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Along the 2.9 mile hike they intermittently gathered meteorological data which they would analyze together later. Despite the cold and strong winds, the group was able to reach the Greanleaf hut at 4,200 feet, where we spent two nights, entertained and fed by the friendly and informative Hut Crew. The final morning, some brave souls made a sunrise hike to the 5,249 foot summit, where they encountered frigid temperatures, strong winds and a breathtaking sunrise. I watched from the hut window as they climbed in the dark, their headlamps like a chain of glinting diamonds, snaking its way upwards until, like a crown, they arrived on the shadowy peak. They were back in time for breakfast at 7am! Later that evening, back at Glen Brook, they reflected on what they had achieved individually and together as a class.

The 4th grade trip focused on animals and the ways they use their senses to thrive. Forest exploration, map reading, cider pressing, helping on the farm, and cooking were other highlights.

Later in the season, we welcomed the Berkshire Waldorf School 7th grade for their annual camping trip. They climbed Mount Monadnock, paddled Lake Nubanusit, and experienced the Giant's Swing.

In October we were visited by the 5th grade, who focused on botany: planting bulbs that will spend the winter in the cold dark earth, and grow into beautiful flowers in the spring and summer. The 7th grade explored physics in action, and the 6th grade learned about geology and astronomy.

All of these trips have a common element, of which my three school program instructors (SPI's) and I never tire: students working together towards common goals and having fun doing it. Time and time again, we see in action what our predecessors saw before us: Children thrive when they contribute in meaningful ways to the community and they are incredibly capable of anything they put their minds and wills to accomplishing.

🍁 Katy Gibney • Youth Program Director



Remembering Gabriel Kane

Since 1946, campers and students who have come to Glen Brook have found themselves to be at home in nature. They have tended the gardens, cared for the animals, and walked the winding paths through the woods. At the same time, they have been inwardly nourished and inspired to carry their sense of beauty and unity beyond Glen Brook itself.

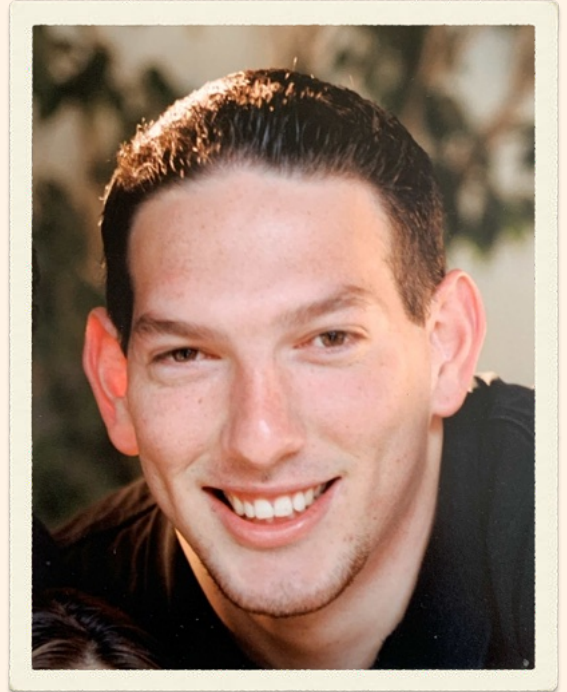
Gabriel Saul Kane was a student at The Waldorf School of Garden City and a camper at Glen Brook during the summer. There was no place he would rather be. When he passed in a car accident soon after graduating college — now twenty years ago — his family could not think of a more fitting way to carry forward his spirit in this world than to expand the biodynamic garden to a full acre for vegetables, flowers and fruit trees.

In Gabriel's Field, children have found nourishment for their minds, bodies, and souls while also developing their own relationship to the world around them. The crops produced grace the tables at the summer camp and school year class visits. Where the abundance exceeds the needs of those at Glen Brook, it is sold and shared with local food pantries for families in need.

As we recognize the deep and lasting difference that Gabriel's Field has made in the lives of young people, there are opportunities to further the impact of what Glen Brook can offer young people. Our next step is to build a state-of-the-art passive solar greenhouse that will:

- Allow us to start all our seeds using no outside energy.
- Create a beautiful and dynamic agricultural lab right inside Gabriel's Field.
- Dramatically increase the efficiency of planting, and give a longer growing season in this space.

Please consider supporting this exciting new project in Gabriel's Field that will impact generations of children to come.



Excerpts from the Gapper Blog

Week One: Solana

Before I came to Glen Brook, one of the books I occasionally read before bed was *The Maine Woods* by Henry David Thoreau. By the time we were camping out by Mount Monadnock for the first time, I found myself thinking of him again, but for entirely different reasons. When Thoreau wrote his chapter on Mount Katahdin, he talked a lot about his experiences of venturing down rivers by boat and visiting log cabins near the mountain. I enjoyed reading these records of his journey very much. But by the side of Mount Monadnock, I realized that Thoreau had neglected to mention many of the finer details. The mosquitoes, for example. Or stumbling on your own feet in the dark. There was beauty to be found in summiting the mountain, to be sure. Now that's something Thoreau would have liked to write about. But I think a lot of what I enjoy about spending extended amounts of time in the woods is the smaller things. Even the inconveniences.

