

# Water Wanderings Annual Report 2020

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In many ways, 2020 has been a historic year. From the COVID-19 pandemic, to the Black Lives Matter Uprising, to extreme weather, to the elections, 2020 has seen countless historic events. Amid such immense changes, the milestones Water Wanderings experienced are minute, yet they are massive developments for this small organization. We are extremely grateful for the support of our community and all the people that contributed to making this year of Water Wanderings possible despite all the obstacles.



In June, Water Wanderings officially became a nonprofit. Our mission has always aligned with that of an educational nonprofit, but the simple structure of a sole proprietorship served us well for our first three years as we worked to establish our model and test viability. Stepping into the more robust structure of a nonprofit and gaining the invaluable support and guidance of a small, talented board is a major milestone for Water Wanderings.

We also had the great joy of welcoming new staff to Water Wanderings this year with the hiring of two new camp counselors - Rei Baek and Jay Stanton. Rei is a student at Sterling College where they are in their final year studying Outdoor Education with a focus on environmental and social change that cultivates inclusion and diversity. Rei is doing an internship with Water Wanderings next year, which will focus on refining the curriculum, and preparing Rei to serve as a lead instructor during next summer's camps. Jay works at the Studio Center in Johnson and previously served as a camp counselor with Hazen's Notch and Outright VT. To read more about our board, advisory council members, and new staff, check out their profiles on our [about page on the website](#).

We also welcomed many new campers this season. For the first time ever, Water Wanderings had a waitlist! Though we had several last-minute changes in registration, and we ended up with seven campers in our first week and nine in the second, we served 160% more campers this year than in any year prior. We are so grateful for the participation of every single camper and we learned a lot from each of them. You can explore more photos from this season on our [gallery and testimonials page](#).



## Session I, 2020



## Session II, 2020



This summer's campers provided invaluable insight about Water Wanderings strengths and ways we can improve camp for future summers. Their honest and informative feedback will help us adapt the curriculum and make Water Wanderings even better. Based on their feedback, we have already developed a new menu, established additional group safety protocols such as daily check-ins with the same counselor, and are planning to create new games and activities to learn about environmental justice, ecology and community building in a more engaging and fun way.

*"Water Wanderings was fun because I got to do a lot of swimming and spend time with people. I also got to go on a rope swing, go canoeing, make fires, and cook!" - WW Session I Camper 2020*

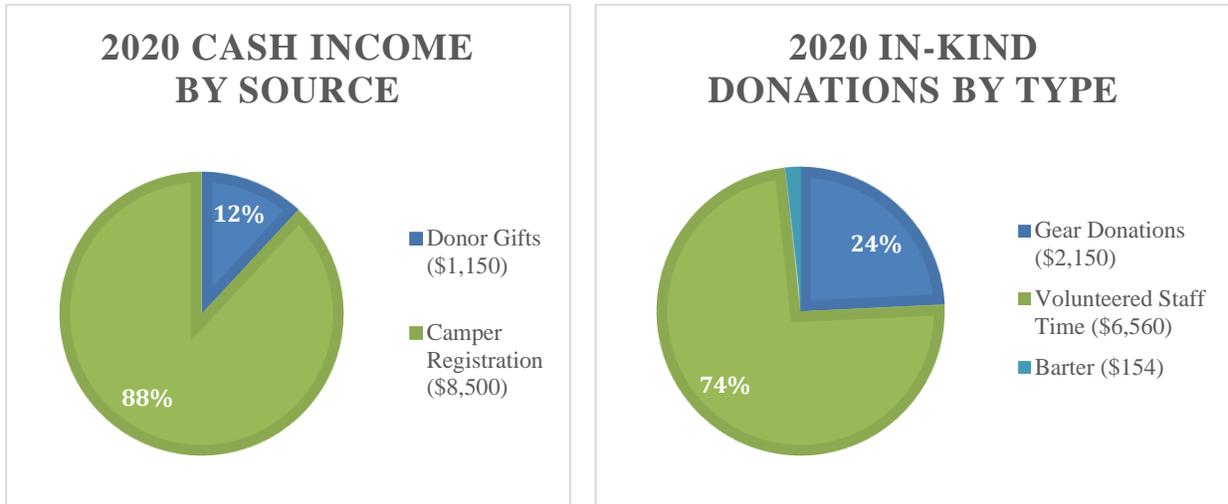
*"I really liked paddling and having the opportunity to talk about the environment. I also enjoyed the inclusion of all the campers and the jobs." - WW Session II Camper, 2020*



The biggest shift in our model for the upcoming season is that we will split up the sessions by age to allow us to develop an age-specific curriculum that is sufficiently supportive for younger campers and adequately challenging for older ones. Session I will be for campers ages 9-12 and Session II will be for campers ages 13-15. We are excited about this change and look forward to making our camp curriculum even more engaging, empowering, fun, and educational. Rei's internship will focus primarily on curriculum development and they will incorporate what they've learned over the past three years of studying Outdoor Education at Sterling College. We are so grateful that Rei chose to do their internship with Water Wanderings and look forward to working with them all next summer!

