

## Bridging the Quiet Divide



“**L**ook! This is how you say ‘mom,’” says an enthusiastic 8-year-old girl as she holds her thumb to her cheek and slides it down to her chin. Another child chimes in, “this is how you say ‘cracker,’” tapping his fist on his elbow. All ten children at this Camp Fire club are clamoring to share their new-found knowledge of American Sign Language. It’s exciting for them to discover how moving their hands and bodies in expressive gestures opens a whole new world to them as they welcome the newest member of their club—Daunovan.

Five-year-old Daunovan is deaf. That does not keep him from making friends; especially with Camp Fire around. When his family moved to Calibre Ridge Townhomes about one year ago, his older brother and sister, Drakarr and D’Airah, wanted to join the four-day-a-week Camp Fire club that meets in the Townhome’s Resource Center. But their obligations to help care for their little brother at home kept them away. Until one afternoon when the two managed to stop over at the club and were welcomed by Camp Fire leader Suzanne Flory. She lit up when Drakarr and D’Airah explained their situation, realizing it didn’t have to be a barrier. “I told them, ‘you know, at Camp Fire we are inclusive and welcome everyone. We



Daunovan, who is deaf, recently joined a Camp Fire Club with his older brother Drakarr and has had a powerful effect on everyone.

would love to have your little brother at club.”

Daunovan and his brother and sister have been coming to club for about three months and they’ve been having a powerful effect on everyone. “It’s been an amazing experience for all of us,” said Suzanne. All the youth are genuinely interested in getting to know Daunovan and understand his abilities. They want him to feel like a part of the club. This is really what Camp Fire clubs are all about—youth learning about themselves and others and opening opportunities to grow in caring and confidence.

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## Words from the CEO

Camp Fire has been engaging youth in guided group experiences for nearly 100 years, yet each day is unique. We continue to learn new ways to do what we do best: building confidence and caring in youth through activities and experiences that are both fun and educational.

When a new situation requires an innovative response, we quickly adjust to meet that need. A good example of this is the story of Daunovan and his siblings and the quick thinking of Suzanne Flory, our site coordinator at Calibre Ridge. When faced with a challenging situation, Suzanne responded by creating both a welcoming environment and a learning opportunity for all the Camp Fire kids in her care. You can read more about this story in our cover article.

Today, we hear a lot about “overscheduled” kids—kids who spend their days in one structured activity after another, with little time to just relax and be a kid. At Camp Fire, youth are encouraged to be kids and explore a wide variety of interests. They are encouraged to come up with ideas about what they want to learn and do in club and at camp. Our recent field trip to camp for a snowy winter romp is one example of the unique opportunities we offer youth to be kids.

As we focus on the needs of today’s youth, we are also creating new opportunities for Camp Fire alumni to stay involved. Our first annual Guardian’s Dinner will be an evening not to be missed. I invite you to learn more about this new event on page 5. If you would like more information, please give me call or send me an email. I’d love to hear from you!

## What's New:

- **CAMP FIRE CONVERSATIONS**

Camp Fire is hosting several upcoming *Camp Fire Conversations* where friends and alumni will get together in their homes to chat with current staff and share their support. If you are interested in hosting a conversation, please contact Karen at 651 632 9191 or [karenb@campfireusa-mn.org](mailto:karenb@campfireusa-mn.org).

- **NEW CLUBS**

Camp Fire recently began two youth clubs in St. Paul through a joint partnership with Episcopal Community Services and the CornerStone Group. We also began two new Teens in Action clubs with Lincoln Place in Mahtomedi and Oxboro Library in Bloomington.

- **NEW STAFF MEMBER**

We welcome aboard Tom Ford, our new fund development specialist who will support our grant-writing and donor management projects.

## Council Staff:

Karen Burton, vice president of community relations

Jill Dent, partner relations manager

Andrea Platt Dwyer, chief executive officer

Lisa Filter, marketing & communications manager

Suzanne Flory, club program site coordinator

Tom Ford, fund development specialist

Julia Gaarder, accounting/HR specialist

Emily Jacobson, Americorps\*VISTA/F.I.L.M. Specialist

Tara Markley, vice president of outdoor programs

Barb Ohs, data management specialist

Bob Peck, facilities manager

Danielle Ricard, program outcomes manager

Ge Xiong, vice president of community programs

# Camp is not just for summer



Fifty-seven youth from eleven clubs, along with their club leaders, experienced the joys of outdoor winter recreation at Camp Tanadoona.

