

CAMP SHRIVER AT UMASS BOSTON



2024
IMPACT
REPORT

CAMP SHRIVER

... SO ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN AND PLAY –AS EQUALS



A national model for inclusive recreational programming, Camp Shriver’s mission is to improve the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children of all abilities by providing an inclusive community of friendship and fun. At Camp Shriver, children with and without disabilities build social skills and positive social relationships by learning and playing together.

Since 2006, Camp Shriver at UMass Boston has welcomed children, half with and half without intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 8-12, from low income families in the Boston area to a free inclusive recreational camp. In 2024, Camp Shriver continued the pilot of Summer Stars, an inclusive Summer Treatment Program, for children with externalizing behavior problems such as those associated with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder. Both programs are offered for 4 weeks in July, take place on the UMass Amherst Mount Ida Campus in Newton, MA, and provide transportation and meals at no cost to parents.

Camp Shriver programming continues during the school year with Saturday Camp, held in partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester. Saturday Camp, held on Saturdays in the Spring, and our new Winter and Spring Reunion Days, provide an opportunity for campers to play during the school year.



TALES FROM THE TENT

... WITH MARK SPOLIDORO, DIRECTOR OF CAMP SHRIVER

This new section of the impact report is coming directly from me, from my view, in the tent, of what we have built in Camp Shriver, of what changes and what stays the same. This summer, we've continued our focus on getting back to a sense of fun and of family.

COVID changed things for everyone, including camp. After COVID, I felt like we had to restart our program and I wasn't sure how we would achieve that. From that place of uncertainty, the partnership with UMass Amherst was born. The Mount Ida Campus gave us stability and a home. This site gave us back the opportunity to sit under the tent, be outside with the campers and take in summer camp as it should be, outside in the elements. It meant we could offer campers new and "traditional" camp activities that we couldn't offer on our urban campus. Now we have a games room, where kids learn to play board games, build with blocks and manipulatives, play ping pong and dance. We have space for a sensory walk to help campers self-regulate as needed. We offer archery and—through a partnership the Mount Ida Campus made possible—swimming with the YMCA next door. We have open space to offer many options for campers during choice time such as volleyball, wiffle ball, soccer and gaga ball. The best of all we have a tent large enough to hold all our campers on their six team tables and really make this campus our home during the summer.

And our camp wouldn't be a home without our staff. I tell our staff every year that there is not a summer that goes by that we don't learn something new, from a camper, a staff person or through trial and error. When the staff feels that and sees that support from leadership, they know it is ok to try and fail. This encourages staff members to go outside their comfort zone and enhances the experiences for the whole camp community. This summer, a few staff members approached me with an idea to have a talent show the last week of the summer. I asked them to give me some goals and ideas, and together, we agreed on some expectations to ensure it was inclusive and fun. And they delivered! It was one of the greatest experiences I have had in 18 years as director of the program.

An activity like this only happens when the staff are committed to each other, the program and most of all, the campers. That is what we have been able to do by giving staff the support, the opportunities and the feeling that they are part of the Camp Shriver family.

We love what we do. What doesn't work, we change. That's what makes Camp happen.

Looking ahead to summer,
Mark



THE CSDE MODEL OF INCLUSION

Founded in 1976, the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston is a multidisciplinary research and development institute whose mission is to promote the social development and overall quality of life for children with disabilities. The principles of the CSDE model of inclusion—based on 40 years of CSDE research and evaluation—are found in Camp Shriver programming:

Commitment to Inclusion: To demonstrate a commitment to serving children of all abilities in an inclusive environment, 50% of campers have an intellectual or developmental disability.

Commitment to Full Participation: To promote participation, all activities are planned in advance to support the camper with the highest needs and developed following universal design principles to promote equity. By planning for the child most in need, campers of all abilities can engage in the same activities together. Differentiated instruction is incorporated so that choices are offered between variations of activities (e.g., which line to shoot free throws from) and between different equipment (e.g., whether to pass a basketball, a playground ball or balloon) that benefit all campers, whether that camper has a disability or is simply trying an activity for the first time.

Commitment to Social-Emotional Development: To foster social connections and meaningful social interactions between campers, campers are intentionally placed on teams with staff chosen to best suit the needs of the group. Staff promote a culture of social responsibility by modeling and encouraging positive social behaviors among campers during structured and unstructured time. The team structure allows for greater building of social skills within the unit; social skills such as cheering for your teammates, inviting others to play with you and joining in groups that are already playing are the building blocks of friendships and positive peer relationships.

