

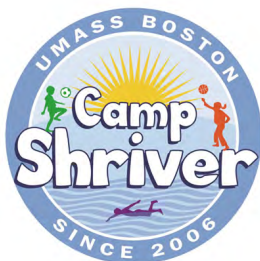
CAMP SHRIVER AT UMASS BOSTON



2025
IMPACT
REPORT

CAMP SHRIVER

... SO CHILDREN OF ALL ABILITIES CAN LEARN AND PLAY –TOGETHER!



Since 2006, Camp Shriver has welcomed children, half with and half without intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 8-12, from low income families in the Boston area to a free inclusive recreational camp.

A national model for inclusive recreational programming, Camp Shriver's mission is to improve the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children of all abilities by providing an inclusive community of friendship and fun. At Camp Shriver, children with and without disabilities build social skills and positive social relationships.

Camp Shriver takes place for 4 weeks in July on the UMass Amherst Mount Ida Campus in Newton, MA, and provides transportation and meals at no cost to parents. Our daily activities, designed for the child most in need to promote participation, include swimming, biking, archery, arts & crafts, basketball, soccer, kick-ball, tag games and more!

Camp Shriver programming continues during the school year with Saturday Camp, also on the Mount Ida Campus, providing an opportunity for campers to meet up and play during the school year.



TALES FROM THE TENT

... WITH MARK SPOLIDORO, DIRECTOR OF CAMP SHRIVER

This summer, I saw two sights from the tent that will stay with me a long time. The first was watching Brayden Gero and Liam Rousmaniere raise our new Camp Shriver flag during our 20th Anniversary Celebration. We went with a flag ceremony for our 20th, because raising the flag at the start of Camp Shriver marks that we are beginning. The summer is here and for the next 4 weeks, we get to prioritize fun, and friendships and teamwork. On our 20th, we raised a new flag—a flag with our logo on it—that proudly and loudly proclaims that we are here! That we have made it 20 years! A flag that shows our campers in action, swimming and kicking and playing.

I have known Brayden and Liam since they first came to camp as 8-year-olds back in 2013: one camper with a disability and one without. These two were already best friends before coming to camp and I've watched them grow into young adults who came back to camp as counselors—and there is no one else who exemplifies our mission better than these two. Brayden and Liam, each in their own way, lead by example, living Camp Shriver's mission that everyone can play and learn as equals. Watching these two role models hoist our new flag while the campers cheered in excitement IS Camp Shriver. We are fun. We are inclusive. We make a difference. We are here and we are going to be here for the next 20 too.

The second sight brings a smile to my face whenever I think of it – dozens of campers riding bicycles around the campus, with Charles leading them in the UMass Amherst security car. We were so grateful to partner with Boston Bikes this summer; this amazing organization brought bicycles and helmets for every camper, met our campers' experience level where they were and made sure that each and every camper found success on a bike. I was struck most by the counselors' engagement with this activity and how they took "supporting your campers" to the next level. From riding slowly with the least experienced rider, to being out in front with the most experienced rider and all those in between. Everyone was supported and included. Watching the smiles and hearing the excited yells of campers as they biked around the beautiful campus is exactly the energy that we are carrying into our next 20 years!

And so, as we celebrate 20 years and our continued partnership with UMass, retiring one flag and raising another, I am thinking about where we came from and how we got here today, and how we continue to bring fun to our campers with bikes and more... how we can keep that spirit going for next 20.

Looking ahead to summer,
Mark





CAMP SHRIVER ... CELEBRATING 20 YEARS!

Camp Shriver marked its 20th anniversary with a celebration that brought together leaders from across the University of Massachusetts system, along with dozens of longtime supporters and friends.

“Spending time with the kids at Camp Shriver is one of the highlights of my summer,” UMass President Marty Meehan shared during one of his earliest visits. “What happens [here] is inspirational, and all of us at the University of Massachusetts are proud to support it.”