Week Two: Sam

The instructor and boss for the week was the venerable Farmer Sam, who started our lessons with readings on microbial soil health and the advantages of low-tillage farming. The week continued, and next, the Gappers, – assisted by a few visiting eighth-graders – had a big ol' harvest party to clear house for the end of season. Basically, this entailed stuffing our crates with as much corn, kale, lettuce, chard, arugula, tomatoes, basil, eggplants, parsley, husk cherries, carrots, beets, radishes and others as we possibly could. And wow, there was a lot of everything. We still have yet to harvest all the eggplants, or even half. Much of this bounty was donated to our local community kitchen in Keene, which the Gappers had the opportunity to tour a few days after the harvest. After plants it was time to deal with the animals. Farmer Sam had the Gappers set up two types of electric fencing—one for a new pig enclosure and one for the rams. Tomorrow begins the week of Food Foundations! Will we make something delicious under the tutelage of Chef Robyn? Will knife skills claim anyone's fingers? We'll find out soon enough!



Week Three: Claudia

"How is this fire a metaphor for your life?" Tori, our instructor, asked this of me and five other gappers after we built and tended to our own fires. As someone who had never slept in a tent or been on a hike more than just a casual stroll before Glen Brook, I assumed making a fire would be a difficult task, reserved for highly experienced hands. However, after listening to simple and clear instructions, taking my time in gathering and assembling materials, and putting a lit match to my kindling, I realized the process was quite intuitive for me. I sort of just knew when to add more fuel or blow air into the fire as if I had been making fires my whole life. I always think everything will be way harder than it actually is. That was my response to Tori's question. Trusting my own abilities is a trait I am developing every day here, and it has allowed me to grow even when things are challenging. That includes trusting in myself to cook a delicious meal for 14 people, keeping myself on schedule, or summiting Mount Monadnock. Yet, I've succeeded at each of these tasks and more that clearly range in levels of difficulty. I continue to surprise myself in my capabilities.

Week Four: Brendan

This week we embarked on our second trip, a canoe expedition on the Connecticut River. We were given more responsibilities during preparation compared to the first trip. Our food team created a four day menu with meals like tacos and pancakes. We packed the gear ourselves and loaded the canoes onto a trailer behind the bus. We were met with surprisingly fast-moving water when we arrived at our put-in. We knew we had to navigate the rapids without capsizing or risk losing essential gear on the first day. Luckily, everyone made it through safely, and shallow water on the other side of the rapids kept the canoes from picking up too much speed. We canoed on flat, slow moving water for the rest of the trip. Thursday was the greatest test of strength as we canoed 15 miles. Morale began to go down towards the end of the day but my canoe and a few others grouped up to tell stories and jokes to raise spirits and before I knew it we had arrived at the next campsite. While paddling was physically taxing, it became meditative for me as the trip went on. I found the repetitiveness very relaxing and I used the time on the canoe to appreciate the wilderness around me, work through problems in my head, or just let my mind wander. I noticed other gappers practicing mindfulness, even closing their eyes while paddling.



Embracing Adventure: The Power of Yes

An excerpt from my journal this summer on the Lynx 2023 second session canoe trip reads: “It feels good to have a rhythm. It feels good to have a goal but to be able to stop and smell the roses—or at least play in the mud. I’ve said ‘yes’ to lots of things on this trip. Yes to opportunities. Less judgment, more curiosity. Instead of caution, careful consideration.” Join me as we relive parts of the 35-mile journey down the Connecticut River.

Day 1: Finding the Rhythm

The Lynx started their 35-mile journey down the Connecticut River with excitement and apprehension. Before we pushed our boats into the river and started paddling, I told the campers that this trip would be fun if we made it fun. I told them that if they saw something that looked exciting while we were paddling—like a rope swing, a cliff or bridge to jump off of, or a scenic swimming spot—we would stop and enjoy it. It was a shorter 9-mile day, with extra time to set up camp.


Day 2: A Day of Yes

Day 2 was a lively 13-mile day filled with many ‘yes’ moments! First, the campers spotted a big sand dune cliff overhanging the river. We pulled our canoes onto the edge and stepped out of our boats into deep, squishy mud. The kids scrambled up the sand dune and excitedly asked, “Can we jump?” After a safety check, the kids started jumping, having the time of their lives. Afterward, they had a mud fight and were covered head to toe in slimy mud. Before we continued down the river, they walked upstream on the bank of the river, jumped in, and let the current float them down to their boats. We kept paddling and pulled over at a state park for lunch. Where we pulled over, in the middle of the river, there was an old stone bridge pylon. The campers asked if they could climb up the stone tower and jump off of it. It sounded fun, and after a safety check another ‘yes.’ It was exhilarating! We continued our paddling until we passed under an old train bridge. The kids said, “Can we jump?” I said “yes!” By this time, everyone knew the protocol for making sure it was safe, and multiple campers eagerly offered to help with the safety and depth check. Watching each other flying through the air inspired some more nervous campers to try it: what a great ‘yes’ day!