Commitment to Staff Support: To ensure that staff provide positive behavior supports that foster social skills for all campers with and without disabilities, staff attend two full days of training provided by experts from the CSDE and Boston Public Schools on best practices for successful inclusion. In a low 4:1 camper-to-staff ratio, staff have defined roles: an inclusion coordinator supports all camper and staff needs; coaches organize and lead specific activities (e.g., gym, field, arts-and-crafts); and counselors support campers through the day, modeling participation and positive social skills by engaging enthusiastically in activities. Coaches and counselors together focus on each child's individual skills and abilities (not a specific disability label).

Commitment to Evaluation: To continuously improve inclusive programming so that its positive benefits can be maximized each year, Camp Shriver conducts a rigorous, annual evaluation, involving parent surveys, counselor observations of campers and one-on-one interviews with campers.

With commitment to inclusion, full camper participation, campers' social-emotional development, staff support and program evaluation, Camp Shriver is creating inclusive communities where all children have equal opportunities to learn and play together.



CAMP SHRIVER

... SHARING WHAT WE DO!

This past year, the CSDE became part of the College of Education and Human Development and we were thrilled to host Dean Tara Parker and her team on campus this summer. In addition to a tour and meeting our campers, Dean Parker even joined in a game of GaGa Ball, one of the campers' favorites! We hope her injuries will heal soon.

Marty Meehan, President of the University of Massachusetts, was also able to spend a day with our campers, joining our campers in the arts & crafts room, playing basketball, jumping rope and sharing his thoughts on importance of summer programming.

"Spending time with the kids at Camp Shriver was one of the highlights of my summer," said President Meehan. **"What happens at Camp Shriver is inspirational and all of us at the University of Massachusetts are proud to support it."**

Camp Shriver is equally proud to part of the CEHD and the University of Massachusetts. Thank you to President Meehan, Dean Parker and the CEHD for joining us this summer!



Pictured: President Meehan with campers. *Bottom Picture:* Mark Spolidoro, Director of Camp Shriver, Regine Paul, Assistant Dean for Finance and Administration, Aimee D'Avignon, Director, Andre Maharaj, Director of Summer Stars and ABA Graduate Program, Office of Student Success, Shantal Petrie, Executive Assistant to the Dean, Mona Abo-Zena, Associate Professor, Lindsay Fallon, Department Chair, Counseling, School Psychology & Sport, Tiffany Donaldson, Associate Dean for Innovative Research and Community Partnerships & Director of the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, Tara Parker, Dean, College of Education and Human Development & Barbara Gildea, Camp Shriver Director of Development.

CAMPER STORY—READY FOR INCLUSION

During his first days at Camp Shriver, the first time he had ever been to camp and away from parents for most of the day, Marco, an 8-year-old boy with a disability, was scared. During the school year, Marco's mother drove him to and from school each day, where Marco was in a substantially separate classroom, that is, he remained in his dedicated classroom with the same children for most of the day. He had few chances to play with his peers and explore the world on his own. **The school and Marco's parents agreed that it was time to pursue inclusion opportunities, but where to start?**

Camp Shriver, with our focus on social inclusion and knowledge of best practices, was ready to help! To start with, Marco's family had many conversations with camp leadership and Marco and his family toured Camp Shriver with our Inclusion Coordinator before the start of camp. A plan was put into place immediately, with Marco's mother driving him directly to camp on the first days and scheduled check-ins with his mother by video call three times each day. During his first few days, Marco only made it through his activities knowing that his video call was next.

Marco's counselors were part of his plan, as well. As the first week continued, they diligently made sure that Marco had his check-in call, but also made sure that he was supported in every activity and made fun name-games and other team-building activities a priority. He grew particularly attached to Coach Christine in the gym and started to look forward to playing with his team in the gym even more than the video call with his mom. Toward the end of the first week, Marco began taking the bus with campers from his neighborhood, with his bus monitors taking particular care to engage him during the ride. By the second week of camp, Marco was cutting his video calls with his mother short, saying, "I've gotta go be with my team!" and the calls were phased out.

By the time Marco's parents came to Camp Shriver's Visitor Day, Marco was excitedly introducing his parents to his friends, his counselors, his coach and all his favorite activities. Marco's mom left in tears.

Thanks to Camp Shriver's careful and deliberate planning for the child most in need, Marco is ready to try new opportunities for inclusion during his school year... and Camp Shriver couldn't be happier for him!