## 2020 Financial Report

This year, nearly half of our budget was covered by in-kind gear donations and volunteered staff time. We are grateful to Katie, Ingrid, Davis, Fred and Gerette for lending Water Wanderings canoes and to Farm & Wilderness for lending us tents this past summer. It saved us over \$2,000 which we would have otherwise had to spend to rent canoes and tents. We also bartered \$154 of food with some of the campers from this summer!



The majority of the volunteered staff time (\$5,060) was for unpaid administrative and logistical work performed by Sonya throughout the year, which we calculated at the rate of \$25.18 per hour based on the [Independent Sector's](#) recommendation for general volunteer hour value in Vermont. The remaining \$1,500 represents the counselor time that we were not able to compensate this year, including staff training, logistical support with organizing and cleaning gear, and other work outside of the 10 days of camp.

Our main source of income this year was camper registrations. We were able to offer one full scholarship and accommodate camper's families on a wide range of the sliding scale and an average contribution of \$530. **Thanks to the generous donations of Ingrid, Jayne, Scott, Ousaima, Erin, and Hilary, we also established a true scholarship fund for Water Wanderings campers!** We hope to build the fund over the coming years to ensure that Water Wanderings is a financially sound and sustainable nonprofit. We are committed to ensuring that our program is financially accessible, and we will not raise the bottom end of our sliding scale because we know how difficult it is for many families to afford summer camps.

All our expenses for this year came out to \$7,931, with the largest expenses being staff stipends, food, campsite reservation, gear, supplies and payroll taxes. In addition to stipends for Rei, Jay and Sonya for their work during camp, Gerette also received a small stipend for her support with

the launch, midweek check-in and camp closing. We are proud to have paid our counselors double the national average for camp counselor wages. According to the American Camp Association (2019), the average counselor pay rate is only \$250 per week (around \$3.60 per hour) for nonprofit summer camps.

We were able to pay Water Wanderings counselors \$500 per week before taxes, in large part due to the generosity of people who loaned Water Wanderings canoes as well as Farm and Wilderness, who loaned us the one person tents we needed for COVID-19 precautions. Summer camps can pay low wages because of the minimum wage and overtime exemption for seasonal recreational establishments and truth be told, only the most expensive camps can make ends meet without this exemption. Yet, counselors are the heart and soul of camp and we believe camp counselors should be paid fairly.



Beyond staffing, our expenses for this year were similar to previous years of Water Wanderings, though we had the added expenses of payroll taxes and nonprofit incorporation fees. Our commitment to supporting local and/or minority owned businesses and farms always makes our food, gear, and supply costs on the higher end, but we are glad to support these businesses. This year, we invested in books to enrich the curriculum and several excellent dry bags, which will serve us for many years to come and allow us to keep our camper’s gear dry without relying on campers to bring their own dry bags, which helps make the program more accessible.

We do hope to establish partnerships with local producers in the coming year to help us access high quality food and gear at a more affordable price. We hope to figure out a way to purchase zero waste seconds from places like Cabot Creamery and Nutty Steph’s and access discounted gear through Outdoor Gear Exchange. If you know of local businesses that might be interested in partnering with Water Wanderings, please let us know at [waterwanderings@gmail.com](mailto:waterwanderings@gmail.com).

## Looking Ahead

The coming year is a critical juncture for the longevity of Water Wanderings. During the year ahead, we plan to make a significant investment in our curriculum through Rei's internship. This will require a leap in our program budget, but it is an investment that will serve Water Wanderings campers for many years to come.

We will continue to be creative and resourceful, and at the same time, we recognize that we need to diversify our revenue streams to continue making Water Wanderings accessible while also maturing into a financially sound operation. Our status as a nonprofit now allows us to accept tax-deductible donations and apply for many grants that we were not previously eligible for.

We look forward to expanding our fundraising efforts and are excited about our upcoming year-end campaign and auction. We also plan to host a fundraiser called "Send Your Parents to Camp" in August, which will allow parents of Water Wanderings campers or friends to get a taste of Water Wanderings as an adult. We have heard countless times from people who wish they were young enough to attend Water Wanderings and this will be a fun way to explore the possibilities around camps for adults while also raising money for our scholarship fund.

This year, we received over \$1,000 of donations to Water Wanderings without doing any fundraising outreach, so we know that people believe in our mission and want to support the future of this organization. In these difficult financial times, we do not want to unduly burden anyone, so we hope that we will be able to raise money for the scholarship fund through small contributions from many people. After all, many hands make light work, and during these difficult times, mutual aid is more important than ever.

*Water Wanderings' mission is to empower young people through inclusive community building, outdoor adventure, and environmental education that nourishes resilience and integrity.*

*Our vision is that young people will disrupt oppression by developing healthy and equitable relationships with themselves, each other, and the Earth.*

We can't do this work without your support – and as always, we recognize and value support in all its forms. From lending us gear, to helping us find grant opportunities, to supporting the scholarship fund, to spreading the word about our program, every contribution is important and deeply appreciated. See our [Ways to Give](#) page for more details on how you can help and email us at [waterwanderings@gmail.com](mailto:waterwanderings@gmail.com) if you'd like to donate an item or service to our upcoming auction or make a suggestion. Thank you!