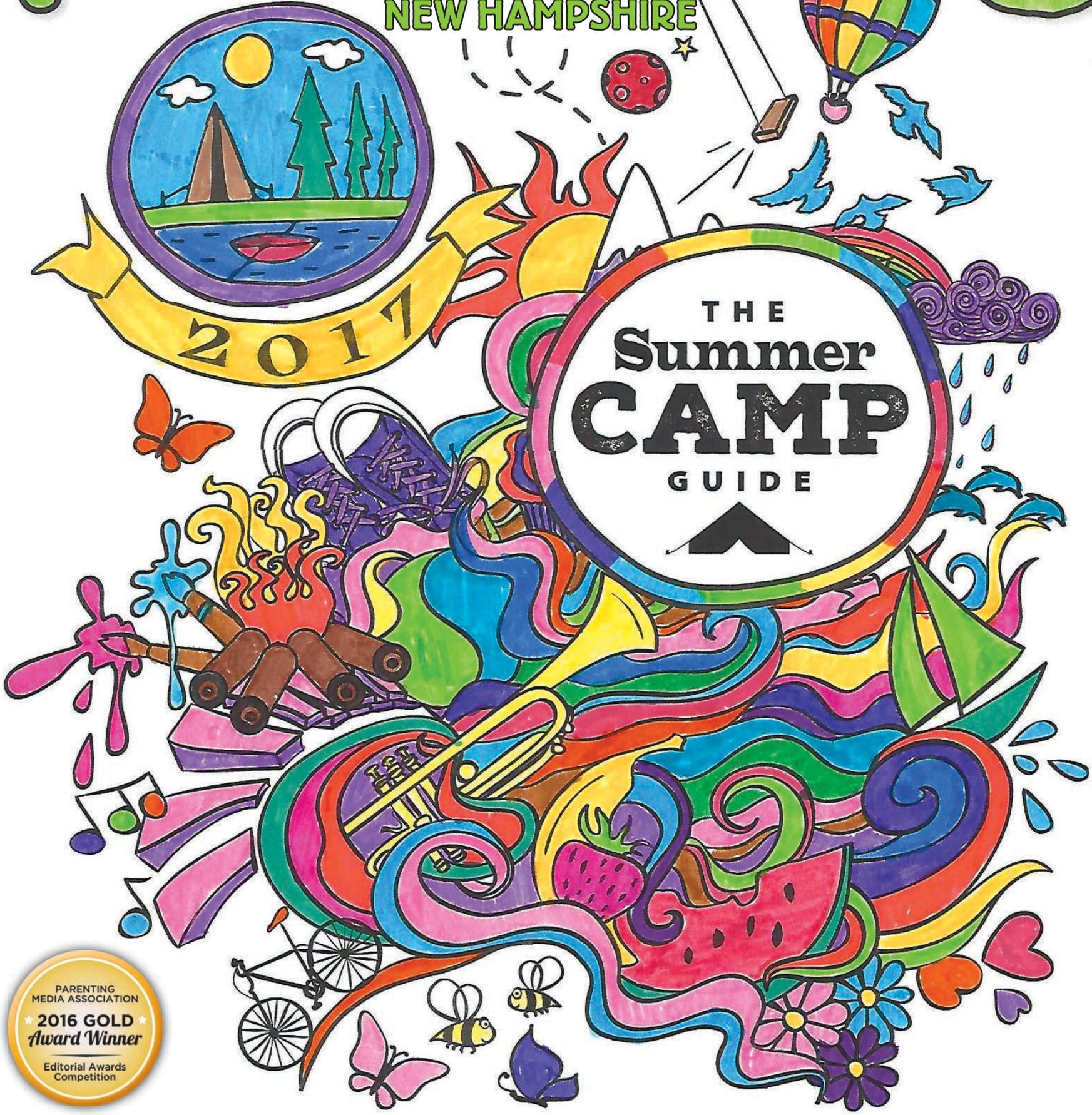


MARCH 2017

COMPLIMENTARY

# parenting

NEW HAMPSHIRE



ParentingNH.com 🌞 DON'T MISS OUR FREE SUMMER CAMP EXPOS: MARCH 11 & 18

# 6 reasons why you can put your trust in your child's camp counselors

By Emily Golinsky, executive director of Camp Starfish

**T**oday's camp staff might accentuate their uniform with unusual hairstyles or prefer to spend their free time on Snapchat rather than talking face-to-face over a cup of coffee. But you can feel confident that the young adults who will take care of your child at camp this summer can handle the responsibility with which you are entrusting them.

How can you be sure? Well, for starters, they have:

- 1. Intensive Training.** Camps are required to provide comprehensive training – typically one to three days for day camps and seven to 14 days (and nights) for overnight camps. Staff are trained on everything from developmental stages to behavior management, from how to help campers who are homesick to what to do if there's a thunderstorm. Many camps also use "pre-training training" – learning opportunities for staff in the spring, so they arrive at staff training with a solid base of knowledge.
- 2. Set Policies and Procedures.** Policies are in place on everything from how to take attendance at activities (and how often) to what topics it's OK to talk about with campers (versus what they should learn from trusted adults at home). The professional directors setting these policies and procedures have years – in some cases, decades – of youth development, risk management, and supervisory experience. You can be sure that they are instructing counselors clearly on how to combine the good judgment expected of them with the bottom-line rules and regulations by which all staff must abide.
- 3. Extensive Background Checks.** New Hampshire has some of the most regionally comprehensive rules on background checks for camp staff. At a minimum, staff hired to work with your child at licensed New Hampshire camps have undergone criminal record checks in each state they have previously lived, as well as checks of the National Sex Offender Registry. The application and interview process for staff requires that potential staff provide a history of all previous employment and volunteer positions and also give references for the camp director to check.
- 4. Directors Who You Trust.** You chose the camp your child is going to attend for many reasons – and high on the list was likely that you trusted the camp's leadership. Perhaps you met the directors, or maybe you spoke with families who have been sending their children for years. Ultimately, you believe that the directors have the best interests of your child as their first priority. That director is the person responsible for approving the counselors who will work directly with your child. The reputation of their camp relies on directors' decisions surrounding the staff team they put in place, so you can



feel confident that they are seeking out employees whose work ethic mirrors their own.

- 5. Consistent Supervision.** It's unusual – and at most camps, not allowed – for counselors to be on their own with your child out of eyesight of other staff. Supervisory staff with additional years of experience and advanced training are always checking in, visiting activity areas to see how things are going, providing opportunities for staff development and feedback, and in general keeping an eye on things.

- 6. Commitment to Kids.** And last, but certainly not least, they are committed to the safety and success of your kids. Being a camp counselor is not an easy job. Working at camp is fun for sure, but all of that is far less of a daily focus for staff than taking good care of your child. Compared to the retail and fast-food jobs their friends have back home, camp counselors put in more time, work harder, and have higher expectations placed on them. On staff, free time is fleeting, pay is low, and their access to technology and social media is significantly limited. In short, this is not the kind of job young adults take unless they have a passion for working with children, an interest in changing lives, and a real desire to make a difference. That means counselors will pour their heart and soul into making sure your child's experience at camp is the best summer of their lives. [PNH](#)

Emily Golinsky is the executive director of Camp Starfish located in Rindge.

march 2017 [www.parentingnh.com](http://www.parentingnh.com) 31