

Algonquin Park



CAMP
Outlook

P.O. Box 811
Kingston, ON
K7L 4X6

613-544-6444

www.campoutlook.ca

The Views



Camp Outlook Newsletter - Spring 2013



The Power of Community

Reflections of a Grateful Outlooker By: Matthew Ondercin

I first heard about Outlook in 2010, in the basement of Jeffery Hall on Queen's Campus. Running from class to class I saw a poster that simply read, "By the end of the summer, I'll either be buff or dead". Those words at that point in my life were all I needed. They reflected back to me exactly what I wanted for the summer: a challenge. A challenge that was promising to either raise me up or kill me.

I still remember my first day walking up to the Outlook House. Walking in, people were already cooking pots of chili and I was welcomed immediately—welcomed, and put to work. Right away, it was clear that it didn't matter that we were all strangers; people were talking to me, and people were interested in what I had to say. You could just tell that you would make some lifelong friends.

Training is where I realized that this was actually going to be what it promised. That first month was so intense, but I picked up on canoeing and most of the hard skills very quickly and I was even okay at the soft skills. I wanted to learn, so I absorbed. I learned more than I realized, skills that I still use every day. But, what's more, it was here that I finally came to grips with what was eating me up, what I was fighting.

It happened the most during swimming class. Swimming was never my strong point. I can't float, and when you can't float, and you are tall enough

to almost always be able to touch the bottom, why learn to swim properly? Those days really pushed me, pushed me to the point of wanting to quit. Waking up, I dreaded the thought that I would have to be in the pool that day and I thought that I would never be able to do it. I even had a speech ready to tell the directors, explaining that I wouldn't be able to get my swimming quals. But the swimming wasn't the real problem.

I had been having a personal fight with depression, a fight I would not admit to and one that had been going on since at least 2008. It was always at these tough moments when it would win and I would give up, say it's not worth it, and move on. It was so much easier to move past something than it was to actually try and work through it. But this time there was something that I had not experienced before: an Outlook community. There was a group of people that were going through this with you and not once was there a negative comment directed at anyone. That group pushed me through the swimming and through something else as well. Coming to grips with the depression wasn't the end of it by any means, and it would take so much more to do something about it. But that summer I felt more in control of it and felt like I could sit and talk with whomever I ended up beside. Then there were the campers continued on page 2...

Fall/Winter Update

With the Winter Season coming close to an end, we too approach the end of our term as directors. We have achieved much this year: moving into a new office space, the creation of a brand new database, and the inauguration of an after-school sports night, just to name a few.

We've had a lot of fun along the way along with new events including a 24-hour walk-a-thon with Walkhome. Together we raised a total of \$2800. Also, we have teamed up with PACT, an incredible group who are paddling across Canada raising awareness and fundraising for 3 organizations, one of which is Outlook. In addition, we hosted an amazing fundraiser at Clark Hall. All of these events highlighted the community of people surrounding Outlook.

The winter season has been an interesting ride, with weekends of great snow and quinzee building followed by weekends of rain and wet tents. Yet, regardless of the unpredictable weather, the campers always come back smiling and our staff always have great things to say about the trip. It was great to get a glimpse into every trip and to hear about how each trip had a positive impact, however large or small, on the campers and the staff that were a part of it. Like the weather, Outlook has been an unpredictable ride, and now with only 6 weeks left of classes, I can look back and say that it was truly incredible. ■





The Power of Community continued...

and the amazing experience that is Outlook—an experience that anyone who has done it knows about. Long moonlit life talks with co-staff, 15-day shenanigans, last-day paddling against an impossible wind on Opeongo. Those moments which make your trips, your trips. That summer was so incredible that I had to come back for another.

So, in the Summer of 2011, I was full time staff once again, not the same as before, a stronger Matthew now. I also came into Outlook differently, taking on a more administrative role where it was less about my own personal growth and instead more about just making the summer better for everyone. That summer was also full of challenges and it is when I found my true mental limit. And again, when it truly felt like I was alone in the world, I could just fall into my tent and my co-staff were right there to help. The community was always there and they were always supportive.

The following school year, I wished I still had that support I had so needed in the summers past. With the antidepressants and the 4-month physical battle before being diagnosed as a Type-1, insulin dependent, diabetic, I just wished for that net that Outlook creates. In the middle all of this, I got the exciting news that I would be able to co-direct the winter program the next school year and that I would have the opportunity to help provide for others what was such an incredible experience for me.

Which brings me here, mere weeks away from graduating and getting my iron ring. Outlook has done so much for me, as I'm sure it has for campers and staff before and after me. It has made me stronger, both physically and mentally. I have tripped with insulin, and, truly, this physical battle seems so little compared to what Outlook has helped me through. I really just want to say thank you. You were/are the most amazing people ever. ■

Thinking of Summer

By: James Seery & Ben Mogl-MacLean, Summer Directors 2013

Greetings to all those who love and support Outlook. We, James Seery and Ben Mogl-MacLean, are the 2013 summer directors. James and I were both staff this past summer under Tim and Zoe's illustrious leadership and, as you may have guessed, we caught that ever-infectious Outlook bug, took the jump, and were lucky enough to land ourselves in the directors' seats. I can say for both James and I that we are truly honored to be able to be part of the continuing Outlook legacy.

As with each new summer of Outlook, some unique challenges and possibilities have presented themselves. One big piece of news is that Outlook's summer base camp and staff residence ("The Outlook House") will likely be relocated this summer. Due to Outlook's increasing demands for space and staff, our friends at Sci-Co-op have suggest using two houses to better accommodate our growing needs. James and I are confident that the new location (which is just a block over on Nelson St.) will also accommodate us just fine, or maybe even better.

James and I are hoping to expand on the specialty trips introduced by Tim and Zoe last summer. We are planning on keeping the 7-day and leadership trips. Last summer, Outlook put in a lot of work trying to implement an intern, or counselor-in-training, program. This would be for campers who are too old to come on trips as campers but who still have an interest in Outlook and have shown maturity and leadership potential. These interns would be involved in almost every step of the trip-planning process, from route choice to equipment and food packing. The interns would then act as assistant leaders on trip. It is our hope to see more Outlook campers become staff and we think this is a good first step.

A further project that James and I have been considering is fundraising to

get some new sleeping bags. Feedback from last year's camper surveys raised a few concerns about some of our sleeping bags and we were think it's time to replace them.

As we continue to prepare for another summer of adventure, we are constantly reminded of just how unique and important Outlook is to the staff, the community, and most of all the campers. My friends are always asking me about Outlook and all I can say is, "It's like no other camp you can imagine; I really have no way to explain it." Outlook is very much an organization built on a long tradition of dedicated staff and supportive community. The nature of the bonds that Outlook cultivates is something that is not quite explainable in words, but that is very much evident to all who encounter it. It is our hope that this coming summer will uphold the long tradition of Outlook and everything that it has come to be in its almost 43 years of existence.

May your canoes find calm lakes and a tail wind that never ceases. ■

Thank You !

We would like to extend a **BIG THANK YOU** for your support! Outlook is made possible by the donations, time, energy, dedication, thoughts and well wishes that are generously contributed by the camp's friends and alumni.



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Camp Outlook
P.O. Box 811
Kingston, ON
K7L 4X6