When speaking with our campers during the visit, UMass Medical School Chancellor Michael Collins—who launched Camp Shriver in 2006 when he was Chancellor at UMass Boston—said, “Gary Siperstein is a legend in our university. He’s a legend most of all in my mind and in my heart because he cares so much about each and every one of you. You campers are what we believe in the most.”

UMass Boston Chancellor Marcello Suárez-Orozco highlighted the joy of



Pictured: Brayden Gero and Liam Rousmaniere raising the flag. *Middle, clockwise:* Director of Camp Shriver Mark Spolidoro shaking hands with UMass Boston Chancellor Suárez-Orozco. UMass President Marty Meehan, Chancellor of UMass Chan Medical School Michael Collins, and Chancellor of UMass Amherst Javier Reyes addressing campers and guests. *Bottom:* Chancellor Reyes, Chancellor Suárez-Orozco and President Meehan meeting with Camp Shriver counselors who are also UMass students.

camp, saying that, “Often in education, the joy part of learning is put aside. So this is the time to have fun, to learn, and to create beautiful memories, beautiful friendships, that you are going to treasure in the years ahead.”

The day’s festivities included a welcome from UMass Trustee Mary Burns, where sponsors such as the Boston Athletic Association, the Liberty Mutual Foundation and Flutie Foundation were recognized alongside many of Camp Shriver’s volunteer and marathon team runners. The day concluded when Brayden Gero and Liam Rousmaniere, who came to camp as 8-year-old campers and are now returning counselors, raised Camp Shriver’s new flag to the cheers of our current campers.

In reflecting on the moment, Camp Shriver Director Mark Spolidoro credits the camp’s enduring success to steadfast support from UMass Boston leadership and community partners. “The past 20 years have been extraordinary—but we’re just getting started,” said Spolidoro. “Camp Shriver looks to the future with hope, energy, and a renewed commitment to creating a world where every child, regardless of ability, feels like they belong.”



Pictured Middle, clockwise: Brayden Gero and Liam Rousmaniere raising the flag, camper laughing, Inclusion Coordinator Danna Bille recognized by a camper for her exemplary service, campers celebrating. *Bottom:* Campers sing “Happy Birthday” to Trustee Mary Burns; with Chancellor Suárez-Orozco and Trustee Bob Epstein.

THE CSDE MODEL OF INCLUSION

Founded in 1976, the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston is a multidisciplinary research and development institute whose mission is to promote the social development and overall quality of life for children with disabilities. The principles of the CSDE model of inclusion—based on 40 years of CSDE research and evaluation—are found in Camp Shriver programming:

Commitment to Inclusion: To demonstrate a commitment to serving children of all abilities in an inclusive environment, 50% of campers have an intellectual or developmental disability.

Commitment to Full Participation: To promote participation, all activities are planned in advance to support the camper with the highest needs and developed following universal design principles to promote equity. By planning for the child most in need, campers of all abilities can engage in the same activities together. Differentiated instruction is incorporated so that choices are offered between variations of activities (e.g., which line to shoot free throws from) and between different equipment (e.g., whether to pass a basketball, a playground ball or balloon) that benefit all campers, whether that camper has a disability or is simply trying an activity for the first time.

Commitment to Social-Emotional Development: To foster social connections and meaningful social interactions between campers, campers are intentionally placed on teams with staff chosen to best suit the needs of the group. Staff promote a culture of social responsibility by modeling and encouraging positive social behaviors among campers during structured and unstructured time. The team structure allows for greater building of social skills within the unit; social skills such as cheering for your teammates, inviting others to play with you and joining in groups that are already playing are the building blocks of friendships and positive peer relationships.

Commitment to Staff Support: To ensure that staff provide positive behavior supports that foster social skills for all campers with and without disabilities, staff attend two full days of training provided by experts from the CSDE and Boston Public Schools on best practices for successful inclusion. In a low 4:1 camper-to-staff ratio, staff have defined roles: an inclusion coordinator supports all camper and staff needs; coaches organize and lead specific activities (e.g., gym, field, arts-and-crafts); and counselors support campers through the day, modeling participation and positive social skills by engaging enthusiastically in activities. Coaches and counselors together focus on each child's individual skills and abilities (not a specific disability label).

