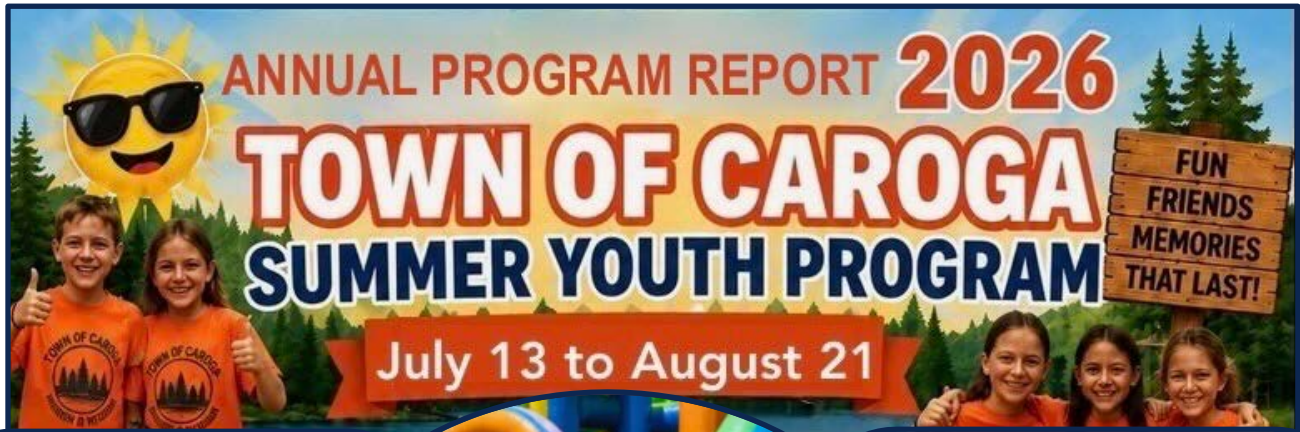




THANK YOU!

Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program 2026 Annual Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
Overview	3
2026 Program Highlights.	4
2026 Special Trips, Activities, and Treats	5
2026 Awards	6
Differentiated Learning Remediation and Enrichment	7
A Safe and Structured Municipal Program.	8
2026 Adult and Youth Survey Outcomes	9
Youth Recreation, Emotional Health, and Social Development.	11
Community Partnerships.	12
Impact of Adirondack Community Foundation 2026 Generous Acts Grant	13
2026 Financial Summary	14
Looking Ahead	15
Conclusion	17

For more information about this report, contact: youth@townofcaroga.com.

Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program 2026 Annual Report

Overview

In 2026, the Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program continued as an important municipal recreation and youth-development program serving children and families in the Caroga community. As a New York State certified children's day camp and municipal recreation program, the six-week program provides a safe, structured, active, and community-centered summer experience for local youth.

The program's purpose extends beyond summer recreation. It provides children with opportunities to build meaningful friendships, develop personal independence, participate in physical activity, explore the Adirondack environment, engage in learning and enrichment, and experience the strong network of community mentors, families, organizations, businesses, and volunteers that have long made Caroga a special place to grow up.

In addition to ongoing core funding from the Town of Caroga and the Wheelerville Union Free School, the program was also strengthened in 2026 through numerous local in-kind donations and a \$5,000 Generous Acts grant from the Adirondack Community Foundation (ACF). ACF identified the project as "Enhancing the Caroga Summer Youth Program – Summer Recreation and Learning Enrichment for Caroga Youth." The Town Board formally accepted the grant and established a separate budget line for its expenditures (see

<https://adkcommunityfoundation.org/granting/what-we-fund/2026-generous-acts-grant-recipients-list>).



Town of Caroga Generous Community Acts

2026 Program Highlights

The 2026 program emphasized a balanced combination of diverse recreation, outdoor activity, social interaction, supportive learning, and special experiences.

Updates from Director Colleen Ricciardi throughout the summer illustrated the emphasis on creating positive experiences for a wide range of children. The updates showed structured activities, special outings, community support, and strong enthusiasm from children, families, and staff. Among the highlights were field trips, community-sponsored activities, and many special fun treats.

