



CLAPPING HANDS FARM

3348 Alston Chapel Road
Pittsboro, NC 27312
clappinghandsfarm@gmail.com
919-542-5599

"I've worked with many wonderful schools and organizations that aspire to do what Clapping Hands Farm does. Anyone who talks about wanting "inclusion" and "diversity" and cultivating a sense of community. . . .I send them to Clapping Hands Farm. It works here. And I'm not sure I've seen it work quite this way anywhere else!"
- Casey Hayes

"I thought camp would be a 'fun opportunity' for my boys. What we got instead is a community that took them in, honored their individuality, modeled exemplary interpersonal skills, improved their confidence, introduced them to new activities and friends, and became a home."
- Shannon Jordan

IN EARLY SPRING of this year, a group of young people and I raked clean the stone circle where our Clapping Hands Farm camp community gathers to start each day. We outlined concentric circles with branches and filled each circle with petals, earth, bark, sticks, leaves, sand, stones, and grasses. Intricate and impressive, our nature mosaic filled the stone circle.

The next week, the pandemic hit. Camp had been on the horizon—159 young people were already signed up; enrollment had never been so big so early!

We were excited for Capture the Flag, stomp rockets, African Dance and Hip Hop classes under the shade tree, Latin Dance in the “silverberry room,” jazz band in the fairy forest, running games in the back field, the sweaty hugs, the paint-streaked arms, the friendships, the community potluck each Friday night. But we didn’t feel prepared to run camp during a pandemic. Nor could we imagine running programs online: “We don’t even allow devices at camp! How would we make camp magic happen on a screen?”

As the weeks progressed, though, I thought about my daughter, who was looking at a summer of no travel, no friends, and no camp. I thought about all the young people who have, over the years, found in Clapping Hands Farm an oasis from real hardships in their lives—bullying, family challenges, mental health obstacles, financial stressors. This was not the year, I decided, to tell our campers (or our camp families!) to go it alone.

So we dove in, running 14 hands-on, virtual workshops where people learned Latin dance, sewed quilts, built talking drums and mbiras (African thumb pianos), felted, and made toys. We reconnected with beloved campers and counselors, and we were grateful to find that our new campers’ personalities and our feelings of “This is a great kid!” came through over Zoom. Camp magic—that dusty sparkling bond that’s seen us through 20 camp seasons—showed up online.

During the pandemic as in every other year, camp magic has never been possible without our No One Turned Away scholarship program.





In a typical summer, between 1/3 and 1/2 of all campers attend on scholarship. Our virtual workshops follow our standard operating procedure: every kid who wants to come to camp, gets to come to camp. Our campers bring a spectrum of racial identities, faith practices, life circumstances, family stories, unique gifts and challenges. EACH camper's presence in our community is vital and important; campers are our most precious resource and I don't look at our scholarship program as a service to THEM but as a gift to CAMP.

We carry this commitment into our 2021 season, where we will begin to have camp in person again. To get ready for COVID-careful camp we're learning games that thrive on social distance, and developing gestures that can convey the feeling of a hug. We're picturing 12 campers each week, and we're re-thinking everything we do. What aspects of our camp traditions will we need to adapt with a smaller group? And what are the fresh possibilities that a small group affords?

We are thinking through every inch of our camp day to carefully preserve what we love about camp while taking pandemic precautions so we can come together again.

To my surprise, we are exploring, discovering, creating and, yes, having FUN—through ZOOM! How is this possible? It is because the magic is in the creating that each camper engages in. The magic is in the community that we create as we interact with each other, even from a distance. ”

- Paris Miller

Throughout these months, I have still walked to the farm each day. The dirt in the back field, usually exposed from the pounding feet of running games, is lush grass now. Under the willow oak trees, where we often gather to start a game or share music, there is a spacious quiet. The nature mosaic has weathered the hot summer. But without the traffic of campers' bare feet, shrubs and overgrowth are beginning to encroach our circle. It's time to get campers back to camp again!

We need donations for our No One Turned Away scholarship program. This year we also need help with the costs of planning COVID-careful camps and bridging the financial deficit that will come with running camps for much smaller groups. With a donation of \$250, we are able to sponsor a camper for a full week of camp. A donation of \$125 brings us halfway to a one-week scholarship. We have a team of matching donors who will match dollar-for-dollar any donation of \$125 or more!

We deeply appreciate all contributions; no amount is too big or too small. Thank you so much for considering, in this new world, supporting a program that empowers young people, forges connections across diverse backgrounds and identities, and places art, nature, and community in the heart of each day.

Sincerely,



Louise Omoto Kessel
Founder and Director, Clapping Hands Farm Camp



MATCHING DONORS

RIGHT NOW, to encourage more people to donate at a higher level, some of our long time supporters have offered to MATCH all donations of \$125 or more. Learn more on the How to Donate Form included.

"Clapping Hands is a huge community and knowing that you have all these people who support and love you, like genuinely. It's very genuine. It's the camp magic!"
- Lenore Ramos

45K In 2019, we offered nine weeks of spring break and summer camps, and several year round programs for children, teens, families and adults. We provided over \$45,000 worth of scholarship assistance.

20K In 2020, we had to cancel all of our in-person camps after COVID-19 hit in March. We then ran 18 virtual workshops after the pandemic and provided over \$20,000 in scholarship assistance.

40K In 2021, we plan on increasing the number of camps we run so we can serve more children even with the smaller group size. We will continue providing our campers with scholarship assistance as needed and estimate our scholarships will be over \$40,000.