The thermometer read  $-3^{\circ}$  on March 7, but that didn't keep these club youth from enjoying a great Minnesota winter day. The school buses pulled into the Tanadoona driveway around ten o'clock a.m. Youth in large parkas, mittens, hats, and boots clomped out onto the snowy grounds, excited for a whole day of outdoor fun.

The group of 57 youth came from eleven east metro area Camp Fire clubs. The most popular activity of the day was snowshoeing. The youth strapped the big mesh platforms on their feet and took off running through the large snowy field. They also got creative by transforming potatoes into little creatures with the help of some toothpicks, clay and pipe cleaners. Group games got the youth running around camp and learning about animals' survival techniques.

Finally, no trip to camp would be complete without skewering a couple marshmallows and roasting them over the crackling campfire.

This field trip to Camp Tanadoona is one of seven that Camp Fire organizes each year for our club members. It's part of our "Club-to-Camp" campaign that is designed to get youth into the great outdoors. It is especially important for today's youth as opportunities to experience the natural world are being overtaken by computers, video games, and televisions. Now experts are confirming what we've always known: Positive experiences in nature help youth thrive intellectually, physically, and spiritually. Such evidence was apparent on this day as the group of youth left camp feeling rejuvenated from a day of fresh winter air.

## CAMP FIRE USA CLUBS & CLASSES ARE OFFERED THROUGH THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS:

- Minneapolis Public Schools
- Saint Paul Public Schools
- Brooklyn Center Public Schools
- Twin Cities Housing Development Corporation
- Legacy Management
- CommonBond Communities
- Commonwealth Terrace Cooperative
- West Side Village Apartments
- Saint Paul Public Libraries
- Hennepin County Library
- Walker Church Neighbor to Neighbor Outreach Program
- South Washington County
- Minneapolis Park & Recreation
- Lincoln Place Apartments
- Episcopal Community Services



# Meet Karen Burton

## Camp Fire's New Vice President of Community Relations



**A**s Camp Fire trailblazes into the future, we know that honoring the support of our community and alumni remains the backbone of our success. Karen Burton, our new vice president of community relations brings a renewed enthusiasm to the role of championing Camp Fire's supporters.

### INTERVIEW WITH KAREN BURTON

*We sat down to talk with Karen, who is always ready to connect with those around her, even as her busy schedule of mother to three growing children, active biker, reader, oboe player and singer in a band keeps her flexible and energized.*

#### *What brought you to Camp Fire?*

**KB:** In retrospect it seems like it was meant to be as I'm discovering that many people in my life are Camp Fire alumni. But what really brought me here was this perfect opportunity to combine my two major interests of youth development and "friend-raising". I've spent much of my career teaching and in my last job I was the youth program director. Ultimately, I love tapping into people's passions and finding ways for other people to feel fulfilled. That's why I was interested in teaching in the beginning

of my career and it is what motivates me here as vice president of community relations.

#### *What do you tell people when they ask why they should support Camp Fire?*

**KB:** It's a way to make a difference in kids' lives, to give them a trusted adult in their lives, which is essential on their path to success. Not enough is happening in the world to meet kids where they are, to teach them who they are, and to give back. Some organizations cater to kids in certain circumstances, but Camp Fire is open to all and especially those kids in most need of our help. Plus Camp Fire gets kids outdoors and I think until that happens kids won't know and appreciate their whole world and hence themselves.

#### *What are you hearing from our supporters today?*

**KB:** I've been talking with individuals about their Camp Fire experiences and learning what's real to them. I'm learning how everyone's Camp Fire experience is unique. Interestingly, I'm also learning how Camp Fire of nearly 100 years ago is similar to Camp Fire today and I've had the pleasure of talking about this with many of our alumni.