- In 2026, a total of 69 students signed up for the program, with about 20 attending part of the program and about 50 participating nearly every day.
- The summer school program included both remediation and enrichment, led by reading teacher Shar Wager and math teacher Colleen Ricciardi. The program had strong adult support and mentoring, with beneficial student-to-counselor ratios at or below the NYS-mandated 12:1 on-site and 8:1 off-site.
- Staff included lead counselor and bus driver Verna Meher Snell, senior counselor Shelly Vosburgh, counselor/lifeguards Anna Pettit and Teianna Vetrano-Frasier, counselors Emma Dillenbeck and Landen Smith, plus junior counselors Riley Meredith and Brooke Cheney. Supervisor Jack Glenn MD was the Health Director.
- The Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program was based at Town Hall and depended on the tent rental supported by Adirondack Community Foundation (ACF) on land provided by Millie Busch.
- Adirondack Community Foundation also supported teachers' resources for the children's learning and recreation.



2026 Special Trips, Activities, and Treats

The 2026 program incorporated opportunities for children to get away from screens, be physically active, socialize with peers, and experience activities beyond the traditional camp setting. The program included opportunities such as swimming, hiking, movies, roller skating, water slide, concerts, and carousel rides, with special equipment and supplies to enhance the summer experience.

- Field trips included Pine Lake Park Beach, Sherman's Park Carousel and Dance Hall, Mayfield Town Beach, Sacandaga Riverfront Community Park, High Rollers, and Johnstown Movieplex. Children also enjoyed visits from Obie the therapy dog, and they sponsored a giving drive for the animal shelter.
- Other community supported activities included:
 - potting plants from Mike and Sue Taylor of Susie's Hidden Gem;
 - free swimming from Jeff Houck at Pine Lake Park;
 - live music with Caroga Arts' Resident Artists;
 - ice cream courtesy of Matt Hillock, Mike Patino, Mel and Val Crane, Raymond and Christina Pecunies, Shar Wager, Patty Lorence, Kathy Manning, and Genia Meinhold;
 - watermelon from Royal View Pub & Campground;
 - pizza donated from Caroga Lakeview, Pine Lake Pizza, and Campers' Corner;
 - donations from ADK Realty, Grassroots Jewelry, Nick Frasier, and Rich and Julie Mayes;
 - deli day by NACs Meat Market;
 - hot dogs, chips, and cookies from Millie, Bruce and Pam Busch;
 - Dygert's milk and lemonade from Patrick Flander;
 - walking tacos from Trista Everest and Albert Bauer of Adirondack Taproom;
 - Campers' Corner doughnuts by Vrooman's;
 - Crafts, games, and more from staff and families;
 - and student awards sponsored by East Caroga Lake Protective Association.



Thank you to all the amazing sponsors!



Adirondack Appreciation



THE CAROGA EFFECT

The Caroga Summer Youth Program's communications demonstrate an important element of the Caroga model: *community participation*. Local individuals, families, organizations, and businesses contribute experiences, supplies, encouragement, and special activities that supplement and enhance the Town's core program.

Differentiated Learning Remediation and Enrichment

The Summer Youth Program recognizes that summer can be a key time for both informal and structured learning. The program includes morning sessions with differentiated reading and math support for both remediation and enrichment.

- The first supported learning group with Mrs. Wager and Ms. Ricciardi includes young children who finished Kindergarten through second grade, and the second session focuses on those who finished third through fifth grade.
- Mrs. Wager has been teaching second grade and doing summer mentoring for more than 50 years. Ms. Ricciardi has been a support teacher for 27 years and the Director of the Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program for 10 years.
- This program features guided practice and one-on-one feedback to help children with diverse learning needs to advance within their zone of proximal development to be ready for the coming year at Wheelerville School in Caroga.



All children have opportunities to learn through direct exploration, small group activities, outdoor experiences, physical activity, and community interactions. This approach is particularly valuable in a rural Adirondack community, where the natural environment itself is a distinctive and valuable learning resource.

A Safe and Structured Municipal Program

As a New York State certified Children's Day Camp and Municipal Recreation Program, the Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program operates within the state's framework established for regulated children's camps. This distinguishes Caroga's program from an informal summer activity program and reflects the community's commitment to providing an appropriately supervised and structured environment for children.

