

# The Ponky

AMC PONKAPOAG CAMP QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## Hello Campers!

Welcome to summer at Ponkapoag!!  
Our summer season begins June 22  
and a new sign will greet you at the  
gate!

We look forward to seeing you on the  
dock, perhaps walking the green dot  
trail, at potluck, the campfire at the  
lodge, or standing on "hot dog rock".  
Summer time at Ponkapoag - can't  
ask for anything better than that!

Opening camp work party's on June  
21st!!

Happy summer everyone!







# A note from our new Committee Chairs

## Alan and Sid McNab

Hey there, all. Just a quick note to tell those of you who don't know me, who I am, and what experiences I am bringing towards being Chair of Ponky, alongside my wife, Sidney. While I am listed as the Chair, we are approaching the job as a team effort.

First of all I am a sixty-year-old guy originally from Rhode Island but currently (and for the last 30 years) living in Hyde Park. As stated before, I'm married to Sid (34 years) and we have 2 kids, Doug and William. We have been regular campers at Ponky for the last 20 years or so, since we started bringing my (then) young children there for some free-range childhood, alongside the Houge/Rodley's.

I grew up in a family of AMC Members, with my parents running the Swans Falls Camp on the Saco during the early to mid 80's. I have been an AMC member for most of my life, with hiking, camping, canoeing, and camp maintenance all extremely regular parts of my childhood.

I am a carpenter by trade, although for the last 20 years, I have mostly taught others how to build things. Mainly, I build museum displays and exhibits - many in the area, but all over the country as well. In doing so, I am charged with overseeing several million-dollar \$ budgets and crews of workers in various trades. I also have prior experience in volunteer boards, having been a board member at my curling club for a 3-year term.

So, to summarize for the TL/DR crowd. I am an experienced leader, work with non-profits all the time, have skills in practical matters, and know viscerally what it is like to sit on a stainless steel pit toilet seat in the middle of winter.

Sid here with a few additional notes on my experience:

- Have held multiple officer positions for the non-profit of P.E.O. International, including President at the local level and multiple committee positions at the state level
- Former treasurer and member of a committee tasked with updating the bylaws of the Fairmount Hill Neighborhood Association
- Manager of a 5+ employee library dept within a management consulting firm for 22 years; included managing a \$5M+ budget. Also, where I learned to communicate in bullet points!
- Currently retired/have a new job as my mom's personal chauffeur & assistant.



# A note from our new Committee Vice Chair

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## Jennifer Hogue

Hi folks! I'm Jennifer Hogue, your new Ponkapoag Committee vice chair. I had a moment of serendipity on the morning of the Volunteer Appreciation dinner. I was looking at my email and I had a message from Shutterfly sharing with me my "Memories from this week 19 years ago." There were a bunch of pictures of my kids, then 8 and 10 years old, at a Ponky work party in April 2006. It felt like some kind of message from the Spirit of Ponkapoag - like I was in the right place.

I feel a tremendous amount of gratitude for the folks who've volunteered in big and small ways to keep Ponky going. Over the years, I've spent time with many of you: sitting on the dock, enjoying the view; shoveling gravel into yet another pothole; enjoying your potluck contributions on a Saturday night... but up until now, I haven't spent much time attending to the business end of camp. I'm so grateful to the many folks who have kept things running so that my family and I could enjoy it.

This year, I'm going to do my best to give more time and energy to Ponky - and I hope that you'll not only continue to do your part, but invite friends who are new or old timers at Ponky to consider doing the same. Because spending time on Ponky's behalf is good medicine and a powerful antidote to a lot of the craziness of our world right now. I'll give you a couple of examples:



There are few things as satisfying after driving into camp worried about breaking a strut in one of those monster potholes to sail out a few hours later over a road that you helped to repair. That's the opposite of the feeling of powerlessness that it is so easy to feel these days.