EVALUATION OF CAMP SHRIVER

... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS

Each year, research and evaluation staff from the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) ensure that Camp Shriver continues to accomplish our mission: improving the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children of all abilities through providing an inclusive community of friendship and fun. Assessment instruments and methods are drawn from social and behavioral science and educational literature, and are adapted to assess campers' social-emotional skills, social relationships, and belongingness through individual camper surveys and interviews. Counselors who directly interact with and observe campers every day are also asked to rate campers' improvement in social skills. Lastly, parents are surveyed. This multisource (parents/guardians, campers, counselors) approach helps camp leadership continue to improve and adapt programming to best meet campers' needs. From the 2024 evaluation, we learned:

Camp Shriver's model creates a community where campers feel they belong.

Camp Shriver welcomes a population of campers where 50% of campers have an intellectual or developmental disability in a low 4:1 camper-to-staff ratio, and where staff are trained to focus on each child's skills and abilities—not on a particular disability label. This model creates an environment where campers feel truly included and supported.

It is especially important for children with disabilities to have a place where they feel they belong. According to the parents/guardians of campers, campers with disabilities are less likely than their peers without disabilities to attend after school programs, participate in sports, and go to special occasions like birthday parties.

Intentionally, Camp Shriver creates a strong sense of belonging for all campers. Campers believe that their counselors care about them (97%). Campers report that they play nicely with teammates (93%) and, more importantly, that they are nice to peers who are different from them (91%). Overwhelmingly, campers feel connected to peers and counselors at Camp Shriver (96%) and that percentage is the same for campers with disabilities and without disabilities.

Camp Shriver improves the social-emotional skills of campers.

Within this supportive environment where campers feel they belong, Camp Shriver staff work to promote



... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS (CONTINUED)

social-emotional learning by teaching, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behaviors among campers during both structured and unstructured time. This intentional focus on social-emotional development helps campers build social- and self-awareness skills, skills that provide a foundation for acting inclusively.

Counselors report that of the campers who needed improvement, 99% of campers improved in at least one social skill. For examples in particular skills, counselors report that 89% of campers improved at making friends with other campers, 79% at following directions, 75% at sharing with others and 72% at playing nicely with others and doing things that are good for the team. Importantly, counselors believe that 87% of campers who needed improvement at trying their best improved, which is exactly what campers told us ...91% of campers believe they are doing their best camp.

Parents of returning campers also see skill improvement in their children, with 100% of parents reporting that campers are more self-confident, 98% reporting that campers are more patient, and 92% that campers participate in more sports in the community.

Camp Shriver fosters positive peer relationships and friendships.

Most fundamental to Camp Shriver's mission is that Camp Shriver brings together children with and without disabilities to promote positive peer relationships and friendships. For children with disabilities especially, the fostering and development of peer relationships is important, as children with disabilities often lack opportunities to develop positive peer relationships.

This year at camp, 89% of campers named a peer a friend at camp. Encouragingly, this percentage was exactly the same between campers with a disability (89%) and without a disability (89%). Importantly, most campers without a disability (72%) named a peer with a disability as a friend. This is particularly notable, given that a study by research staff at the CSDE found that only 41% of middle school students report becoming friends with a student with a disability, even in the context of inclusive extracurricular programming (such as Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Program; Jacobs, et al., 2018). Additionally, as reflects the diversity of our camp population, 78% of friendships were between campers of different races.

Camp Shriver promotes motor skill development.

Camp Shriver provides opportunities for motor skill development by increasing camper participation in all



... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS (CONTINUED)

activities; this is accomplished by planning for the child most in need and making inclusive accommodations to all activities to promote participation.

Overall, campers participate in over 78 hours of motor skill development on the field, on the tennis courts, in the gym, and in the arts and crafts room, playing a variety of activities such as swimming, archery, golf, tennis, tag games, kickball, basketball, soccer and more. These activities are beloved by campers – campers say that “all these activities make Camp Shriver fun,” and that they “like being outside a lot, getting a lot of fresh air and being active.” Some enjoy “playing and creating games.” Additionally, Camp Shriver adds new activities when possible, so that campers get excited and can learn something new. Many campers listed Camp Shriver’s new GaGa Ball Pit (picture below, left) as a favorite!

This enthusiasm for activities carries over from the summer into the school year, with 100% of returning parents reporting that as a result of Camp Shriver, their children are more likely to be active during the summer and school year.