The core responsibilities of maintaining the New York State certification are carried by the Director of the Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program. For the past decade, Ms. Colleen Ricciardi has spent six months each year preparing for the six-week summer program.

The Youth Director completes all of the Department of Health electronic forms, special annual certifications (e.g., CPR, Response to Emergencies, Defibrillation, Epi Pen, etc.), safety plans, drills, children's medical records (e.g., vaccinations, meds, allergies, communicable disease reporting, etc.), water tests, permission slips, Program Handbook, Student Application Packet, and Program Staff Orientation Packet. She organizes the program, plans activities, schedules trips, arranges transportation, hires staff, gets drivers, secures lifeguards, and maintains equipment, resources, and supplies. The director collaborates with teachers and senior lead counselors to implement the program.



The program's municipal status is also significant. The Summer Youth Program represents a direct investment by the Town of Caroga in children and families and is part of the Town's broader investment in the community's lifelong recreational opportunities that strengthen quality of life in the Town and region.

2026 Adult and Youth Survey Outcomes

Adults and children were invited to complete surveys about the program. The one-page surveys asked questions in five domains: (1) overall experience, (2) learning, (3) life skills, (4) belonging, and (5) satisfaction.

**Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program
2026 Survey**

We value your feedback! Please share your input.

- OVERALL EXPERIENCE**
How would you rate the children's overall experience in the program?

1: Very Poor	2: Poor	3: Neutral	4: Good	5: Very Good
- LEARNING**
The program supports the children's learning, curiosity, confidence, and growth.

1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Neutral	4: Agree	5: Strongly Agree
- LIFE SKILLS**
The program strengthens communication, cooperation, and problem solving.

1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Neutral	4: Agree	5: Strongly Agree
- BELONGING**
The program offers positive peer relationships in a safe, structured environment.

1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Neutral	4: Agree	5: Strongly Agree
- SATISFACTION**
The program provides accessible, high-quality summer programming for children.

1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Neutral	4: Agree	5: Strongly Agree
- BENEFITS**
What are the best parts of the program?
- SUGGESTIONS**
How might the program be improved?

Thank you for sharing your feedback! Please save and send PDFs to youth@townofcaroga.com.

**Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program
2026 Kids Survey**

We want to hear from you!

- OVERALL** — Did you like coming?

1: Not at all	2: A little	3: Okay	4: A lot	5: Loved it!! 😊
- LEARNING** — Did you try new things?

1: Not at all	2: A little	3: Sometimes	4: Yes	5: Definitely! 😊
- SKILLS** — Did you work with others?

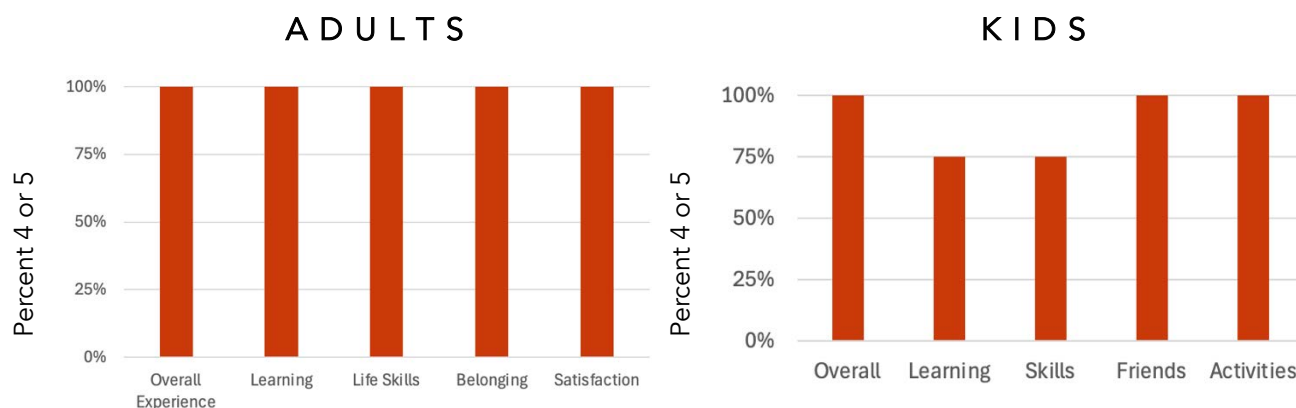
1: Not at all	2: A little	3: Sometimes	4: Yes	5: Definitely! 👥
- FRIENDS** — Did you have fun with other kids?

