

Summer Camps on Burnt Island – 2023

By: Elaine P. Jones

In July, sixty children entering grades 4-6 at Southport, Boothbay Region, and Edgecomb Elementary Schools participated in the ultimate camp experience on Burnt Island. Three sessions of outdoor learning took place again this summer with this year being better than the last, thanks to overnight stays. Using the five-acre island's magnificent natural and historical resources, participants were fully immersed in their own learning while exploring, discovering, and understanding their new and interesting environment.

Awesome Instructors

The Burnt Island summer camp was thoroughly enjoyed for the second year in a row with teachers Sarah Currier, Jennifer Lassen, and Emelia Petrowski from AOS98, and Libby Zipperer from Bath serving as instructors. The team of four, along with parent chaperones, worked together to provide campers with outstanding activities, including an overnight experience. After a spaghetti dinner, the evening activities included games, visiting the lighthouse at dusk, and swishing the water to view bioluminescence after dark.

Libby Zipperer stated, "For many children, this was their first time sleeping away from home and they all did very well. Imagine being able to do this on a lighthouse island, in a post and beam replica of a life-saving station in ship style bunks! The joy these children felt was immediately seen. Having been involved with Burnt Island for over 15 years and personally witnessing the hands-on, experiential learning that happens in this magical place, I cannot say enough about the incredible value of this experience. It is truly unforgettable. The educational opportunities that happen on Burnt Island are one of a kind, and a rarity at that! In a world where technology dominates, and the almighty dollar makes it almost impossible to get to places like Burnt Island, this place is unique and beyond comparable. The connections between the people that experience Burnt Island are lasting, as no one can ever forget the time they spent being on "island time."

Sarah Currier added, "The kids loved the program this year. The overnight was a lot of work, but a great success. We had wonderful volunteers that helped tremendously. The addition of school lunches and breakfast was a great idea, as was asking the PTO to pay the overnight fee. The addition of the awards pizza party on August 8th at the Boothbay Railway Village was the perfect venue for a wrap-up session. The photo presentation recapped the Burnt Island experiences and the campers glowed when receiving individualized awards with such titles as: "Master Clam Digger" and "King Crab Catcher."

Through the Eyes of the Campers

Isabella Page said, "My favorite thing was the overnight. I also enjoyed making new friends. I hope I can come back next year. I also loved the squid dissection. I loved the lighthouse tour and the keeper's house tour."

Mackenzie Thyen stated, "I've never been to camp especially to a sleep over. Everything I liked. Exploring the lighthouse, the sleep over and the boat ride. When I first arrived, it was the best experience that ever happened to me! The opportunity that I had was amazing."

Finn Leeman declared, "My favorite thing that I did was dig for clams and catch crabs. I hope I can come back next year. The overnight was so fun."

Charlie Brooks expressed, "I really enjoyed the lighthouse. The overnight was amazing and I got to see bioluminescence."

Shauna Ytac acknowledged, "I will cherish these three days of my life. Three things I loved doing is tide pooling, GPS hike, and bioluminescence. I wish I could stay for all of the weeks, but I sadly can't."

Sheyenne Upham said, “I had the best time and loved meeting new friends and having a sleep over on the island. Dissecting the squid was really neat even though I wasn’t keen on the idea at first. I’m excited to do this again next summer.”

Parents’ Perspectives

Alan Baldwin, dad of Violet, served as chaperone and spaghetti chef for his daughter’s camp session. He shared, “The group of kids that I and my daughter were with, were so positive and eager to experience the program. And that, for me, was what I appreciated the most about the opportunity afforded by this program – kids outside of the traditional classroom, eager to learn, excited to have hands-on learning, and really embracing the whole experience. From asking questions about how the lighthouse keeper’s family lived to dissecting a squid, they all embraced the situation and had a blast out in nature. I am truly grateful that both my kids got to enjoy such an invaluable educational experience, and that I have as well.”

Denica Dimitrova, mom of Iliya Sanborn, described the Burnt Island Summer Camp as a unique program designed with educational learning in mind and packed with diverse activities that sharing with her child is a memory to be cherished for life. She said, “The whole island magically transformed into a giant nature classroom and all the learning turned fun through hands-on experiences. From clam digging to tide pooling, learning how to use a GPS to the exciting treasure hunt, walking the rooms of the keeper’s house and seeing fascinating objects from the past, climbing the stairs of the lighthouse and hearing spooky ghost stories, journaling on the rocks using their five senses, observing real bioluminescence at the dock in their pajamas, was an experience of a lifetime to share with camp friends.”

