

Camp Alkulana 2022 Annual Report

Camp Alkulana hosted another successful summer in 2022. We thank God for the support of our church and community partnerships that made this ministry possible!

Campers and staff members enjoyed four camp sessions from June to August at our camp home in Bath County. As usual, we had fun in the camp creek, in caves, and hanging from ropes on the rappel tower. We grew together through meaningful (and hard!) conversations, tackling our fears, and building new friendships.

Our friends at Derbyshire Baptist Church purchased new mattresses for every bed in camp! (Our returning counselors were especially grateful.) A long-time camp supporter purchased sweatshirts for every camper to take home. Volunteers cooked and cleaned and crafted alongside our campers.

We were all changed from our experiences at Alkulana and from the investments that our partners made in our campers' lives through Alkulana. When asked how he knew camp made a difference in his campers' lives one of our counselors said, "The proof is me; the proof is how we all keep coming back!"

I consider having *seventeen* junior staff members one of the high points of the summer! Junior staff are former campers who are sixteen or seventeen years old. Many years we host two to five junior counselors, so you can imagine how excited we were to have seventeen teenagers come to serve this summer! They worked and played hard alongside the experienced counselors who mentored them.

Camp Alkulana enjoys a high return rate among staff members, most of whom are former campers. Staff members have our own stories to share too. As I listened, I heard their stories and thoughts about what brings them and others back to Camp Alkulana.

Here are a few shared thoughts:

- "I believe all children deserve a place to feel safe, loved, and valued with freedom from judgement and fear, as well as the opportunity to build healthy relationships. Camp Alkulana does this by offering a safe space to grow and make mistakes without fear."
- "I came to camp to share my love with my campers, and for them to know that someone a million times greater than me loves them too."
- "I believe that every kid deserves the chance to experience God's love, regardless of gender, race, religion, sexuality, identity, and socio-economic status. I can be a part of this by showing them that I love them no matter what, the same way God loves me."

We are proud to have provided this meaningful experience for so many children this summer, and we're blessed to have the staff and volunteers on site to run the camp. Some quick stats about this summer include:

- **179 campers** attended Camp Alkulana, including 11 Counselors-in-Training (15 year old campers)
- Over 70% of campers were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch at school
- We served almost 4,000 meals to campers this summer from our camp kitchen
- **46 summer camp counselors** served, 17 of whom were Junior Counselors (16- or 17-year-old former campers)
- 83% of these 46 counselors were former campers at Camp Alkulana

- **20 additional volunteers** served in the kitchen, infirmary, facilities or crafts areas this summer and two thirds of them were former campers or counselors.

Now that summer is over, we turn our attention to our school year programs that offer continued support to our campers and their families. We identify these programs as Alkulana RVA.

- Alkulana RVA is Camp Alkulana's primary school-year program in Richmond. We host events throughout the year to continue friendships from the summer, build social-emotional skills, and have fun together! Participation is open to those ages 9-13 who are Alkulana campers or are interested in becoming campers. There is no cost to participate. We ran our first full year of Alkulana RVA during the 2021-22 school year. Summer counselors volunteered and led the program with great success. This year, we're hosting an intern from VCU's School of Social Work to lead the program with the support of Jordan Payne, who directs our summer program Director, and several junior counselors.
- The Alkulana Peer Program (APP) is Camp Alkulana's school-year program for former campers ages 14-18. We meet monthly (in person or virtually) to continue camp friendships and offer opportunities for leadership development and mentorship. Kate Wakeland, a former camper and current counselor, will lead this program again this year. We attribute the large number of junior counselors this summer to the success of this program last school year.
- Our Family Liaison, SaraAnne Burgess works closely with the families of campers to provide connections to resources like food and other material supports for holidays and throughout the year. We are partnering with our RCFN Community Ministry Centers and local churches to accomplish this.

Our campers, their families, our Support Team, our staff, and I are all thankful for the supports our camp ministry receives from RCFN churches, individuals, and other organizations who believe in the work of Camp Alkulana and Alkulana RVA. We can only do this work because of these strong partnerships through which we work together to show God's love to Richmond's children.

—Beth Wright, Camp Alkulana Director