1: Not at all	2: A little	3: Sometimes	4: Yes	5: Definitely! 😊
- ACTIVITIES** — Did you like the activities?

1: Not at all	2: A little	3: Sometimes	4: Yes	5: Definitely! 🎉
- FAVORITES** — What did you like best?
- IDEAS** — What might make it even better?

Thank you! Please save and send PDFs to youth@townofcaroga.com.

The following graphs show the percentage of adults and kids who responded with a 4 ("Agree" or "Yes") or 5 ("Strongly Agree" or "Definitely!") to questions.



In general, survey responses from both adults and kids documented highly positive responses to the 2026 Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program.

Among adults surveyed, 100% rated the children's overall experience in the program as "Good" or "Very Good". In addition, 100% of adults responded that they "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the following statements:

- *The program supports the children's learning, curiosity, confidence, & growth.*
- *The program strengthens communication, cooperation, and problem solving.*
- *The program offers positive peer relationships in a safe, structured environment.*
- *The program provides accessible, high-quality summer programming for children.*

When kids were asked, "Did you like coming?" 100% said "A lot" or "Loved it!"

- 100% rated their fun with other kids and activities as "Yes" or "Definitely!"
- When asked about *Learning* ("Did you try new things?") and *Life Skills* ("Did you work with others?"), 75% responded "Yes" or "Definitely!" and 25% responded "A little" or "Sometimes." None marked "Not at all."

Taken together, survey results revealed no negative responses to the program. Mostly, the results provided evidence of positive outcomes across the multiple domains of children's learning, life skills, belonging, and satisfaction. Survey results showed exceptionally strong support that *"the program provides accessible, high-quality summer programming" with "positive peer relationships in a safe, structured environment."*

Results also showed mostly positive responses to learning and life skills. At the same time, outcomes showed slight room for improvement specifically with:

- children's views about learning (i.e., discovering and trying new things) and
- life skills (i.e., adapting to work well with others).

In written responses about the BEST parts of the program:

- kids — (1) friends, (2) field trips, (3) arts & crafts, (4) gymnastics, (5) Teianna;
- adults — (1) peers & activities, (2) trips, (3) hours, (4) community involvement.

Ideas and suggestions to IMPROVE the program included:

- kids — (1) no bullying, (2) more movies + popcorn, and (3) cloned counselors.
- adults — (1) three strikes and out for misbehaving kids and (2) longer hours.

In summary, 2026 survey results for the Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program showed exceptionally strong program satisfaction and consistently positive outcomes in learning, life skills, belonging, and enjoyment, while identifying modest opportunities to further strengthen children's experiences with trying new things and working with others.

Youth Recreation, Emotional Health, and Social Development

Adirondack Community Foundation's *Strong Community Framework* provides:



"It is well-documented that a family's income can impact children's physical, health, cognitive abilities, school achievements and behavior and emotional outcomes... Education is more than a pathway to a job and financial self-sufficiency. It is foundational to a stronger, more equitable community. Education is also deeply intertwined with other, persistent issues like poverty. Early intervention, literacy, mentorship and guidance, as well as career development and other support programs are among the areas where philanthropy can play a critical role in strengthening pathways."

According to the latest New York State child-well-being data, 20.2% (1 in 5) of youth ages 0 to 17 in Fulton County, New York live below the poverty level.

A central strength of Caroga's Summer Youth Program is its combination of positive peer interactions and physical activity. The program provides all children with structured opportunities to swim, hike, play, create, explore group activities, and try new things. Equally important, the program provides a safe, structured, and certified environment where children can develop friendships, build confidence, develop independence, practice cooperation, and learn teamwork.

2026 Caroga surveys showed that adults and children both saw the program's greatest strengths as fostering belonging and friendships.