Maureen Cooper, mom of John and Sam, expressed her sentiments as such. “Many families in the area, despite living so close to harbors and islands, never have the opportunity to experience such a beautiful place. The experience of the Burnt Island camp was the first time our family, and many others, had spending so much time in the natural marine environment, and on a historic island to boot! What better place for our children to learn about science, history, and how to learn cooperatively!!! Most of all, what better place to make lifelong friendships with both peers and adults.”

Special Thanks to the Donors

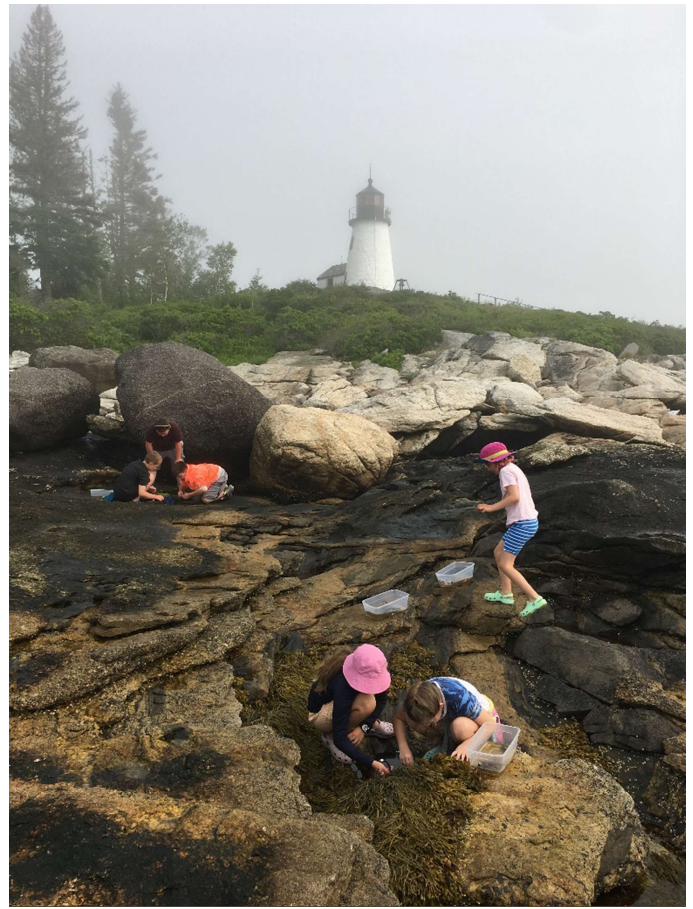
Sponsorship of the Burnt Island Summer Camp was a collaborative effort organized by AOS98 teachers, staff, and Parent Teacher Organization, the DMR, and generous donors to the nonprofit organization *Lighthouse Education & Nautical Studies* (LENS). The well-organized endeavor provided unique, learning opportunities that benefited not only the campers, parents, and instructors, but the community at large.

Thanks to local generosity, these youngsters have gained newfound knowledge and understanding of island ecology, historic structures, and the importance of lighthouses to mariners. Hopefully, this awareness will foster a sense of responsibility and preservation of the ocean and its resources, islands and their habitats, and local historic buildings. A new alliance of Burnt Island campers are ready to make informed choices that contribute to a more sustainable future for the lighthouse station, Boothbay region communities, the Gulf of Maine, and beyond.

All Burnt Island campers expressed their gratitude, but here are a few direct statements. William Lassen said, “I hope you can do this for more kids next year.” Kinsley Weiss stated, “I hope I can come to Burnt Island again next year. I am so grateful for this opportunity.” Finley Gatner expressed, “Thank you for giving money so we can go to camp without paying money to go. I hope that other people will have the opportunity that I had.”

You Too Can Make a Difference

Please support future educational programming for local school children by donating to: *Lighthouse Education & Nautical Studies*, PO Box 213, W. Boothbay Harbor, Maine 04575, or online at www.lighthouseeducation.org



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