Commitment to Evaluation: To continuously improve inclusive programming so that its positive benefits can be maximized each year, Camp Shriver conducts a rigorous, annual evaluation, involving parent surveys, counselor observations of campers and one-on-one interviews with campers.

With commitment to inclusion, full camper participation, campers' social-emotional development, staff support and program evaluation, Camp Shriver is creating inclusive communities where all children have equal opportunities to learn and play together.



ONE CAMPER'S STORY

"Do I **have** to get out of the car?" Nico whispered, gripping the door frame with both hands.

Danna Bille, Camp Shriver's Inclusion Coordinator, crouched down beside him. "Are you nervous?"

Nico nodded. "I don't know Saturday Camp."

"Well... you know the gym, the art room, snack, and team time, right? That's camp!" she smiled.

Nico paused. "It's the exact same thing?!"

"So don't let the rain drops catch you!"

Nico giggled—and together they ran through the rain toward the gym.

This summer was Nico's second year at Camp Shriver, but it felt like his first real beginning. The year before, he needed a one-to-one staff member by his side at all times. A 9-year-old with a disability, Nico cried at drop-off, resisted anything new, and couldn't bear being away from his mother. Even simple physical activities felt overwhelming.

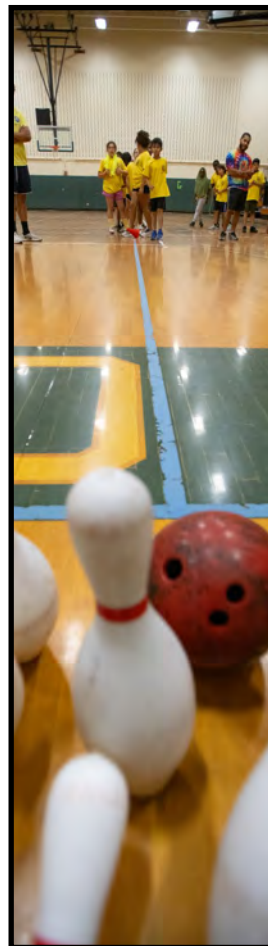
When he returned this year, Danna had a plan. Instead of being dropped off by mom—a transition that had been too hard—he rode the bus with other campers. The excitement of the other campers was contagious, and Nico arrived ready and eager for the day at camp.

What Nico needed most was a **human kind of support**: coaches who understood that he needed to move at his own pace and didn't rush him, counselors who knew that transitioning was hard and could let Nico sit in the tent for a few minutes when he needed quiet. Staff gave Nico a chance to do things his own way, but still within camp expectations.

Slowly, those things that once felt impossible, such as joining his team, starting an activity, trying something new, became part of his day. By the end of the first week, the one-to-one support he'd needed the summer before was no longer necessary. He just needed someone to walk with him at the end of the line.

Nico began to choose his own breaks—and to return when he was ready. He discovered favorite activities: archery, team time, and especially gym activities like basketball or kickball. He moved more, laughed more, and glowed with pride when he realized he could do hard things. Even at home, his mom noticed that he was running more and moving his body in ways he never had before.

By the end of the summer, Nico had come so far that his "bad days" were simply moments, not barriers. He even signed up for Saturday Camp—something unthinkable just one year earlier. Nico's journey is Camp Shriver's mission in action: when children are supported, understood, and included at their own pace, they can surprise themselves and discover what they can do!



EVALUATION OF CAMP SHRIVER

... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS

Each year, research and evaluation staff from the Center for Social Development and Education ensure that Camp Shriver continues to accomplish our mission: improving the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children of all abilities through providing an inclusive community of friendship and fun. Assessment instruments and methods are drawn from social and behavioral science and educational literature, and are adapted to assess campers' social-emotional skills, social relationships, and belongingness through individual camper surveys and interviews. Counselors who directly interact with and observe campers every day are also asked to rate campers' improvement in social skills. Lastly, parents are surveyed about their goals for their child and how their child has changed after attending Camp Shriver. This multisource (parents/guardians, campers, counselors) approach helps camp leadership continue to improve and adapt programming to best meet campers' needs. From the 2025 evaluation, we learned:

Camp Shriver's model creates a community where campers feel they belong.