- 100% of adults surveyed reported that they agree or strongly agree that *"The program offers positive peer relationships in a safe, structured environment."*
- Likewise, when asked, *"Did you have fun with other kids?"*, 100% responded *"Yes"* or *"definitely!"*



The program's focus on active recreation and social connection is consistent with the objectives articulated in connection with the Adirondack Community Foundation's *Strong Community Framework* that fosters a systems approach to education and supports early childhood development. Caroga's program is also broadly consistent with other supported enhancement projects in the Adirondacks that provide children with meaningful outdoor recreational activities that encourage them to be active, socialize, and spend less time on screens.

Community Partnerships

The enduring success of the Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program since the 1940s reflects the Adirondack community's broader investment in children.

In 2026, Caroga's Summer Youth Program operates as a certified New York State Children's Camp and Municipal Recreation Program. At the same time, it is not run just by the tiny budget provided by the Town and School. Its impact is amplified by residents, local businesses, community organizations, supportive volunteers, and generous donors. The community partnerships add core value.

As noted above, Caroga's local year-round and seasonal community contributed generously with in-kind donations to make possible the trips, activities, meals, and treats that the children enjoyed throughout the summer. The program also depends on skilled partnerships with the teachers, counselors, lifeguards, bus driver, and health director who constantly adapt to keep the program flowing.



Caroga's local momentum exists in the context of broader regional momentum. For example, the Adirondack Community Foundation awarded \$1,162,380 through its 2026 Generous Acts cycle to 136 organizations and initiatives. The Foundation specifically listed the Town of Caroga's project as an award (see <https://adkcommunityfoundation.org/granting/what-we-fund/2026-generous-acts-grant-recipients-list>).



ACF's Generous Acts program is intended to support community-driven solutions addressing basic needs, educational pathways, and community and economic vitality. Municipalities serving the Adirondack region are eligible applicants, making Caroga's award an important recognition of the value of municipal youth recreation in rural Adirondack communities. ACF also provides an important opportunity for local people to contribute to these donor-advised giving programs (see <https://adkcommunityfoundation.org/giving/make-your-gift>).

Impacts of Adirondack Community Foundation 2026 Generous Acts Grant

Funding from the Town of Caroga and Wheelerville School along with the \$5,000 ACF grant and community support provided essential resources at a time when costs of providing quality recreation and enrichment continue to increase.

- Specifically, grant funding supported the cost of the program's tent rental as well as teachers' resources for the children's enrichment and recreation. By funding these needs, it also freed essential money for counselors.
- External support from all sources allowed the Youth Director and staff to enhance the program by adding equipment, supplies, activities, resources, and experiences for youth.
- External funding does not replace the Town's core responsibility to fund the program. Rather, philanthropy makes enhancements possible. Additional resources help bridge gaps, empowering more meaningful experiences and impactful outcomes than would be possible through the core municipal and school budget alone.



Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program 2026 FIELD TRIPS

DATE	DESTINATION	SPECIAL NOTES
Thurs. July 16	Mayfield Town Beach	Swim test
Tues. July 21	Pine Lake Beach	Rain Date on Wed.
Thurs. July 23	Johnstown MoviePlex	TBA
Tues. July 28	Pine Lake Beach	Rain Date on Wed.
Thurs. July 30	High Rollers	Skating Fun
Tues. Aug. 4	Pine Lake Beach	Rain Date on Wed.
Thurs. Aug. 6	Sacandaga Community Park	Outdoor Fun
Tues. Aug. 11	Pine Lake Beach	Rain Date on Wed.
Thurs. Aug. 13	High Rollers	Skating Fun
Tues. Aug. 18	Pine Lake Beach	Rain Date on Wed.
Thurs. Aug. 20	Johnstown MoviePlex	TBA
Fri. Aug. 21	Last Day Picnic & Inflatables Fun, Food, and Games!	



The Town's formal acceptance of the grant and creation of a separate expenditure line also demonstrate the program's shared commitments to responsible stewardship and transparency in the use of philanthropic funds.