#### *How do you hope our supporters will see us in 10 years?*

**KB:** I want them to be proud of all the important work we do for youth by bringing them inside themselves and back out again. I also want our supporters to grow ten-fold, or a hundred-fold. And I want everyone to know that we are a strong presence in our community, we've never gone away, and with their help we plan to be here another hundred years.

## First Annual Guardian's Dinner

On Wednesday, May 14, 2008, Camp Fire USA will celebrate its first annual Guardian's Dinner. This dinner is the first event designed to help Camp Fire reconnect with its alumni on the path to our momentous centennial in 2010. At the Guardian's Dinner we look forward to presenting special individuals with awards for their service to Camp Fire and dedication to our mission.

The dinner will be hosted at the elegant Town and Country Club in Saint Paul. It will be an opportunity for everyone to reflect upon the past 98 years of Camp Fire's history. We look forward to hearing personal stories about the way Camp Fire made a difference in people's lives. We will also celebrate the wonderful ways in which we make a difference with the youth of today.

The term *guardian* harkens back to the early years of Camp Fire when this title was bestowed upon the adult leader of a club. It is very fitting that our dinner incorporate this term as we believe our alumni and supporters play an essential role in guarding the Camp Fire flame. We rely on our guardians to keep the organization strong today and our history alive.

Our history not only rests in the memories and scrapbooks of past members, it is also a living history revealed in the values and integrity of today's adults who are still influenced by the Camp Fire experiences of their formative years. We know that Camp Fire has made a tremendous impact on the lives of many Minnesota youth who have gone on to be successful adults. Probably many more than we even know.



Everywhere we go, we continue to meet people who say, "I was in Camp Fire." We hope during the next two years to once again connect with these people who have been part of our history and to keep them supporting today's youth. The Guardian's Dinner is an important event for us to begin to bridge our past with our present.

If you or someone you know is interested in being a part of this event, please let us know by contacting Karen Burton, Vice President of Community Relations at 651 632 9191 or [karenb@campfireusa-mn.org](mailto:karenb@campfireusa-mn.org).

## Camp Tanadoona Open House

It may not seem like it yet, but summer is just around the corner. As the snow slowly melts away we are busy planning for another exciting season at Camp Tanadoona.

On Saturday, April 19 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. camp will open its doors for the annual open house. Past, present, and potential campers can get a feel for what this summer holds. Several fun activities for youth are being planned and parents will have a chance to meet Tara Markley, the vice president of camp programs. It's a great opportunity for future camp families to prepare for their experience.

We also invite all Camp Fire supporters and alumni to take advantage of this opportunity for visiting Camp Tanadoona and connect with today's camp programs.

To register for summer camp at Camp Tanadoona visit [www.campfireusa-mn.org](http://www.campfireusa-mn.org) or call 651 632 9180.



*Last season's overnight campers relaxing after a busy day. A record number of campers attended Tanadoona last year and it looks as if 2008 will be just as popular.*

# New Deal for the Future of Camp Ojiketa



*Camp Ojiketa awaits future plans for its grounds.*

In the tradition of all Camp Fire camps, Camp Ojiketa has been a place for thousands of youth to connect with nature and learn about themselves. This legacy could live on even as the camp grounds potentially transfer hands in a recent deal with the Trust of Public Land.

By the end of the year, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a nonprofit land conservation group that works to preserve open space for the public good, is working to raise money to complete the purchase. The land, located 32 miles northeast of Saint Paul, will then be preserved as a regional park. Widespread interest in this proposed regional park will help the TPL in its fundraising efforts which will likely include grants and appropriations.

A group of Ojiketa alumni rallied together in recent years to form the Ojiketa Preservation Society. They have been raising contributions to purchase the land and preserve it for public space. The TPL will use the support of this group along with regional legislators to complete the deal. There is preliminary support among state legislators for a bill that would appropriate state assistance for Chisago City to acquire the Ojiketa land from the TPL.

Camp Fire is very excited about the prospects of our former camp as a place to walk around and enjoy the outdoors. Camp Fire USA arrived at the difficult decision to sell Camp Ojiketa two years ago when it became apparent that the organization could no longer operate four camps. We have now successfully consolidated our camp program at Camp Tanadoona, which is currently enrolling another record number of youth for this summer's sessions. We are dedicated to investing our resources in Camp Tanadoona for many years to come.