Camp Shriver welcomes a population of campers where 50% of campers have an intellectual or developmental disability in low 4:1 camper-to-staff ratio, and where staff are trained to focus on each child's skills and abilities—not on a particular disability label. This model creates an environment where campers feel truly included and supported.

It is especially important for children with disabilities to have a place where they feel they belong. According to the parents/guardians of campers, campers with disabilities are less likely than their peers without disabilities to attend after school programs, participate in sports, and go to special occasions like birthday parties.

Intentionally, Camp Shriver creates a strong sense of belonging for all campers. Overwhelmingly, campers feel connected to peers and counselors at Camp Shriver (98%). Campers believe that their counselors care about them (97%), that they play nicely with teammates (97%), and that they are nice to peers who are different from them (98%).

Camp Shriver improves the social-emotional skills of campers.

Within this supportive environment where campers feel they belong, Camp Shriver staff work to promote



... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS (CONTINUED)

social-emotional learning (SEL) by teaching, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behaviors among campers during both structured and unstructured time. This intentional focus on social-emotional development helps campers build social- and self-awareness skills, skills that provide a foundation for acting inclusively.

Counselors report that of the campers who needed improvement, 99% of campers improved in at least one SEL skill. For examples in particular skills, counselors report that of campers who had room to improve, 94% improved at trying new things, 87% at making friends with other campers, 82% at following directions, and 77% at sharing with others. Parents of returning campers also see skill improvement in their children, with 100% of parents reporting that campers are more self-confident and more patient as a result of Camp Shriver.

Camp Shriver fosters positive peer relationships and friendships.

Most fundamental to Camp Shriver's mission is that Camp Shriver brings together children with and without disabilities to promote positive peer relationships and friendships. For children with disabilities, especially, the fostering and development of peer relationships is important, as children with disabilities often lack opportunities to develop positive peer relationships.

This year at camp, an amazing 91% of campers named a peer as a friend at camp who also named them as a friend in return; this percentage was the same for campers with and without disabilities. Further, 83% of campers named a camper of a different race as a friend, and importantly, most campers without a disability, 89%, named a peer with a disability as a friend; this is especially notable when compared with other inclusive extra-curricular programming where only 41% of students report becoming friends with a student with a disability (such as Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Program; Jacobs, et al., 2018).

Camp Shriver promotes motor skill development.

Camp Shriver provides opportunities for motor skill development by increasing camper participation in all activities; this is accomplished by planning for the child most in need and making inclusive accommodations to all activities to promote participation. Overall, campers participate in over 78 hours of motor skill development on the field, on the tennis courts, in the gym, and in the arts and crafts room, playing a variety of activities such as swimming, archery, golf, tennis, tag games, kickball, basketball, soccer and more.



... THE IMPACT OF CAMP SHRIVER ON CAMPERS (CONTINUED)

Campers consistently describe Camp Shriver's activities with excitement. Many mention about the variety, saying, "we get to play a bunch of games we want to," "there's a lot of fun stuff to do," and it's "different every time." Campers also love the chance to try new things, with several calling out Boston Bikes as a standout — "I like that we get to try new things like Boston Bikes," one shared. As another camper put it, "All the activities" make camp fun — "we can do anything we want from football to a dance party." For many, the best part can be summed up simply: being active, being creative, and playing with friends all day.

This enthusiasm for activities carries over from the summer into the school year. 100% of returning parents report that as a result of Camp Shriver, their children are more likely to be active during the summer and school year, with 90% of parents reporting their child is more active in community sports and 85% in school sports.