Day 3: Expert Canoeing & Lasting Memories

Day 3 we planned to paddle 9 miles, but our expert paddling skills saw us fly through 13 miles and complete our mileage a day early. While paddling we spotted a rope swing that wasn’t quite secure enough to swing from; we canoed under 2 bridges that were just a little too high to jump off of, and were dying for a ‘yes’ opportunity. We were losing hope that we would find fun jumps on our last day, and then finally, as we were rounding the bend to load our canoes onto the trailer, we spotted another old stone bridge pylon. We were so excited! After the all-clear, the kids jumped many times and hooted and hollered the whole time! It was a great last ‘yes’ on our canoe trip.

The Lynx canoe trip wasn’t just about paddling down a river; it was about embracing life’s opportunities, learning to assess risks responsibly, and building confidence. The campers were surprised at how many ‘yesses’ there were to their adventurous ideas, and I hope they hear ‘yes’ more often in their lives, as they do here at Camp!

 Rose Gibney • Trip Leader



Glen Brook's Recreation Hall: An Essential Icon

In the heart of the Glen Brook campus sits an old, humble—yet formidable—structure that once served as an old carriage and hay barn. We call it the Recreation Hall, or Rec Hall for short. Some of us as young campers knew the name before we understood its meaning! What gives the Rec Hall its distinctive character is as much what goes on inside as its unique outside profile. The number of separate spaces it holds is a tribute to its valuable place in Glen Brook culture.

The first space is the hall itself: With post and beam construction supporting a vaulted ceiling under a ridge beam nearly thirty feet tall, one can easily admire the craftsmanship of a different era with hand-hewn beams pegged together onto eight two-story gunstock-style posts. A basketball hoop centered between two massive collar tie beams creates the perfect setting for “barnball.” Add to that the excitement from a large game of knockout, dodgeball, or aerial four square, and you have the Rec Hall at its peak capacity for social engagement!

But that is only one of seven spaces within the Rec Hall. A flight of stairs in the corner takes you up to a seasonal space known most recently as the CIT lounge. This loft boasts a clear view of the Hall below, while comfortable seating allows for shared discussions, games, and creative scripting for the next Saturday Night Entertainment.

Below the loft is the wood shop, of course! This space has maintained its identity for all of Glen Brook's years as a camp. One could listen in on CIT exchanges above were it not for busy saws, files, chisels and sand paper at work, shaping the many summer projects within the wood shop.

Connected to the wood shop via a small handmade door is the space known (since the '80s) as the Maintenance Shop. This space serves as much as a working space as it does a tool and building supply room. For most of the summer, multiple projects are in progress by the maintenance staff and many of the counselors, who craft appreciation projects for their peers.

The other spaces serve Camp in secondary, yet critical, capacities: A sports shed holds all the supplies used in the multitude of games classes, evening activities, and group initiatives throughout the year. An adjoining room houses everything related to electrical, plumbing and automotive care (hence “EPA shop”). And, even to the back of the building, a space that we call the triple garage juts out. Here our tractors, long lumber and plywood, and a host of other treasures rest until summoned for the full and varied needs and traditions throughout the seasons.

We are lucky to have such a useful and beautiful building as the Rec Hall. Space will always be tight, no matter the resource, and organizing will forever be a challenging opportunity. However, the social benefits of creative accommodation are much of what help establish positive memories associated with a structure that is timeless and true.

🍁 Grant Butler • Facilities Director



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Building Community in the Rain

Thursdays are harvest days on the Farm at Glen Brook and the twelve Gappers (18-21 year-olds from our semester program) broke into groups, pairing themselves off with 8th graders from the Waldorf School of Garden City's visiting class. We gathered out of the rain on the second floor of the barn to review our harvest plan. Each group took their target list of veggies and we climbed the hill to Gabriel's Field.

The wind was loud and raincoat hoods made it even harder to hear, but there was an air of merriment as a sizable team of dedicated individuals connected with each other toward a common goal. Thursday harvests are typically destined for the kitchen at Glen Brook, with some CSA-style shares to New York, but today was an entirely different objective.

The Gappers and I were in the midst of a rigorous two-week apprenticeship, studying and examining, among other concepts, the impact of communities on small local farms through a variety of project-based learning opportunities. Today, with the help of the intrepid 8th graders, we prepared our largest single donation of the season for the Keene Community Kitchen.

As the Gappers and I loaded nearly three hundred pounds of veggies onto our bus and made our way to town we discussed how local communities can create positive feedback loops wherein supported organizations are able to use that support to subsequently bolster the efforts and make positive contributions to even more communities. The Farm at Glen Brook is made possible through the generous contributions of time and resources from all the individuals who work at and visit Glen Brook, and we in turn are able to support organizations, like the Community Kitchen, who support the people who create the very fabric of the community. We're proud to have donated over 1,200 pounds of fresh vegetables this fall.

As an organization and a community, Glen Brook has always strived, as our mission says, "to nurture a sense of personal responsibility for the world around us." This, with the help of all who come to Glen Brook, was a great example of how "in all that we do, we aim to leave the world a little better than the way we found it."

 Samuel Gow • Farm Manager