



CRAO Log October 2020

Volume XXXIII Issue II

Hear ye, hear ye! Save the date for the Camp Runoia 115th Reunion, August 13-15, 2021
[More info on the reunion here](#)

Camp Runoia Executive Board and Board of Trustees

President: Roberta "Boop" Tabell Jordan (1967-1980)
West Bath, ME

Vice President: Marie-Claude Francoeur (1972-1982, 1984-1986, 1989)
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Brooklyn, NY

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Susan "Yatesy" Yates (1964-1968, 1970, 1973)
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Clerk: Matti Williams Bradley (1969-1981)
Belgrade Lakes, ME/Sanibel, FL

115th Reunion Co-Chairs:
Marie-Claude Francoeur
Betsy Nicholson

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SERVICE!

Letter from the CRAO President

Dear Runoia Alumnae,

Do you remember a time at camp when you screamed out “Bo-Bo-Ski-Watten-Datten” so loudly that it made you hoarse by the end? I remember chanting it ferociously for the other team at the end of a softball game, or in praise of the great banquet that we used to have on the night of cotillion. And I remember screaming it out to my summer friends (through tears sometimes) as buses and cars took them away on a cold, dark August morning.

I have always loved “bo-bos,” as we call them. It’s a lovely tradition. But it’s more than that. It’s an enthusiastic and joyful way to express support, appreciation, or even deep gratitude. And it’s shared (like a secret handshake) by almost anyone who’s passed through Runoia’s gates in the last 70 years when the cheer was first brought to Camp Runoia.

Pam, Alex, and the entire Runoia staff deserve the loudest, most raucous bo-bo we can muster for the courage, smarts, determination, and resilience they showed prior to and during the summer of 2020. Camp successfully opened in July for one three-week session. 80 girls enjoyed a unique camp experience on the shores of Great Pond, one that they will certainly be able to tell their grandchildren about someday. I know you all share my deep gratitude (and a certain amount of awe) for the gargantuan effort that made 114 continuous summers of Runoia possible this year.

In addition to your virtual shout-out of a heartfelt bo-bo, you can show your gratitude to Pam and the Runoia crew this fall in several ways:

Make a gift to the Camp Runoia Alumnae Association (CRAO) to support camperships. In a typical year, Pam and CRAO award full or partial “camperships” to 20 to 25 girls who would otherwise not be able to attend camp. CRAO makes an annual donation to camp, thanks to your tax-deductible gifts, that covers about 35 to 40% of the total amount of the camperships awarded (about \$55,000 last summer). The rest of the tuition reductions come out of Runoia’s bottom line.

This summer there were only 80 campers instead of the usual 220 that attend camp over two sessions. While Runoia is in good financial health, the impacts of this small summer enrollment will be felt for several years to come. CRAO’s goal in this reunion year is to raise more and give more to camp -- to cover more than our share of tuition assistance over the next two years. [We’ll be sending out an annual appeal letter at the end of October and hope you will support our efforts to increase our annual donation for camperships. You can also make a gift today, through the CRAO web page.](#)

Join us for the 115th reunion celebration, August 13-15, 2021. The 115th is going to be awesome, and it’s also going to offer several competitions that will raise funds specifically for CRAO and camperships. We’ve chosen the theme of “resilience” for the 115th celebration, in honor of the resilience Pam, Alex and Runoia have shown during the pandemic, and in honor of the resilience and many other life-skills we have all gained from our summers at camp. Our goal is to have 115 new alumnae gifts by August 13, 2021 to support camperships.



[Details on the reunion events and other fundraisers can be found a little further on in this newsletter, and through the special 115th reunion tab on the CRAO web page.](#) Please make plans to spend a weekend in Maine next August and seek out some of your old camp friends to join you. And if you have them, *please* send us photos from your camp years to share on social media.

Bo-bos to all,

Boop Tabell Jordan
CRAO President

(pictured on left in 1972, bottom right with Gwyneth Hamel and Noianni Horgan

Letter from Camp Runoia Harmonyville 2020 – from Pam Cobb Heuberger

When you read the last CRAO news, the spring news, we had a plan to run camp during a global pandemic. With the risk of the Corona Virus and COVID-19 infections, we did not know how it would go; adding to the uncertainty were the lack of protocols for operating camp with COVID. Our priority was to protect our campers, staff and their families as best as we could while running camp. As true Runoia Gals – we were determined, worked hard, gathered the right people in the right places and made it happen!