It's wonderful to have an excuse to really unplug - to look away from the screen and toward the woods and the water - and to watch the kids having fun with nothing more complex than some sticks, stones, and pinecones.

And in this age of virtual gatherings and artificial intelligence, it's great to be in an actual place with a bunch of actual people and to know that whatever intelligence we've got (or don't got) - it's authentically ours, not artificial!

So, thanks again, so much, for your Ponky spirit and dedication. I am really looking forward to working together to serve our special place in the year ahead!





## Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

On Saturday evening April 26 Ponkapoag friends and volunteers got together to both celebrate the camp community and “rally the troops”. As a AMC volunteer-maintained family camp, we rely on the community to take care of our special treasure in the Blue Hills.

About 45 people attended the dinner - catching up with friends, admiring the wonderfully creative centerpieces, eating yummy food, and purchasing some camp merch like sweatshirts and mugs. We also played fun games led by Julie Linehan, welcomed Jennifer Hogue our new vice-chair who introduced herself and her love of Ponk, and celebrated some special volunteers who were nominated for the Volunteer of the Year Award - Julie Linehan, Betsy Hewitt, and Dennis Maher. Dennis was honored with the award this year and proudly wore his special hoodie and said he’s been doing this work and making the time for camp consistently over the years because he wants it for the next generation to enjoy and cherish as he does.

Thanks to all who joined in the event and I’d like to give a big shout out to the committee that planned and ran the event - Jamie Cohen, Heather Mick- Carito, Trisha Minton, and Julie Linehan.



# Volunteer of the year

## Dennis Maher

Dennis has been part of Ponkapoag for over 30 years, volunteering consistently since day one. His contributions form an ever-growing list—not the doomscroll kind, but one full of energy, dedication, and impact. From leading as Camp Chair for four years to countless maintenance projects, here are just a few things around camp that bear Dennis's touch.



Over the years, Dennis has done it all—from snorkeling to clean trash from the pond to building decks, replacing roofs, and fixing plumbing under the lodge. He's rebuilt much of the camp's water system, constructed the lodge's front entrance, and repaired countless cabin interiors and exteriors. He's built decks for Gorlin, Lakeview, and Duncan, replaced doors, installed retaining walls and outdoor grills, and even brought his own tractor for roadwork.

He built over 20 picnic tables and several Adirondack chairs, designed and donated the first volunteer appreciation T-shirts, and was key in starting and shutting down the camp's water system each year. He's helped maintain the dock, set up buoys, and coordinated work parties as Facilities Coordinator. As Camp Chair from 2020–2024, Dennis led Ponkapoag through the challenges of COVID and a major leadership transition.

He even hosted the beloved Saturday night Scavenger Hunt for 15 years.

With a legacy this strong, it's no wonder Dennis was named Volunteer of the Year. Thank you, Dennis, for everything you've done for Ponkapoag!



# Volunteer Event Pictures



Julie and John Linehan, Jamie Cohen



Centerpieces at the event





## Ponk Stairs

Why would someone spend four precious Saturdays doing physical labor? If you're a regular Ponk volunteer, you already know the answer. But if the answer isn't obvious, read on. I'll explain.

First, let me set the stage. Imagine a stairway in the woods made of dirt and twenty year-old 4x4 beams. Imagine a dozen people, two pickup truck beds of new 4x4s, a generator, shovels, sledgehammers, wheelbarrows, screw guns, and tons of gravel. These dozen people, in interwoven small teams, ripped out the rotten wood, dug trenches, measured and cut and pinned the new wood, and filled the wooden frame with a stone-and-sand mixture. It was hard work: We were sore and fuzzy-brained at the end of each day.

In the rest of the camp, others were fixing window screens, painting, running to bring back lunch, and generally cleaning up. On days like this, the camp is buzzing with all sorts of different jobs.

Now, back to the question: Why would you exert yourself this way? Here's how I'd answer.

