

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subject: Good News from Governor Northam for Virginia Youth Ahead This Summer

Youth across the Commonwealth and beyond rejoiced on Wednesday February 17, 2021 when Governor Northam made an official announcement during his press conference confirming that Virginia's overnight camps would be able to reopen this summer and expressing confidence that overnight summer camps in Virginia are ready to plan and execute safe operations in 2021. Working parents celebrated the news, which will provide them with a trusted, niche childcare option so they will be able to get back to work, and camp operators are breathing a sigh of relief with an optimistic outlook at recruiting families to attend camp and staff to operate camp this summer. After an abundance of caution shuttered overnight camps in Virginia last summer due to COVID-19, children, parents and caregivers, as well as camp staff, now have something to look forward to as planning for summer and returning to the outdoors at camp becomes a reality and respite. This welcome news follows almost 18 months dominated by technology, social media, and isolation for our children and youth as well as staggering business losses for camps.

Virginia's overnight summer camps have been providing high quality camp experiences across the Commonwealth since 1915. The American Camp Association, Virginia's Chapter and the Coalition of Virginia's Overnight Summer Camps report that 596 Virginia camps serve 1,040,000 campers and employ 48,000 staff each year. Through the Great Depression, polio, world wars, other pandemics, and recessions, Virginia's overnight camping industry has continued to provide a safe environment away from home, where children can develop emotionally, socially, and spiritually in a community that encourages them to take healthy risks without fear of failure and to develop a sense of self necessary for navigating the modern world. According to the American Camp Association (ACA), over 3,000 camps across the country offered just such outcomes to youth following the [ACA's Field Guide for Operations](#) during the 2020 summer.

The Governor's announcement is welcome news to small businesses eager to get to work to deliver services for youth at a time where children have already lost so much as a result of school closures, cancelled social and sporting events, and online learning. Local, rural communities where camps are located will praise the news and will benefit from the seasonal, economic injection as Virginia's overnight camping industry provides local jobs and boosts local tourism. Overnight camping is uniquely poised to combat this crisis and empower Virginia's next generation to face the difficulties that lie ahead with the grit and determination so characteristic of what is at the heart of the best of Virginia.

Additional Resources:

[Research Study on the 2020 Summer CampCounts Survey](#)

[Preventing and Mitigating SARS-CoV-2 Transmission — Four Overnight Camps, Maine, June–August 2020](#)
[Summer Camps Successfully Prevented and Mitigated COVID-19 Transmission, Says New CDC Study](#)

About The Coalition of Virginia's Overnight Summer Camps

The Coalition of Virginia's Overnight Summer Camps is a statewide network of overnight camps working to #SaveNextSummer for thousands of camper families who they serve. Virginia's overnight camps were the only small business industry unable to operate in all three phases of the Forward Virginia reopening guidelines in 2020. As a result, camps experienced an estimated 75% loss in earned revenue. The coalition has two main focuses: (1) to urge state representatives to provide financial support to the industry, and (2) to work closely with state officials to develop reopening guidelines for summer 2021. [View the list of Coalition Members and find contact information here.](#) For more information, call [Colleen Hagan Egl](#) 540-456-6135.