2026 Financial Summary

ENHANCING THE CAROGA SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM: PROJECT BUDGET			
APPLICANT:	TOWN OF CAROGA: SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM		
INSTRUCTIONS	For this section, please list expenses in categories that make up the budget in the "Expense" column. Under "Grant Request," outline how you anticipate allocating grant funding if awarded.		
COSTS	DESCRIPTION	EXPENSE	GRANT REQUEST
Personnel (\$25,000)	Program Coordinator + Teacher	\$6,400.00	
	Youth Lead Teacher	\$2,300.00	
	Hourly Staff (Head Counselor \$18.50, Staff \$16.00, Lifeguard \$17.00; Bus Driver Set by School)	\$16,300.00	
Contractual & Program (\$3,600)	Supplies & Field Trips	\$3,600.00	
Enrichment (\$5,000 Grant)	Educational Staff, Materials, & Resources		\$2,650.00
	Tent Rental Pavilion		\$2,350.00
	TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	\$28,600.00	
	ADDITIONAL ADIRONDACK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT		\$5,000.00
INSTRUCTIONS	For this section, please describe the sources and amounts of your cash and in-kind cost-share either as a bulleted list or in full sentences. Matching funds are not required but are viewed favorably.		
REVENUE	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING	
Actual funds on hand	(e.g., value of expenses covered by applying organization, grants received, revenue generated, etc. specific to the work described in this grant request)	\$28,600.00	
In-Kind	(e.g., time contributed by partner organizations, donations of materials/space, etc.)	see page 5	
	TOTAL TOWN REVENUE	\$28,600.00	
	TOTAL REVENUE WITH GRANT FUNDING	\$33,600.00	

NOTES

The 2026 Caroga Summer Youth Program ran Monday to Friday from July 13 to August 21 with 69 children participating.

The program is a long-standing community initiative operated as a partnership between the Town and the local school.

The program operates with a lean budget and relies heavily on volunteer contributions and donations to support access.

Modest personnel costs account for most of the program's budget to ensure safe supervision and program continuity.

The program is administered by the Town of Caroga, a rural municipality located entirely within the Adirondack Park.

Co-Sponsor Wheelerville Union Free School reimburses half of the annual expenses for the Caroga Summer Youth Program.

The school also provides educational goal alignment and identifies youth who would most benefit from summer education.

Community volunteers, local organizations, and individual residents contribute expertise, materials, treats, and experiences.

In 2026, the program was awarded its first \$5,000 Generous Acts Grant from the Adirondack Community Foundation.

In 2023, the Town of Caroga Median Household Income (MHI=\$53,698) was below 65% of New York State MHI (\$84,578).

Between 1980 and 2020, Caroga's MHI ranged from \$14,030 to \$59,809 with poverty ranging from 8.8 to 13.6%.

New York State child-well-being data show 20.2% (1 in 5) youth ages 0 to 17 in Fulton County live below the poverty level.

Looking Ahead



The 2026 season demonstrates the continued exceptional value of maintaining and strengthening the locally based Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program.

Program reviews with Ms. Ricciardi and Mrs. Wager offered key ideas for the future, grounded in current success, prior experiences, and ongoing flexibility.

TRANSITION PLANS

- After a decade as Director, Ms. Ricciardi aims to retire and transition to teacher.
- Fortunately, the program also has experienced and certified lead counselors.
- The next Youth Director must have prior knowledge of the children's needs and behaviors and prior experience with current program operations.
- Advance plans and collaborations are key to making a smooth transition.
- The 2027 Youth Director should be appointed in September or October 2026.

AFFORDABLE ACCESS

- Program successes include the generosity of staff and support networks to keep the program free with low-cost field trips and activities.
- Meeting children's diverse needs and providing continuity depend on maintaining close connections with Wheelerville School and keeping the program's focus on Town of Caroga year-round and seasonal residents.
- Students' grades range from finishing K to 6, with discretion for older "junior counselors."