Alex renamed camp so it was clear that it was not our regular Runoia. She came up with the name Harmonyville and Camp Runoia Harmonyville (CRH) it was! We took charge of our own protocols starting with facts and science. We built protocols starting with food service, activity and residential living, use of space at camp and caring for our staff. We shortened our session and operated at low density. We built new sinks outside the dining hall (pictured left) and two new staff lounges for our staff to have space to re-energize. We checked with the CDC and the ACA for updates and tweaked our protocols. I met bi-weekly with a core group of other camp owners about contacting the governor, protocols, new ideas, purveyors of PPE, tent rental ideas, isolation set up, etc.

Special thanks to: Alex and Jen for reading absolutely everything available in real time and transferring it to camp protocols. Thanks to Drs. Susi Laskey and Susan Weaver for volunteering their time to come to camp and to help us before camp in those very uncertain times. Thanks to admin staff, Tess, Jai, Eliza, Callie, Cleen, Amelia, Kenz, Abbie who showed up and stayed present. A big shout out to the staff who came from near and far, listened to our protocols, were willing to quarantine on camp property all summer and provide a safe experience for campers. Thanks to the parents who believed in us and those who supported us from afar. Thanks for the gratitude that kept us running when coffee didn't do the trick anymore. Thanks to the CRAO for supporting campers to attend camp and participate in our riding program. Thanks to Mark who reviewed and edited protocols, who supported us without wavering in this amazing project and made the most fun happen on the Waterfront!

With all of this energy and brain power and will power, we opened CRH 2020. We have experience now. We feel we have the scaffolding to operate our 115th continuous season of camp. [We have experience. We are looked to as experts.](#) We know many things will change between now and next spring/summer, but whatever comes our way, we feel we have the skills and people power to figure it out with confidence. As one parent wrote in the early summer:

“We consulted with a family friend who is an infectious disease doctor. I thought you might find his response amusing:

Several reasons to send her:

Child's sanity

Sibling's sanity

Parents' sanity

Rural Maine, with low population density, as safe an environment as one can find, albeit with increased on-site density of campers

Extensive precautions and safety measures implemented by Runoia.

To paraphrase Moses to Pharaoh, let your child go.”

Our CRH 2020 campers:



And the amazing staff who made it all happen – thank you!



Black Women Matter – In the midst of preparing to open camp during a global pandemic, another crisis was happening in the United States. The awareness of systemic racism and police brutality from a series of tragic events in the US ignited by the horrific killing of George Floyd in police custody, and the advent of the Black Lives Matter movement encouraged three teenage advocates, Runoia campers, to reach out to camp to ask, what is Runoia’s stance on BLM.

Within hours we committed to take a multi-pronged approach to a sustaining stance on BLM. With awareness, we put together an independent committee to advise camp and the group would like to focus on Black Women Matter. The group is still defining its mission and will continue to meet and form over this coming year. One idea for focus is to make connections with women of color to apply as camp counselors. One charge camp has made to the BWM advisory committee is securing sources for applicant pools of POC in education, outdoor education, experiential education, physical education, coaching, leadership, camp administration. **BWM - committee members include:** *Kendall Wilson, Keira Hackett, Asha Wills, Thandie Scott, Yuki Moore and Camp Admin Rep, Pam Cobb.*



Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free.

Celebration of Juneteenth with staff in pre-camp



Anti-racist training is ongoing at camp. Thanks to the committees’ contacts, trainer Love Foy was hired by camp to pivot and provide a three-part series on anti-racism at camp in early July during staff training. Ms. Foy was presented with some technical difficulties leading up to the third of three meetings but were able to complete two of the three with staff this summer. Topics including implicit bias, tokenism and cultural appropriation grew out of the training.

Our Camp Library: Another tangible change we made at camp inspired by BLM was to add to our library, including books including:

- Stamped/Reynolds and Kendi
- Let’s Talk About Race/Julius Lester
- The Hate U Give/Thomas
- A Phoenix First Must Burn/Caldwell
- Anti-racist Baby/Kendi

We will continue diversifying our library in the years to come. If you have a favorite author of color or book on anti-racism you’d like to donate to the Runoia Lodge library, please send to: Camp Runoia Library, PO Box 450, Belgrade Lakes, ME 04918 We welcome the addition of Library books and encourage purchasing from black owned independent bookstores like Mahoganybooks.com or check this list for other [indie stores](#) you can purchase from.



