**Keeping the Chi Flame Burning:**

**How Wellness Strengths our Summer**

**By: Dr. Laura L. Wood**

At Camp Chi, we’ve always known that the best summers don’t just create memories-- they shape people. So, for the past three years we have been working hard to strengthen a dynamic wellness and character program that helps campers and staff alike build confidence, deepen connection, and grow into their best selves—all while having an unforgettable summer.

Wellness at Chi shows up in the small, powerful moments: a quiet check-in after a tough day, a high-five after conquering the ropes course, a conversation about courage and kindness, or support for campers who might have other struggles. The goal is always to offer campers skills that get them back into camp and leave them with lessons they can take home with them.

Wellness at Camp Chi is also about caring for our incredible staff. When counselors and village leaders feel supported, they’re better equipped to be present, responsive, and joyful with campers. Through leadership development, coaching or direct support, in summer 2024, 95% of staff surveyed reported that the Wellness Team supported them at an “effective” or “very effective” level, which far exceeds the national average across overnight camps.

Our Wellness Team is led by Dr. Laura Wood and Ely London, Camp Chi’s Community Care Coordinator. Dr. Wood is a licensed mental health professional and university educator passionate about transformation at camp. Together, they work with a team of social workers, counselors, creative arts therapists, and graduate level students. All members are specially trained to meet the unique needs of camp life with warmth, flexibility, and heart. Whether it is helping campers build confidence, navigate friendship dynamics, develop emotional awareness, or receive additional support for anxiety, homesickness, or neurodiversity, our team is there to meet kids where they are. In addition, Chi alum Dr. Jason Frydman, a licensed psychologist and university educator, supports the team in better understanding what is and isn’t working about our initiatives, ensuring our work is rooted in what truly helps today's campers and staff thrive.

This year, we presented our wellness model at both the Foundation for Jewish Camping Leaders Assembly and the Tri-State Camp Conference—the largest gathering of camp professionals in North America. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with camps across the country reaching out to learn more.

This summer, we’re welcoming four new wellness advocates, two returning ones, and a newly promoted senior wellness team member who began their journey as an intern. We also have last year’s team of beloved social workers back joining for various weeks throughout the summer. We’re also expanding our Leadership Development Program, which gives counselors and village leaders the tools to grow their skills, their confidence, and their impact.

We can’t wait to welcome everyone back this summer. If you have questions or want to learn more, feel free to reach out to Laura at [dr.lauralwood@gmail.com](mailto:dr.lauralwood@gmail.com)