In conclusion, Camp Shriver has had demonstrated success in meeting its objectives since its inception in 2006 and the evaluation results are used to continuously revise and improve programming to maximize positive effects. Camp Shriver's model and evaluation results have been widely disseminated in books (Best Practices for Inclusive Camps from Sagamore-Venture Publishing, 2023), conferences (e.g., the American Camping Association Conference, 2023; the National Inclusion Project Power of Play, 2022), encyclopedias (Encyclopedia of Intellectual and Developmental Disorders, 2018), scientific journals (Social Inclusion of Children with Intellectual Disabilities in a Recreational Setting. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 47(2), 97-107), psychology magazines (Monitor on Psychology, July 2008), camping magazines (American Camping Association, 2007) and in national media outlets such as It's Only a Game on NPR.

And most importantly, Camp Shriver continues to be successful in the eyes of our campers. When asked what makes camp special, many spoke first about inclusion — "anyone can come here; it's inclusive," shared one camper, while another said, "I've never felt so respected in my life." Campers emphasized how welcoming the environment feels: my friends "include everybody," and "nobody makes fun of me." Others expressed the pure joy of the experience, saying, "Everything! Nothing beats Camp Shriver." Above all, campers consistently describe Camp Shriver as a place where they can be themselves, make friends who are kind, and spend each day surrounded by supportive peers and counselors. It is their voices — and their sense of belonging — that reflect the true impact of Camp Shriver.



SERVING DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Camp Shriver remains committed to welcoming children, 8-12, boys and girls, with and without disabilities from low-income urban neighborhoods and ensuring diversity among its campers.

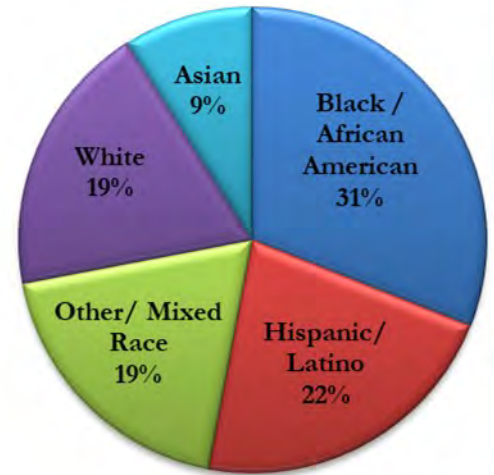
In 2025, Camp Shriver served 154 campers with and without disabilities from Boston (80%) and Quincy (20%) in our summer and school year program. The majority of campers lived in the neighborhoods surrounding UMass Boston, including Dorchester, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roslindale, South Boston and Roxbury. **The ethnicity of our campers is representative of the communities in which they live:** 81% of campers self-identified as a racial-ethnic minority (31% as Black/African American, 22% as Hispanic/Latino, 19% as mixed race or other and 9% as Asian).

At the heart of Camp Shriver's unique inclusive experience, an equal number of children with and without disabilities are brought together to engage in the same recreational activities alongside one another. Our campers with disabilities are children with intellectual disabilities, on the autism spectrum, and who have other developmental delays. In 2025, 51% of campers were children with a disability.

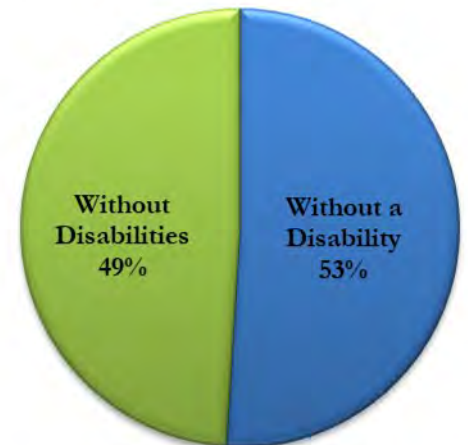
Additionally, **Camp Shriver partners with schools and community groups that serve children from low-income neighborhoods** to identify families that might be interested in and benefit from a free summer recreational camp. In 2025, 63% of Camp Shriver families reported low or very-low household incomes (as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).



