



November 28, 2023

*I think that no experience which I have today comes up to,  
or is comparable with, the experiences of my boyhood.*

-Henry David Thoreau

Dear Pine Islanders,

Boyhood is a precious season. Before sending my sons to Pine Island, I thought a lot about what boys need, what boys may not get from school, and what is not conveyed in athletics and extracurriculars. During my boys' first summer at Pine Island, they seemed impossibly young to spend six weeks away from us and we missed them terribly, so my husband and I decided to visit mid-season. As soon as we arrived, it was clear our visit had been solely due to our parental anxiety; our boys were thriving, and this unnecessary interruption meant precious hours away from camp. Upon returning them to camp that afternoon, we watched our boys join their friends on the mainland dock and witnessed a magical moment as they stepped back onto the KWS. It seemed to us they passed through the wall of an invisible bubble, back to their cherished island of protected, celebrated boyhood. Almost forgetting we were dockside, they gave us the briefest of waves after the boat departed before eagerly turning back toward Pine Island. And there it was: our young boys had gone to a place far from home where they knew no one and had cultivated a community of friends and mentors, learned new skills, had excellent adventures, encountered new challenges, and were flourishing without us.

Pine Island provides a moment in boyhood needed now more than ever. As a pediatrician with experience in child and adolescent development, I share the concern of many parents: the social-emotional development and mental health of children is seriously challenged by the distractions of screens, hazards of social media, overscheduling, loneliness, and far too little time outdoors. Pine Island offers an alternative vision of boyhood: living in open-air tents, building community, taking healthy risks, persevering through challenges, and reflecting on life while listening to loons and lapping waves on Great Pond. It is a place where boyhood thrives and where boys become independent, compassionate, good-humored, generous young men poised to embrace the challenges of young adulthood.

Your generous support means a great deal to Pine Island Camp and the boys who benefit from summers spent there. Pine Island is fortunate to have wonderful staff, alums, and friends who give their time and talents behind the scenes, and you are part of that community. The ability to continue to provide this unique and essential Pine Island experience requires your support, and I hope you will join this dedicated team and make a gift to Pine Island's Annual Fund.

Thank you and Akka Lakka,

Bianca Bell, MD