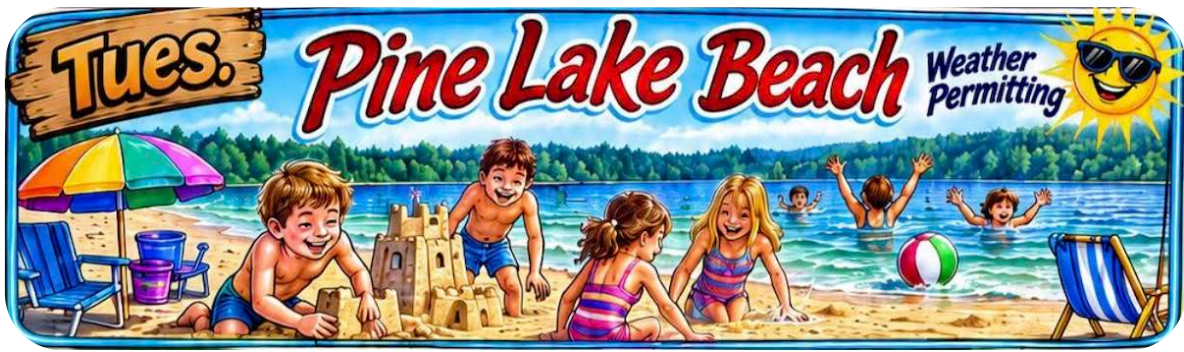


WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Youth Program leaders are highly experienced and certified professionals.
- Higher wages would increase viability of essential early childhood careers.
- Structured volunteer service programs benefit junior counselors as assistants.
- Students benefit from special career support visits (e.g., fire & police officers).

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- Continuing partnerships with local families, organizations, and businesses complement partnerships developed through the 2026 Generous Acts grant.
- Ideas exist to partner with lake associations to provide awards and scholarships.



MAINTAINING SPACES AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Program success depends on maintaining strong relationships with local and regional field trip partners who have generously shared opportunities for years.
- Public spaces at Town Hall and neighboring properties are key to the program, including use of the Glenn Harris Park Pavilion and/or support for a rented tent (e.g., from L&M Inflatable and Tent Rentals in Saint Johnsville, New York).
- The Town Hall gym has been key for consistent options for daily indoor activity schedules, with great responses to the various stations and areas (e.g., learning room, sports equipment shed, gymnasium mats, play house, arts and crafts, LEGO kits, game tables, reading areas, chill sofas, program refrigerator, etc.).

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

- Managing challenging behavior requires experience and leaders who “get it.”
- Summer strategies have continuity with those in place at Wheelerville School.
- Some students have benefited from signing contracts for behavior. This helps to facilitate clear communication, accountability, limits, and consequences.
- The program is not certified and staffed for youth requiring one-on-one aids.

ENHANCING PROGRAMMING

- Opportunities exist to draw on the program’s history, dating to the 1940s with Jim Izzo and later with Pete Falzarine, Carol Barker, Jim Gabler, Jack Weiss, Nancy Insogna, Becky Ward, Mary Jane Deriso, Desiree Hines, Cindy Ormiston, Rachel Simonds, and most recently continuing to develop with Shar Wager, Colleen Ricciardi, Verna Meher Snell, Shelly Vosburgh, and others.
- Prior programming has included options for Junior Lake Steward training, golf lessons, sports clinics, music programs, DEC campground day use trips, etc.
- The program has a long history of differentiating remediation and enrichment for individual students, based on detailed recommendations from teachers. More support and resources could enhance such educational best practices.
- Opportunities also exist to draw students into current Adirondack outdoor recreational activities in Caroga (e.g., biking, paddling, hiking, fishing, and more).

Conclusion

The Town of Caroga Summer Youth Program represents far more than a seasonal childcare or recreation service. It is a community treasure that brings children together, supports families, promotes healthy activities, enhances learning, and connects youngsters with the community and natural environment around them.

The 2026 season was strengthened by the generosity of program staff, numerous community partners, and Adirondack Community Foundation's Generous Acts donors. Caroga's inaugural ACF Generous Acts \$5,000 grant recognized the importance of enhancing recreation and learning opportunities for Caroga youth, and the program delivered and reported strong outcomes.

The Town is grateful to the children and families who participated, the program staff and leadership who made the season possible, the local businesses and community members who contributed special experiences and resources, and the Adirondack Community Foundation for investing in the next generation of Caroga residents in Upstate New York's Adirondack Park, a place of people and natural wonder.

The 2026 Summer Youth Program demonstrates that when a community like Caroga, New York engages to invest in its children, the benefits extend well beyond one summer — they strengthen the social fabric, health, resilience, and future of the entire Adirondack Park community.

