

June 8, 2022

Dear friend,

It is with an extremely heavy heart that we are writing to share with you the very difficult decision made on Monday, June 6, to cancel all Hidden Villa Summer Camp sessions in 2022. This is the first time in our history that we canceled all Camp programming. Many of you have likely heard this news already. It has been our priority to share this information with the families directly affected, and now we wanted to share the sad news with you.

Staffing for Camp has been a challenge over the past several years. In anticipation, we significantly invested in outreach, but still struggled with meeting programmatic needs. We were at less than 50% of ideal staffing in early May. This is an industry-wide challenge:

"... camps continue to struggle with an ability to staff adequately. This issue was present before the pandemic but is so much worse now. We are certainly not alone in that challenge, but it directly impacts our industry's ability to meet the current need."

- American Camping Association 5/6/22

On May 27, we made the very difficult decision to cancel some Day Camp Sessions for campers entering Kindergarten, 5th, and 6th grades. These age groups were selected because our Kinder Camp requires a higher staffing ratio than other age groups and 5th and 6th grade programs are not as highly in demand. After these sessions were canceled, we felt fairly confident that we would be able to provide a safe Camp for the day and residential camps that were not canceled, although staffing numbers were still very tight. Over this past weekend, 4 camp staff, including the Summer Camp Director, handed in their resignation effective immediately. Losing these key positions led to the heart wrenching decision that we would be unable to responsibly provide a safe Summer Camp experience. If we thought that we could provide a safe experience for our youth, we would have found a way to operate Camp.

Part of what caused the abrupt departure of Camp Staff was an ongoing process to discuss symbols on the historic Duveneck house. The house, built in 1929, had 3 tiles, approximately twelve inches by twelve inches, with Buddhist [swastikas](#) and a lotus embedded in the architecture. These tiles were purchased by Frank and Josephine Duveneck while on their honeymoon in 1913 traveling through Asia. It was brought to the community's attention that the Buddhist symbols were experienced differently and some individuals experienced harm from their presence on the building. A process to address the issue was identified with Staff and Board. After community discussions, on Monday, June 6, the decision was made to remove the tiles from the building. They were removed on Tuesday, June 7.

The resignation of our Camp leadership team on June 5th, prior to the decision of the Committee on June 6, put us in the position of making the difficult decision regarding Camp. It also highlights the need for the organization to continue to pause, reflect, and further develop plans of action to address the racial equity concerns shared by staff. Honoring and welcoming people from all backgrounds at Hidden Villa is core to who we are and what we stand for. Any

pain that our current and former staff, especially any Staff of Color, have felt during their tenure at the organization, deeply saddens us. We are committed to creating an environment where all feel seen, welcome, and heard.

Hidden Villa has been investing in issues of racial equity over the last couple of years, such as the formation of the JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Council, the DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access) Advisory Committee, and staff training, but for some, the pace of change has been too slow. Unfortunately, in organizing a complex and inclusive process, we were too slow to respond to the voices that expressed pain and concern over the symbols on the house, and we recognize how that was interpreted as a lack of concern.

The decision to cancel Camp has been heart wrenching and staff is still triaging care for all involved. We acknowledge the impact our decision to cancel Camp has had a truly painful impact on the 900+ campers, approximately 700 families, Hidden Villa seasonal Camp staff, partners and vendors who help us deliver our Summer Camp. Over the next few weeks, we will continue to come together internally to outline the next steps to address these issues, restore the health of our community process, and we will share the plan with you.

We are available if you'd like to speak or reach out to us.

Sincerely,

Peter Hartzell, Board Chair
boardchair@hiddenvilla.org

Philip Arca, Interim Executive Director
parca@hiddenvilla.org