



CAMP NEBAGAMON

PO BOX 429, LAKE NEBAGAMON, WISCONSIN 54849

To The Camp Family:

One of the best decisions Stephanie and I have made in our lives was when we chose to buy Camp Nebagamon and serve as its stewards beginning in 2004. The opportunity to carry Nebagamon forward in its mission to help children be themselves and reach their potential, have fun, and make lifelong connections has been an incredibly rewarding life experience.

As the years have gone by, we have thought deeply on how best to ensure that this nearly 100-year-old institution continues to exist and thrive for the next hundred years...and beyond.

Nebagamon has been incredibly fortunate in its leadership with four sets of committed directors. (Three of which were as talented as any directors I have ever seen in this business...the jury is still out on the fourth!) Nonetheless, Stephanie and I have come to understand that the private ownership model of camps has always been a risky one. Although each set of Nebagamon's directors has conscientiously protected Camp, and the institution remains on solid financial footing today, there is little doubt that if a private owner were in an untenable financial situation, their hand could be forced to sell the property, and the future of Camp, to the highest bidder. Stephanie and I personally lived this fear when the pandemic hit. Fortunately, we only missed one season and Camp survived 2020 just fine, but that experience only furthered our belief that we needed to create something more indissoluble for Camp Nebagamon's future.

With this goal, we have contemplated, researched, and selected a new organizational model – the transfer of Nebagamon to a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization run by a board of directors – a model we believe to be the best option to secure Camp in perpetuity. This model works; there are many similar camps around the country that employ the non-profit model and are thriving. In fact, the camp that I directed, prior to Nebagamon, operated under this very same model and has been incredibly successful.

Stephanie and I, together with an amazing, dedicated small group of passionate Nebagamon alumni, worked through how to make this a reality. Importantly, all former living directors – Nardie and Sally, and Roger and Judy – enthusiastically support this idea and agree that it is truly the best way to protect the place that we all know and love so much.

To be very clear, we expect the camper experience to remain the same in the new model. In fact, that is the point. Nebagamon will still do EXACTLY what it has been doing so well since 1929, honoring tradition while staying flexible, upholding Nebagamon values while always seeking improvement, doing it all while staying laser-focused on what is best for the children who walk through its gates.

We believe that transferring Nebagamon to a non-profit structure is the best way forward for many reasons:

- The combination of skills required to be camp directors is relatively unique. (After all, you have to be able to operate a business, oversee a staff, take care of children while enriching their lives, sing AND plunge toilets!) Additionally, camp has become a very expensive business to purchase partially due to the significant appreciation of lakefront real estate in northern Wisconsin. Having to meet both of those bars makes the potential private owner/director pool exponentially tiny. This move will allow the Camp Nebagamon board to seek out and hire the best possible professional camp director(s), independent of their personal access to wealth.

•This structure would make it much easier for Nebagamon to weather any crises that might arise. As we already mentioned, the pandemic is a case in point. Timing is everything, and had this sort of event happened when Stephanie and I were new directors, before we had built up a financial cushion and the relationships that buoyed us through that difficult year of closure, it is hard to say what the outcome would have been for Camp. A non-profit structure will remove, permanently, the possibility for any private owner to sell the property to developers, whether as a way to recoup a financial investment or address unforeseen challenges. Furthermore a non-profit structure would benefit from the ability to raise additional funds for a special need or emergency, so that, no matter the crisis, Nebagamon would be better equipped to withstand it.

•Camp is currently profitable. While fiscal responsibility will continue to be vital as a non-profit organization, all excess revenue will be invested into Camp. In addition to operational revenue, the non-profit organization could generate more funds to pursue large capital campaigns and have more resources to accomplish its goals.

•We all know and love Nebagamon. We love the place and its traditions. Yet we are all aware of the fact that Camp has always needed to evolve in order to stay relevant, while still maintaining its core values and important traditions. As a non-profit, Camp will ultimately benefit from a committed board of directors with camp's best interests at heart, and a broad variety of volunteer skills and expertise from "the real world" that will be a built-in resource. We know the board will bring added intelligence and perspective to future strategic deliberations and critical decisions.

Steph and I are not going anywhere, anytime soon. After serving as Camp's stewards for the past 19 years, we are totally committed to the institution and doing whatever we can to "leave our campsite better than we found it." Nebagamon is truly our life's work; we intend to see this through completely. With this in mind, Stephanie and I have enthusiastically agreed to become the first directors of Camp Nebagamon under this new structure.

Within the past year, the alumni group I mentioned earlier has done the legal and organizational work to create the 501(c)(3), named the Camp Nebagamon Foundation, and has embarked on a quiet-phase fundraising drive to make this dream a reality. The support from Nebagamon's alumni has already been, frankly, amazing. In the coming week, you can expect to hear from the Camp Nebagamon Foundation about opportunities for you to be a part of this milestone in Nebagamon's history, as, together, we chart its course. (For more information, visit www.campnebagamon.com.)

We cannot adequately express how grateful we are for the Camp Family and we look forward to continuing as Camp's stewards. We are more optimistic than ever about Camp's future and the coming generations that will assuredly be able to share in the Nebagamon experience because of what we, all, accomplish here.

Keep the Fires Burning,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam & Steph". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.