First, Ponkapoag is a special place worth caring about. It's where kids roam free, generations connect, and new faces are always welcome. Here, social standing melts away; we're all equal in the woods, sleeping in cabins and swimming in the pond.

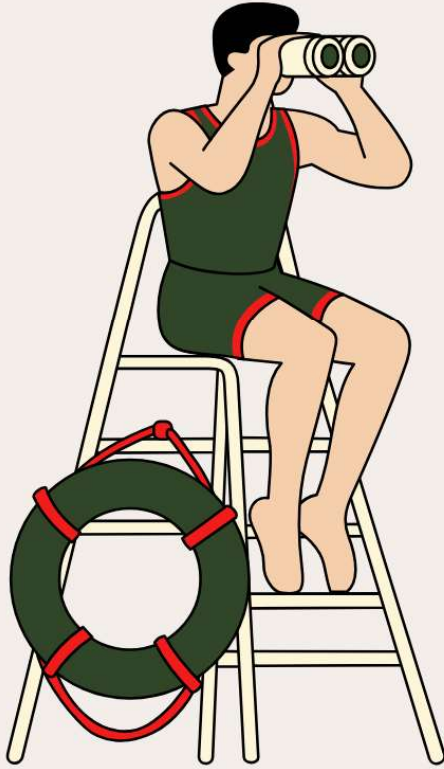
Second, volunteering at Ponk fulfills a deep social need. There's nothing like working shoulder to shoulder with others who are committed to something that matters. We often find silent harmonious collective rhythms, like bees in a hive, driven by shared purpose. This forges special bonds, an antidote to the toxic individualism that can seem to define today's world.

Finally, for desk jockeys like me, Ponk offers a vital escape. After a week of screens and meetings, laboring with my hands is immensely satisfying. I'm no carpenter, but there are always more experienced volunteers ready to show me the way. Working alongside them and my fellow laborers, taking care of Ponkapoag, simply makes me happy.



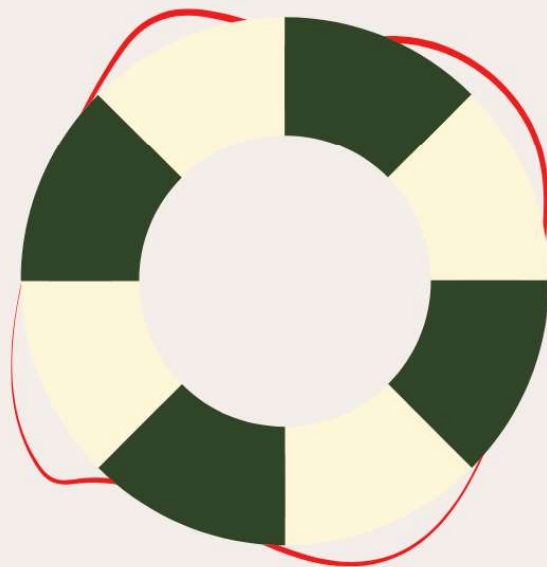
*Written by Matt Cuddy*

## Meet Our Lifeguards!



This summer, Juliet Lerner and Luke Thompson will be keeping Ponkapoag Pond safe as the lifeguards on duty. Juliet, 18, is excited to start college in the fall. She loves painting, creating clothes, and has been coming to Ponk since she was a kid.

Luke is returning for his second year as a lifeguard. He enjoys working out, swimming, and playing volleyball. Both are thrilled to be part of the Appalachian Mountain Club team and look forward to a fun and safe summer by the water.







## Inquiries

If you have any questions, wish to update or add your email to the distribution list, or are interested in contributing, we'd be thrilled to hear from you!



[ponkapoagcaretaker@outdoors.org](mailto:ponkapoagcaretaker@outdoors.org)

**Still have two Volunteer Work Parties left this season! Save the dates!**

Saturday, June 21  
Sunday, June 22

WE ♥ PONK  
PONK ♥ YOU



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