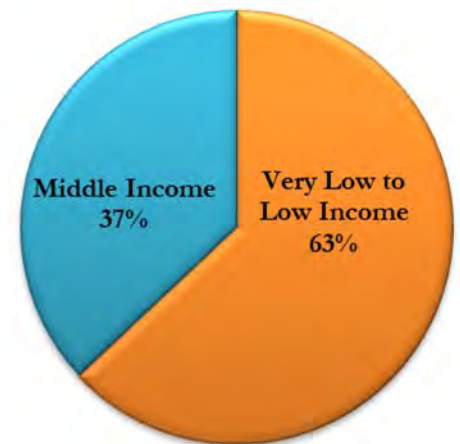
Camper Ethnicity



Camper Disability Status



Family Income Levels



ONE CAMPER'S STORY

"Riley, I don't see your smile today," Danne Bille, Camp Shriver's Inclusion Coordinator said gently, pulling up a chair beside her.

Riley kept her head down, hood up, knees tucked to her chest. "Did someone tell you to come sit here?"

"They're not upset with you — they were just worried. Are **you** worried about anything?"

Riley finally whispered, "Just... not in a good mood."

"That's okay. You have the right to be in a bad mood sometimes," Danna replied.

"It's okay to sit for a bit. How many minutes do you think you need?"

Riley lifted her head just enough to meet Danna's eyes. "Maybe... three?"

"Three it is." And just like that, the pressure was off — and three minutes later, Riley was back on the field, running with her team.

This was Riley's first summer at Camp Shriver. At 11, she was an older camper...and far too mature for her age. She came from a difficult home situation, attended a classroom for students struggling with mental health, had difficulty expressing her feelings and often shut down when she was overwhelmed.

But at Camp Shriver, her counselors met her where she was. If Riley needed to sit with her head down, she could. If she needed space before talking, she got it. Counselors helped her put her feelings in perspective, reminding Riley that the program was manageable and that they were there to listen.

At home, she didn't have much support. **But at Camp Shriver, Riley found her cheerleaders.** Counselors celebrated every win, big or small, until Riley began to celebrate herself, too. Riley rose to the high expectations her counselors set for her team, which was composed of our older campers. She tried every activity Camp Shriver had to offer, eager and curious, a sponge absorbing every bit of joy, comfort, and confidence she could find. Being on the older team, surrounded by kids who weren't from her school, gave her something priceless: a fresh start.

The transformation was visible even on the outside. In her first week, Riley wore long pants and a hood pulled low. By the final week, she was in a tank top on stage at the talent show—smiling, dancing, and glowing at the applause she rarely received anywhere else.

By the end of summer, Camp Shriver had become her safe place, her happy place and she was one of the first campers who signed up for Saturday Camp. Riley's experience is a powerful reflection of Camp Shriver's mission: in a welcoming and supportive environment—where campers are cheered for being who they are—every child can thrive!



CAMP SHRIVER...
IN THE CAMPERS' OWN WORDS

I love every-
thing! Noth-
ing beats
Camp
Shriver!

There's
lots of
stuff
you can
do!

I like how
the counse-
lors push us
to do better!

I like to
play with
everybody
in my team!



At Camp
Shriver, I can
make more
friends!

I learned
how to
swim!