The Bell Post: In a quick and confident decision, the traditional Runoia bell post was removed from the bell this summer due to its cultural appropriation and will be put in the future Runoia museum. Without any encouragement, the CIT 2020 project proposal was for a new, contemporary Runoia bell post. The project was led by Talia Mintz who designed and created the art for the new bell post. Bell post photos - new on left and old on right. Does anyone know the origin of the original?



Milestones and News

Mercedeh Mirkazemi Ward – CIT 1976 and counselor in 1979 (*cousin of Mitra Morgan – camper 1976-1979, and relative of Charlie Moremen – 10 years in 2020 and Ginny Moremen – camper 2014-2020*).

Mercedeh Mirkazemi Ward – April 11, 1964 – July 3, 2020

Torrance, CA – Mercedeh Mirkazemi Ward of Torrance, CA passed away peacefully surrounded her loving family on Friday July 3, 2020 at the age of 56. Mercedeh is survived by her husband, Bruce Ward, children, Kyle Ward and Ari Ward (as well as cousin Mitra Morgan, as well as many aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and cousins).



by

Born in Tehran, Iran, Mercedeh embraced her father’s passion for basketball and architecture, and shared her mother’s gregarious and loving spirit. She established lifelong friendships at the Hadaf Middle School and was delighted as an adult to reconnect with those friends all over the world. In 1979 Mercedeh moved to the United States to attend high school and settled in Worcester, Massachusetts with her aunt and uncle’s family. In 1982 she graduated from Worcester Academy and went on to pursue her engineering degree at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. [Read more](#)

Kate Biddescombe McKillop & Donnie welcome Virginia Gail McKillop. They also have a three-year old boy, Trace, and a two-year old girl, Phoebe. Grandmother Gail says, “Another ten years and the girls will be enjoying Camp Runoia!” Katie and her husband work at a private prep school in CT.

Molly Biddescombe lives in Montenegro and is expecting her first child in November, a boy. She married a Montenegrin man last year and she still works for a US public relations firm doing sports marketing. Presently she is working on the Tokyo Olympic Games.



Suzanna Preston Perry (L) and Alex Perry welcomed Olivia Rose on September 24, 2020

After 8 years, **Alex “Cricket” Lynch** completes her obligation to the US Navy and is off to nursing school, pictured here (R) at her commitment signing.



Alex Cahill Moss graduated from UVA’s Darden school of business with her MBA in May 2020 and discovered three more bright Runoia gals in the same program: **Anne McKenna** graduated in May 2019. **Madeline Hicks** also graduated from Darden in May 2020 and **Talia Bronfin** is the class of 2021!

Weddings – Runoia Gals Making it Happen No Matter What!



Alex Cahill and Brendan Moss (L)
September 26, 2020



Hallie Ruben and Lee Cohen (R)
September 19, 2020



Hallie pictured (L) with sister
Tessa Ruben, on the big day!

Donations to the Betty Cobb Memorial Campership Fund

Donations provide camperships for campers from its endowment

Donations recorded through October 8, 2020

Rangely \$5000 - \$9999

Laura Kind McKenna

Great Pond \$1000 – \$4,999

Harriet Hubbard, Tomlinson Family Foundation, Valerie Kind Rubin

Katahdin \$500-\$999

Zareen Mirza (In honor of my parents, Josephine H and Humayon Mirza), Susan Yates, Diane Dorsey Edwards, Mitra Morgan*, Sarah Hommel

Bigelow \$250-\$499

Blair Griffin, Sarah Sutel Looper, Asha Wills, Mahroo Morgan* (uncle of M.M. Ward)

Mt. Blue \$100-\$249

Ken and Roanne Robbins, Alice Gleghorn, Abolghassem Tehrani*, Matti Williams Bradley*, Roxana Sadigh-Esfandiari*, Kelly Blackburn*, Caitlin Mann

Tumbledown \$50-\$99

Nora Robbins, Jamie Cluchey and Angela Marzilli, Cheryl LaBreck*, Chris Hardouin*

Mt. Phillip - \$49

Karen Mynes Allen, Caroline Knights, Melissa Boock*, Talai Sadeh*, Donna Barone*

***In memory of Mercedeh Mirkazemi Ward**

Donations may be made on our website: <https://runoia.com/alumnae/donate/>

or you can mail a check to CRAO, Treasurer Jody Dixon, PO Box 344, Belgrade Lakes, ME 04918