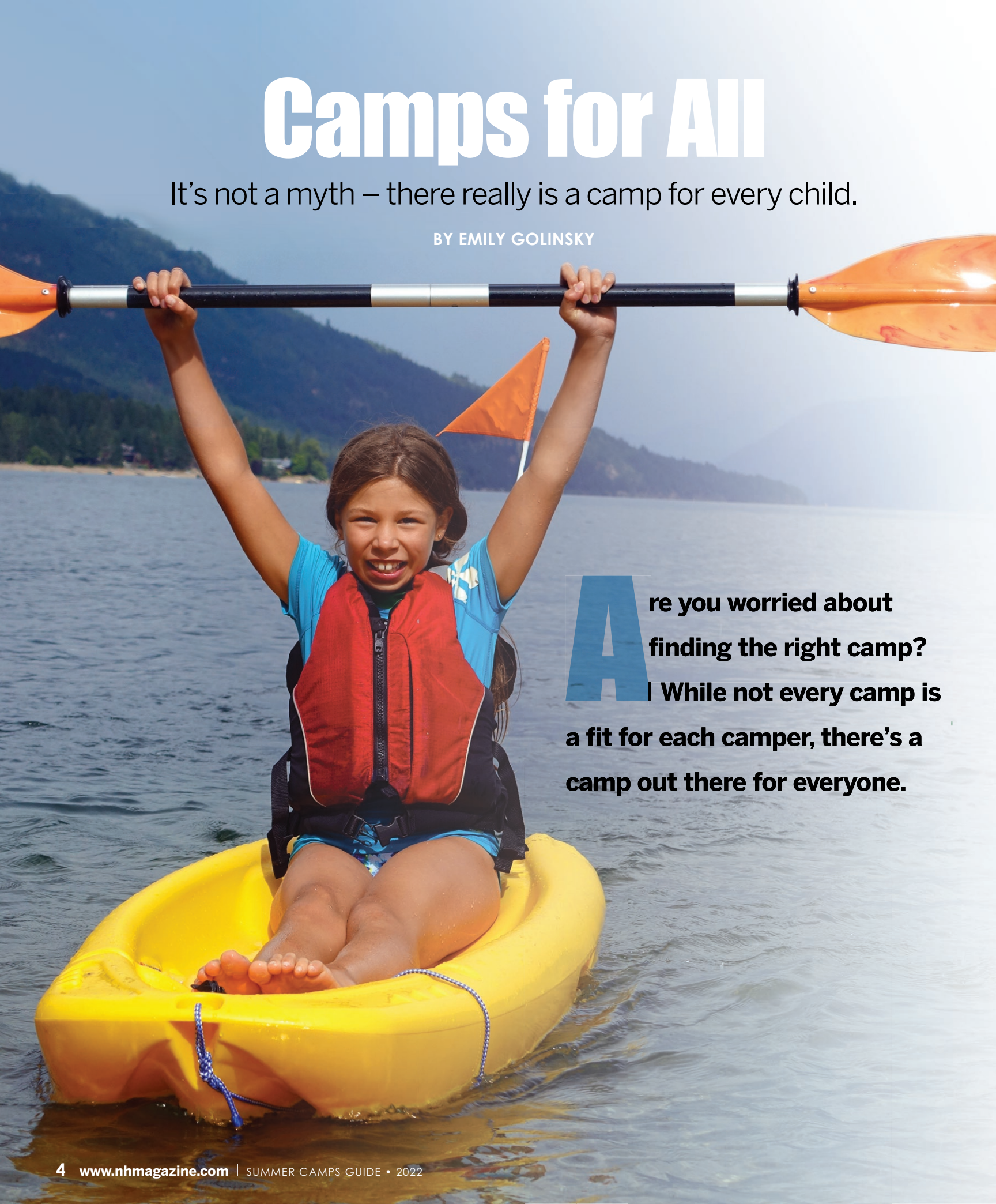


Camps for All

It's not a myth – there really is a camp for every child.

BY EMILY GOLINSKY



Are you worried about finding the right camp? While not every camp is a fit for each camper, there's a camp out there for everyone.

In the last decade, there has been meteoric growth of programs catering to different interests, types of kiddos and timelines. Looking for a full summer of outdoors-based overnight camp? Check. Want a week of morning-only coding camp a few miles from home? Swimming lessons every day? No swimming ever? Check, check, check. There are plenty of options, including general programs that offer a bit of everything for everyone.

It can be daunting to determine which camp to choose. Some good advice — the “best” camp out there is the one that fits best for you, your child, your family and your needs. And while you’re searching for that camp, here are a few myths and facts to guide you.

Myth: Camp is too expensive.

Fact: Many programs offer sliding scales, tiered pricing and “camperships.”

If you’re on a budget (and who isn’t?), look for camps that offer sliding scales (which base tuition on the number of people in your family and your household income) or those that offer financial aid (often called “camperships”) to offset the cost of tuition based on need. Some camps also offer “tiered pricing” — the lowest tier is a subsidized rate, while higher tiers more accurately reflect the actual costs for running the camp. Families are asked to choose the tier that accurately represents what they are able to pay.

Many camps also offer discounts, such as for multiple siblings or during certain weeks that fill less quickly. Additionally, many day camp programs qualify for child care credits — a real benefit when you do your taxes.

Myth: My kids can get the same benefits from playing in the backyard like I did when I was a kid.

Fact: Organized camp activities provide essential social-emotional opportunities that kids need more than ever.

Covid disruptions over the past two years have hit kids hard. Outdoor play and social interaction are critical activities, no matter how they happen. But now kids also need opportunities to cultivate relationships with age-appropriate peers, step outside of their comfort zones and rebuild independence. Even a week of camp is a great way for your kids to meet new friends who can then come over to play in your backyard later in the summer.





The best way to ensure that a camp program is set up to provide your child with a great experience is to be honest about your child’s needs. Ask questions about the systems and supports the camp can offer; not every camp will have what you are looking for, although many will be able to work creatively with you to find flexible solutions or recommend a better fit.

What’s most important is that everyone feels comfortable with the arrangement and thinks it is a likely setup for success. Trying to jam a square peg into a round hole can lead to frustration and disappointment on both sides. It may be a bit more complicated to search for just the right place if your child has specific needs, but it will also be all the more rewarding when they come home from camp brimming with smiles.

There truly is a camp for every child. Enjoy the journey of figuring out which one is best for your camper, then get ready for a great summer of fun. 🍁

Emily Golinsky, M.S., has been at the helm of Camp Starfish in Rindge for more than 15 years and is the founder of Bright Moose LLC, where she provides training for camps and youth development organizations.

Myth: There’s no way a camp can understand my child’s specific set of needs.

Fact: In addition to being great group-focused environments, camps have experienced leaders in the areas of inclusion, support and specialization for individual children.

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