

HOLMES CAMP & RETREAT CENTER

Living the Mission Award



The Wayfinder Experience has flourished over the past 23 years because it empowers youth, promotes friendships, and builds community. Not only that but the live-action role playing (LARP) Adventure Games at the heart of the Wayfinder program are down right fun. For this work, the board of Holmes Camp & Retreat Center is pleased to honor **The Wayfinder Experience** with its **Living the Mission** award.

The partnership between Wayfinder and Holmes Camp began before Wayfinder's inception when the predecessor to Wayfinder, Adventure Game Theater (AGT), ran overnight camps at Denton Lake. For the past 12 years, and beyond, Wayfinder has offered one to four week-long overnight summer programs at Holmes, drawing teens from across the U.S. and Europe. The week-long camps fill with around 65 campers each session. Toward the end of each week, someone walking through Holmes might see the playfields filled with dozens of kids running around wielding foam swords, wearing helmets, tiaras or goggles, and immersed in epic fantastical battle.

"I wouldn't be the same person I am today without this community and this program."
- Wayfinder camper

The theme of every week is different so on any given week the woods, fields, and buildings around Holmes might be transformed into pirate ships, encampments or castles for imaginary worlds, and the final battles might be harder to find because they are set at nightfall or are being waged at the far reaches of campus deep in

the woods. On the last night of camp, songs and other performances can be heard by the crackling of the fire as teens express themselves around the end-of-week camp fire they call Bardic Circle.

In the earlier days of each week, the teens have gotten acquainted with Wayfinder through taking part in workshops on improv, magic, and sword fighting as well as creating characters, selecting costumes, and planning team dynamics for the big Adventure!

"I was jealous because I never had this when I was growing up and I would have loved it."
- parent of a Wayfinder camper

Adventure Games aren't just games, of course. The power of LARPing is an opportunity for imaginative play that helps teens learn about themselves. According to one of Wayfinder owners, Trine Boode-Petersen, some teens realize that in the LARP they are capable of charging into battle when they didn't think they could. And then they might realize they can do the same in their real lives back home. After Adventure Games, campers have ample opportunities to talk about their experiences and feelings within the Adventures and how they might pertain to their everyday life. Teens are also given plenty of time during the week to bond and grow together as they take on deeper moral issues our Adventure Games challenge them with.

"I was accepted immediately, I had fun, I made friends."
- Wayfinder camper

In addition to Overnight camps at Holmes, the Wayfinder Experience, which is based in Kingston, offers programs in schools and community spaces focused on topics such as theater, literacy, community building and more. It also offers day-camp programs at several locations in the Hudson Valley.

For more information see <https://wayfinderexperience.com/>.