In conclusion, Camp Shriver has had demonstrated success in meeting its objectives since its inception in 2006 and the evaluation results are used to continuously revise and improve programming to maximize positive effects. Camp Shriver’s model and evaluation results have been widely disseminated in books (Best Practices for Inclusive Camps from Sagamore-Venture Publishing, 2023), conferences (e.g., the American Camping Association Conference, 2023; the National Inclusion Project Power of Play, 2022), encyclopedias (Encyclopedia of Intellectual and Developmental Disorders, 2018), scientific journals (Social Inclusion of Children with Intellectual Disabilities in a Recreational Setting. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 47(2), 97-107), psychology magazines (Monitor on Psychology, July 2008), camping magazines (American Camping Association, 2007) and in national media outlets such as It’s Only a Game on NPR.

And most importantly, Camp Shriver is successful in the eyes of our campers. In their words, when asked what makes Camp Shriver fun, our older, returning campers said, “being included in camp life” and “how we can all have a good time together without stress and bullies.” Another camper said that “it’s fun because I usually don’t get to communicate with a lot of people every day.” Campers highlight the “friends they make” that are “kind and inclusive,” as well as the “nice counselors.” One camper reported, “Every Friday we get ice cream and today we have a talent show. I love that the end of camp is packed with activities. We also get popsicles!”



SERVING DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Camp Shriver remains committed to welcoming children, 8-12, boys and girls, with and without disabilities from low-income urban neighborhoods and ensuring diversity among its campers.

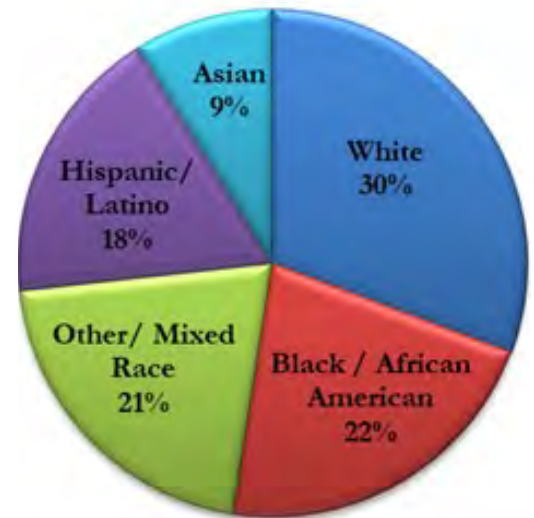
In 2024, Camp Shriver served 165 campers with and without disabilities from Boston (80%) and Quincy (20%). The majority of campers lived in the neighborhoods surrounding UMass Boston, including Dorchester, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roslindale, South Boston and Roxbury. **The ethnicity of our campers is representative of the communities in which they live:** 69% of campers self-identified as a racial-ethnic minority (22% as Black/African American, 21% as mixed race or other, 18% as Hispanic/Latino and 9% as Asian).

At the heart of Camp Shriver's unique inclusive experience, an equal number of children with and without disabilities are brought together to engage in the same recreational activities alongside one another. Our campers with disabilities are children with intellectual disabilities, on the autism spectrum, and who have other developmental delays. In 2024, 47% of campers were children with a disability.

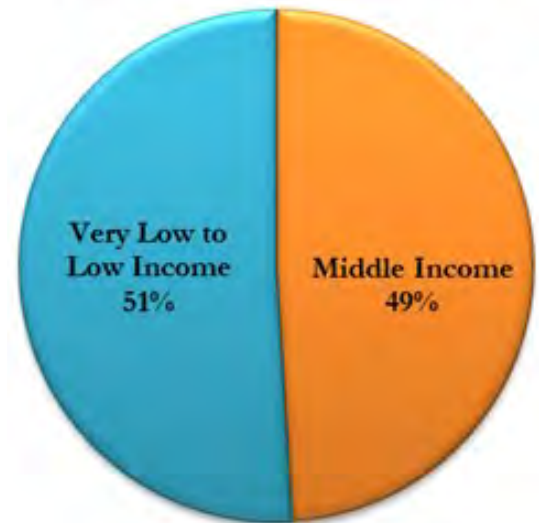
Additionally, **Camp Shriver partners with schools and community groups that serve children from low-income neighborhoods** to identify families that might be interested in and benefit from a free summer recreational camp. In 2024, 51% of Camp Shriver families reported low or very-low household incomes (as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).



Camper Ethnicity



Family Income Levels



Camper Disability Status



CAMPER STORY – READY FOR CAMP

“Can you carry my bag? It’s soooooo heavy.”

“Can we go to the bathroom? I need my special stool. I always have my special stool. Let’s go get it.”

“Not that one, I want the red one. Can you go get me the red one? Pleeese?”

On and on it went, all summer long. When little Casey, a 9-year-old girl with a disability, showed up at camp, whining and pleading, her counselors quickly fell into a bad pattern. When she complained the walk to the gym was too long, they held her hand. When she complained that she needed a break, they took a walk. When Casey would only talk to one specific counselor, that counselor was essentially assigned to Casey.

