



ADDING TO A POSITIVE CAMP EXPERIENCE — Campers at Skylemar in Naples joined in the Dunk Your Kicks program. Pictured are campers, Lion Max and Skylemar owner/director Arleen Shepherd.

Importance of social action

Summer camp is a great time to have fun, enjoy the outdoors and meet new friends.

It is also a time to learn. Maine Camp Experience and Maxcure Foundation teamed up to help collect donated sneakers as part of the Dunk Your Kicks program, which raises money and awareness to help fight pediatric cancer, and interact with hundreds of kids to discuss the importance of social action.

Recent stops included: Tripp Lake Camp in Poland; Camp Nashoba North in Raymond; Kamp Kohut in Oxford; and Camp Skylemar in Naples.

Campers from Skylemar and visiting campers from Mataponi got to dunk their kicks, learn about social action, and use donated sneakers in field day events. Last year, camps collected well over 1,000 pairs, and are looking to surpass that this year. MCF works with recyclers and distributors to sell the donated sneakers after they have been refurbished in exchange for funds that go toward cancer research and treatment. MCE partners Camp Trucking and Camp Baggage will help transport the sneakers. Maine summer camps have always been

committed to teaching and engaging campers in social responsibility. Camps listed above have had a longstanding tradition of providing campers with greater knowledge, skills and involvement in helping others, such as supporting Camp Sunshine, and instilling in campers the lifelong commitment to giving back.

"Dunk Your Kicks is an exciting and meaningful way to engage campers as an extension of the camps' ongoing and longstanding commitment to social action," said Maine Camp Experience spokeswoman Laurie Kaiden.

In addition to having 20 Maine camps participate in Dunk Your Kicks, Maxcure Foundation founder David Plotkin embarked on a six-camp tour of events at host camps the week of July 14. Campers donated their used sneakers by dunking their kicks through basketball hoops and into receptacles. This year, Maine campers also enjoyed additional "Field



Day" type activities (e.g., tug-of-war, wheelbarrow race with sneakers on hands) with the donated sneakers as they learn about giving back.

"Raising awareness to fight pediatric cancer is a very personal and important cause, and the partnership with Maine Camp Experience has been a good entrée to bringing Dunk Your Kicks to kids at camp," said Plotkin.

Camp families donate their used sneakers by sending them up in their kids' camp trunks, mailing them to the camps, and bringing them to camper drop off/pick ups and Visiting Days. Campers can also donate their used sneakers at camps at the end of the summer and parents can bring more on Visiting Day.

The program, which started at Maine camps last summer, continued throughout the past year with Dunk Your Kicks at some camp reunions, as well as individual campers

and staff bringing the program to their hometowns and schools. One inspired 8-year-old Maine camper, Riley from New Jersey, even designed a beautiful poster for the cause. Dunk Your Kicks raises money for research and treatment, provides affordable footwear for those in need, and helps the environment by keeping the sneakers out of landfills.

Summer planning and enrichment expert Jill Tipograph, founder of Everything Summer, said, "It's never too early to instill in children how important it is to give back. Camp, a place for ongoing growth and development, sparks interest and awareness of new activities. When you start philanthropy young, it becomes natural and something kids make part of their lives, which is more organic than just trying to fit it in anew when teens have community service requirements to meet."