If you are interested in helping to ensure that Ojiketa's land be preserved as open space please contact Karen Burton at 651 632 9191 or [karenb@campfireusa-mn.org](mailto:karenb@campfireusa-mn.org).

## *Help Another Child Benefit from Camp...*

*You know the power of camp and now you can help a child get that same benefit today. Each year Camp Fire USA receives requests from families who want their children to grow and learn from the camp experience. Your donations become the answer to those wishes. Mail in your donation today and send a child to Camp Tanadoona this summer! Or donate online at [www.campfireusa-mn.org](http://www.campfireusa-mn.org).*



## Celebrating differences *continued from cover*

Drakarr has seen how coming to the Camp Fire club is really helping himself, his sister, and his little brother all feel like part of a caring community. “They love coming here; if they aren’t at club I worry about them, because they are always here,” said Suzanne. Before Daunovan began coming to club the other youth didn’t know how to talk with him. Now they all know him and treat him just like all other kids—but with a little added animation.

“He’s really just a typical 5-year-old who likes to play video games and watch cartoons,” said his brother Drakarr, who then goes on to joke, “Oh, but he’s bad when he’s not here;” to which Daunovan replies with his characteristic muffled ‘hey’ yell. However, his challenges are apparent if you glance at the give-away earpiece attached to a button near the back of his head (a device that helps him pick up on some noises, but not enough to make out words). Daunovan attends kindergarten classes for kids with special needs. There he’s learning sign language, himself. He’s also learning how to feel the vibrations in a person’s throat when their talking as a way to decipher speech and help him form vocalized words.

Integrating Daunovan into club has involved some give-and-take on everyone’s end. The kids are all learning sign language. Right now they are creating signed versions of their names by combining the first letter of their name with a



*Camp Fire club members and their leaders, Suzanne (left) & Dinata (right), at Calibre Ridge Townhomes in Roseville are excited about learning sign language, with the help of some illustrated books, as a way to communicate with Daunovan (middle front).*

descriptive word about themselves. Daunovan’s name is symbolized with a sign language D (the thumb touches the tips of the three outer fingers and the index finger points up) bouncing up and down because he is energetic. Suzanne likes to smile a lot so she decided her name should be a closed fist for the letter “S” that moves in an arc across her mouth like a smiley face.

The kids are learning to celebrate his differences while not shining the spotlight on him too brightly. At first the kids would all gather round him and intently watch as he tried to tell them about himself. “They’re all well-intentioned, but it can be overwhelming for one little boy to feel that much pressure, so we try to balance the attention,” said Suzanne. When Suzanne leads an activity she will periodically pull him in with specific questions,

giving him a chance to share his knowledge. And the other youth sitting by him will point to things to help keep him in the loop. Being the astute observer that he is he picks up on what is happening around him.

“He doesn’t just sit back and wait for us to include him. He has learned to be confident and gets his thoughts communicated to us, even if we’re not fully capable in American Sign Language yet,” said Suzanne. Often the youth at club help Suzanne haul food supplies from her car into the center and Daunovan especially likes to help. “He will look at me really intently and stomp his feet while pointing to the car in a sweet but determined way. So, I’ll give him a box of cereal—which looks absolutely humongous in his little arms—and he beams with pride as he carries it in.”

## Snapshot in History



*A group of seven Camp Fire girls at Square Lake circa 1925. Camp Fire had camping programs on Square Lake in the town of Lake Elmo prior to establishing Camp Ojiketa for camping activities. In these early years campers slept in large canvas tents (behind campers).*

## Wish List

*You and/or your company can make a direct impact on our programs by arranging to donate any of the following items:*

- Industrial-Sized Washing Machine for Camp
- DeWalt Cordless Combo Pack Power Tools
- Portable CD Player
- DVD/TV set
- Disposable Cameras
- Board Games

To arrange a donation please contact Karen Burton at 651 632 9191 or [karenb@campfireusa-mn.org](mailto:karenb@campfireusa-mn.org).

Thank you to past donors including Stephanie Larson & Sarah Larson for the upright piano for Camp Tanadoona.



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