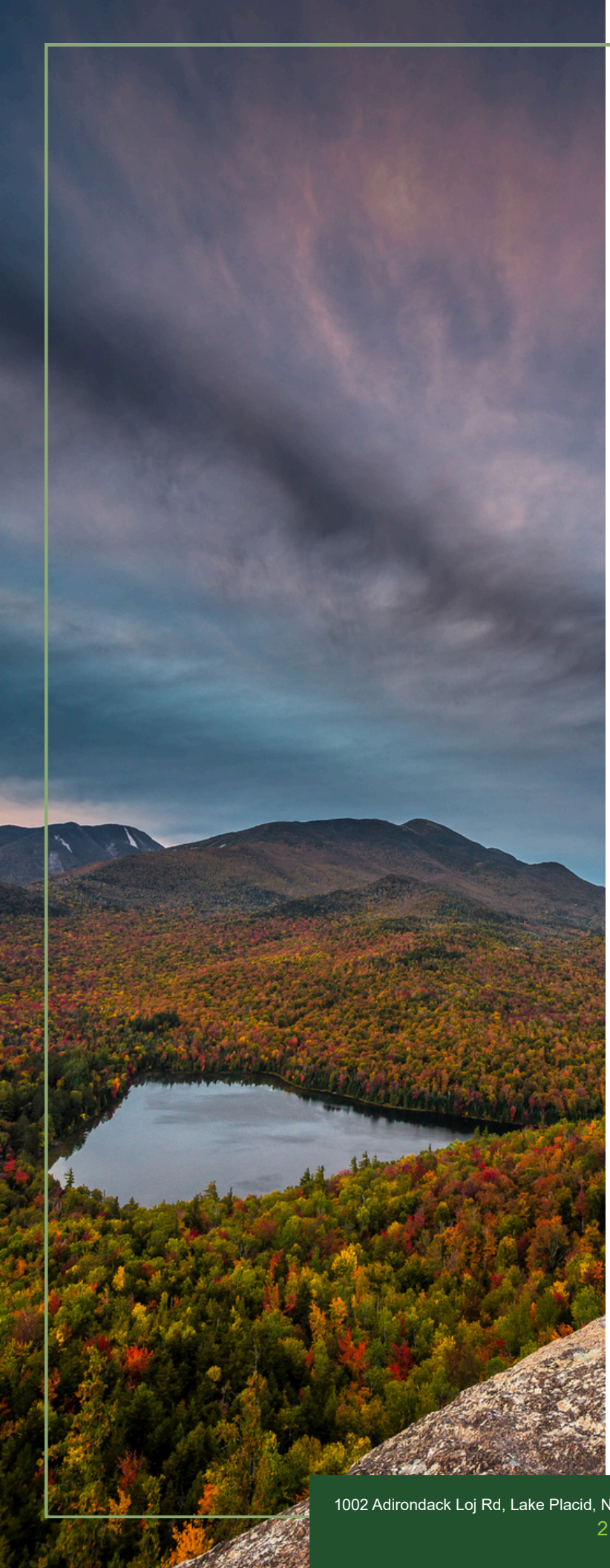


CAMPGROUND HOST PROGRAM END OF SEASON REPORT 2026

In its 34th year, the volunteers who dedicated their time to the Campground Host Program continued the legacy of providing a welcoming and hospitable wilderness experience to all campers from Victoria Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day. The volunteers for the 2026 season went above and beyond to build connections to Heart Lake and the Adirondacks for families, visitors from many other states and countries, first time visitors, and campers who have loved the Wilderness Campground for decades. Campground hosts are a key part of ADK's commitment to going beyond educating visitors to the Wilderness Campground by giving them the tools and experiences they need to form their own wilderness ethic that values the importance of responsible outdoor recreation.

Our 2026 volunteers were true champions of Leave No Trace for the Wilderness Campground by showing visitors how to store their food safely and properly, how to have a responsible and enjoyable campfire, and even how to stay warm through an unseasonably cold Adirondack night. They were also invaluable to the daily operations of ADK's Hospitality Department by keeping bathroom supplies stocked, the Front Desk informed of the goings-on inside the campground, and selling firewood to guests. All of these things may not seem so remarkable in the moment, but when they get overlooked or forgotten, visitors will notice the impacts immediately. This is key to the impact of our campground hosts. The hours they gift to our organization throughout the summer and fall culminate in a seamless visitor experience that calls campers back to Heart Lake again and again. Campground hosts are an irreplaceable part of the stewardship journey that ADK seeks to guide visitors on.



We were privileged to have help from three new hosts this year along with many more returning hosts, four of which have volunteered for this program for seven or more years. In addition, there were also five volunteers and co-volunteers who responded to last minute requests to cover host assignments when scheduling conflicts arose.

Through a great network of communication between volunteers, our Campground Host Coordinator, Stu, and ADK staff, we had full volunteer coverage of the Wilderness Campground all season long.

This year's hosts reported hundreds of meaningful interactions with visitors and accumulated thousands of visitor interactions in the campground. We deem meaningful interactions to be any conversation pertaining to a visitor's needs or an educational moment, but no visitor interaction can be overlooked as this friendly, helpful, and welcoming presence is the cornerstone of the Wilderness Campground in the busy months.

Campground hosts work from the early morning to late in the evening to provide campground guests and ADK staff with the resources and information they need. They work through all weather conditions to cover our expansive campground with everything guests need.

From greeting every visitor with a smile through the sun and the rain to keeping noise levels in the campground respectful and considerate throughout the night, our volunteers are there for it all. We could not do what we do without them.

We extend a heartfelt thank-you to the twenty-one volunteers who each gave the Adirondack Mountain Club a week of dedication and service to the Campground Host Program.

Our volunteers are vital to the safety and daily operations of the Wilderness Campground and to the experience of our guests and visitors.

By educating the public about responsible recreation, these volunteers also serve as vital ambassadors of ADK, supporting our mission to protect New York State's wild lands and waters and helping us build a statewide constituency of land stewardship advocates.

2026 was an exceptional year for camping at Heart Lake, and we are already looking forward to the 35th season of this program.

ADK would like to extend a special thank-you to our Campground Host Coordinator, Stu Weinberg, who has dedicated countless hours of scheduling, recruiting, training, and hosting to the Campground Host Program over his many years of involvement.

From the Florida coast to the African Savanna, the Adirondak Loj dining room and everywhere in between, Stu was there to respond to volunteers' questions, adjust the host schedule, and keep ADK informed.

Kudos, Stu, to a program well run!

Submitted by Lizzie Johnson
ADK Front Office Associate & Campground Host Liaison