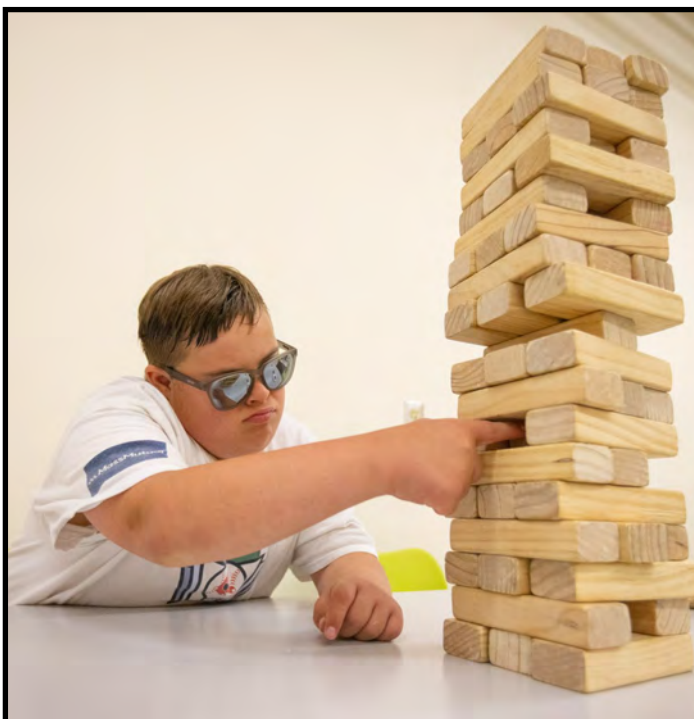
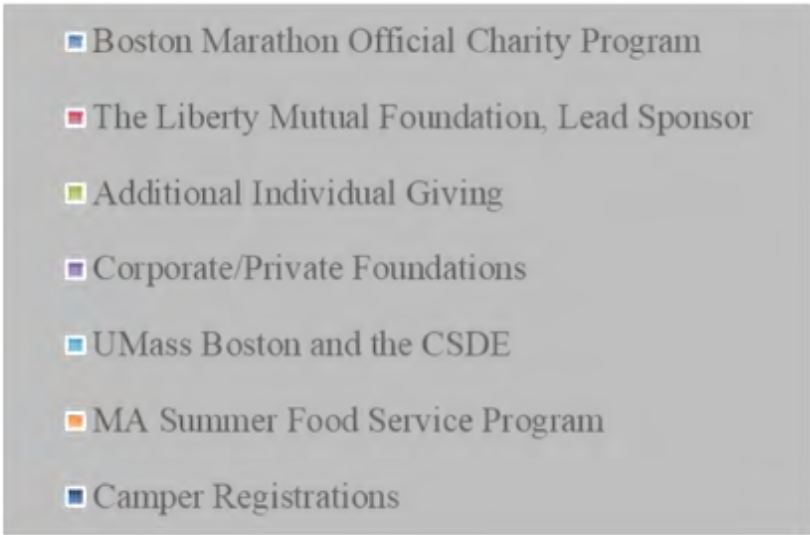
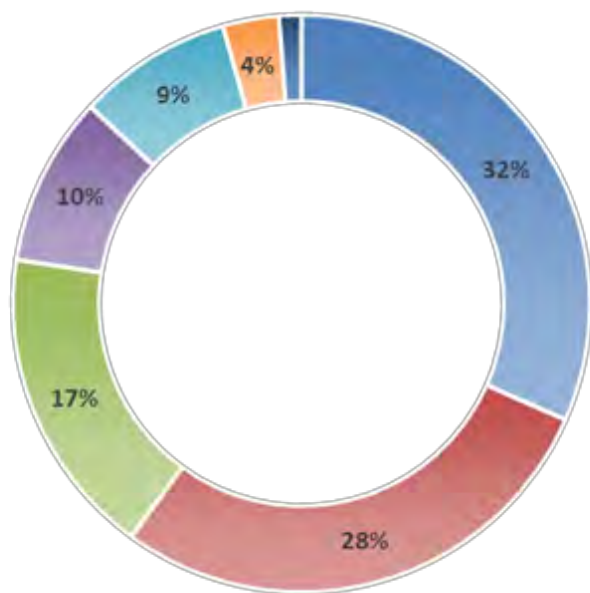
It's fun
because of
the friends
you make!



At Camp
Shriver,
they
include
every-
body!

SUSTAINABILITY OF CAMP SHRIVER

Camp Shriver is a financially stable program, comprising support from a variety of sources, including the Center for Social Development and Education (administration and fundraising), the University of Massachusetts Boston (transportation), a multi-year grant from the Liberty Mutual Foundation, and as a members of the Official Charity Programs of the Boston Marathon and the New York City Marathon. We continue to actively solicit new and varied funding opportunities each year.



A GRATEFUL THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Camp Shriver and the Center for Social Development and Education would like to thank UMass Boston, UMass Amherst and all of our friends and sponsors:



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CAMP SHRIVER

ON UMASS AMHERST'S MOUNT IDA CAMPUS



2025