In the end, Casey was isolated. She wouldn’t talk to her peers or engage in activities. Casey had learned at school and at home, then with enough whimpering, someone somewhere would hold her hand, carry her tray or take her away from a challenging activity.

Director Mark and Inclusion Coordinator Danna knew this behavior couldn’t continue. By not playing with her peers, engaging in activities or cheering on her team, Casey was missing out on the social skill development that is so important for campers her age. She spent almost all her time alone with a single counselor and was missing out on the important inclusive community of Camp Shriver.

Happily, they noticed that Casey had applied to Saturday Camp. Accepting her into the program, Mark and Danna immediately initiated new firm expectations of independence. They talked with her family before the start of Saturday Camp and once Saturday Camp began, they started with a small routine and practiced it throughout the year, so that Casey could leave her parents at the door, walk herself down the hallway, hang up her own bag, and check in with the staff, saying “hello!” before playing the first game of the day. Once Casey gained confidence in this new routine, Mark and Danna expanded those expectations, so that Casey was even more in charge of her own care and could spend more time with her fellow campers.

When Camp Shriver 2024 began, Casey defined all expectations. She ran from the bus to the tent on her first day, hung her bag on her chair, said, “hello!” to her counselors and to Coach Mark, and went through the breakfast line with her tray by herself.

With behavior interventions and the creation of new routines, Camp Shriver was able to help Casey grow into her independence so that she was able to enjoy camp as an entirely new camper: one who was eager to take part in all games, who would walk between activities talking with her teammates and who could take advantage of all the friends and fun that Camp Shriver offers.

Thanks to Camp Shriver, Casey could be just another kid at camp!



CAMP SHRIVER...
IN THE CAMPERS' OWN WORDS

My favorite part of Camp Shriver is the friends you make!



My friends listen to me and include me a lot!

Swimming is my favorite part!



We get to go to all these new activities!

It's fun to make new friends!

I had the best time ever at camp!

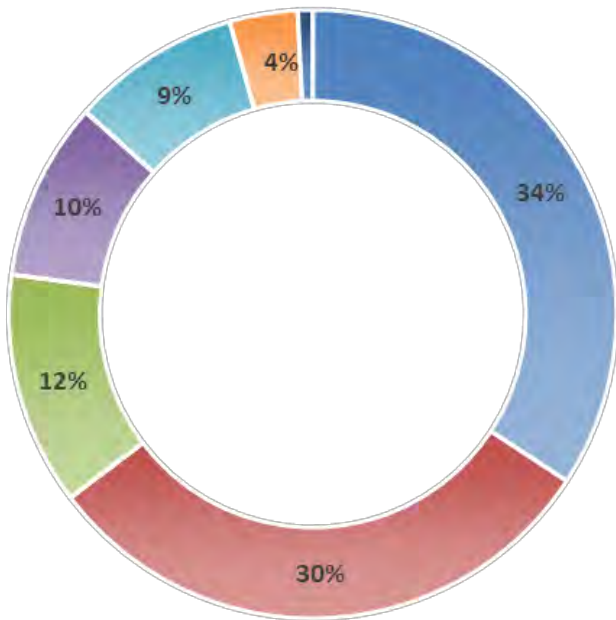


My favorite part is that you're a team!

I like being outside a lot, getting fresh air & being active!

SUSTAINABILITY OF CAMP SHRIVER

Camp Shriver is a financially stable program, comprising support from a variety of sources, including the Center for Social Development and Education (administration and fundraising), the University of Massachusetts Boston (transportation), a multi-year grant from the Liberty Mutual Foundation, and as a members of the Official Charity Programs of the Boston Marathon and the New York City Marathon. We continue to actively solicit new and varied funding opportunities each year.



- Boston Marathon Official Charity Program
- The Liberty Mutual Foundation, Lead Sponsor
- Corporate/Private Foundations
- TCS NYC Marathon Official Charity Program
- UMass Boston and the CSDE
- MA Summer Food Service Program
- Camper Registrations



A GRATEFUL THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Camp Shriver and the Center for Social Development and Education would like to thank UMass Boston, UMass Amherst and all of our friends and sponsors:



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We are very grateful to all our individual donors and foundation sponsors, including **The Agnes M. Lindsay Trust** and the **Paul D. Moore 2020 Revocable Trust!**

JOIN US &

CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF INCLUSION!



CAMP SHRIVER

ON UMASS AMHERST'S MOUNT IDA CAMPUS



2024