

Camp Galileo Alumni Stories

How has Camp Galileo impacted me?

Being a Lead Instructor at Camp G has been a wonderful experience for me and has helped me to gain important skills I needed as a teacher. I've learned invaluable classroom management techniques that I've been able to put to immediate use in the classroom. Cooperative learning is an extremely effective way to teach, but it is not always easy to facilitate. My experience teaching at Camp G has helped me to gain confidence in using cooperative learning during the school year in my classroom. I've learned that no one ever loses their love of cutting, pasting and gluing. Being able to teach kids that mistakes are a necessary part of learning, and that experimentation can help you discover the laws of nature has been especially inspiring. In addition to improving my teaching skills, working at Camp G has given me the opportunity to work with incredibly supportive, fun and caring staff and administration. It's been one of the best jobs I've ever had.

~Barbara Schremp, San Jose: Almaden Lead Science Instructor (2006 to present); Camp Galileo Curriculum Developer and Lead Instructor Trainer (2008)

I have been impacted immeasurably by my three years as a Camp Director in Oakland. Our camps have shown me that my ideal vision of education is possible to create. Each summer I reconnect to what we can accomplish when a staff of people are connected to a common mission, provided with support and resources, and are focused on teambuilding and having fun. Being a part of Galileo has also given me the tools to become an educational leader. I have learned how to take and receive feedback, how to create a shared vision with a staff, how to create an environment that allows people to trust their teammates and risks. Having the opportunity to take on this role has given me the confidence to create a career path that will rely on these skills. Perhaps most importantly, being a Camp Director has taught me that it is possible to find work that is meaningful and fun at the same time.

~Beth Sondel, Oakland Founder & Camp Director (2006 – Present)

I feel that I can't get Camp Galileo out of my head. Never before has a job made me so happy, so energetic that I just can't wait to get back to it. With one year under my belt, I feel like I have enough experience to really make a positive impact at my location. I love everything about Camp Galileo, and it would be such a pleasure to spend another summer with such an amazing program. I enjoyed the staff most of all at my Galileo site. Never before had I been surrounded by such positive, energetic individuals who knew how to combine fun with professionalism. I mean obviously the kids were amazing, and the curriculum was a lot of fun, but the staff made it for me. I think the most challenging thing for me last year was keeping the same high energy for the entire seven weeks. Thanks to the amazing support of the staff, I definitely found strength in their support.

~Jared Abbot, Menlo Park Team Leader (2007); Menlo Park Senior Team Leader (2008)

Every job that I have had since being a director at Camp Galileo has had to suffer through the unfortunate experience of being compared to my job at Camp G. I ask myself, Will I get to work with kids? Will I get to work with a team of other adults who are passionate and driven? Will my strengths be recognized and valued? Will my areas of need be supported toward improvement? Will I have a positive influence on children and adults? Will I feel exhausted, and exhilarated, at the end of the day? Will I get to play outside, wear costumes, be goofy, and make others laugh hysterically in a legendary performance of jazzercise?

No other job will ever compare to the experience of working at Camp Galileo. It's difficult to identify just one thing that impacted me most. If I had to choose, I'd say it was being a part of a competent organization with drive and with the ability to support the staff to accomplish their lofty goals. To be a part of an organization--a family-- like that just once is truly a gift.

~Gillian Bowley, Hillsborough Founder & Camp Director (2004 – 2006)

I started at Camp Galileo as a volunteer in high school. It was mostly my Dad who got me into it, not wanting me to sit around doing nothing all summer. I had always liked kids, but had never done anything more than babysit. This turned into an unbelievable opportunity for me. For some reason, I have a connection with kids, and they love being around me. As I kept coming back to Camp G, summer after summer, my role kept expanding, I truly felt my impact on the campers expand with it. My first summer, I was shy and interacted with only some of the campers, doing what was requested of me by the rest of the staff. Last summer, I ran around in a shirt made for a three year old, speaking in a German accent half the time, all the while leading the charge in pre-camp games, coming up with several opening and closing ceremony ideas, and being somebody the rest of the staff felt comfortable talking to if they had questions or ideas. Anybody who saw me my first summer compared to where I am now would be astonished at the difference.

The other thing about working at Camp G is that I love it. I can't think of many jobs in the world where you'd rather be at work than at home, but that's what Camp G is to me. I absolutely love being there, and I'm always extremely happy during the summer. Knowing this is important to me as it allows me to explore other similar areas in my life. Right now I'm coaching a baseball team for 9-10 year olds, and I can't remember ever having more fun doing anything in my life. Without my experience at Camp G, I would not be as good at keeping them entertained, speaking with their parents, knowing when to push them, encourage them, or make them laugh, or even know that it would be something I would want to do in the first place. Camp G has shown me that I am good at, and enjoy working with kids, and I can't think of any career I would rather have then one where you get to have a positive impact on kids every day.

~Nathan Losche, Palo Alto Outdoor Lead Instructor (2007, 2008), Palo Alto Camp Assistant (2006), Palo Alto Team Leader (2004-2005), Palo Alto Summer Intern (2002-2003)

As an Operations Coordinator for 2 years, I knew my role wouldn't necessarily be directly working with campers everyday. However, my Camp Directors encouraged me to step it up as a leader and put myself in positions I normally may not have such as leading opening ceremony, getting into the classroom doing observations, or dealing with camper conflicts. Through their coaching and evaluation during the summer, I was able to objectively see where my strengths lie and areas in which I could improve. Galileo has greatly impacted my life by giving me the confidence to grow professionally and have an amazing support system behind me. These skills have also translated to my school year job where I feel I have become a stronger leader all around. I have been inspired to bring this knowledge to current and future staff member so they may have the same awesome experience I have!

~Salina Lam, San Francisco Camp Director (2008), San Francisco Assistant Camp Director/Operations Coordinator (2007), El Cerrito Operations Coordinator (2006)

I didn't think I could learn much more about leadership when I came into camp as a Team Leader. I was so confident in my school experience and leading experiences that I thought it would be a piece of cake. Team Leaders are so hard-working and dynamic that I learned and improved every single day. I didn't just learn from specific instances, like how to deal with a camper running away or not listening, but also in general what demeanor must be used as an authority figure to kids. It's hard to be their friends and also their mom, to demand discipline but expect playfulness. After seeing what an organized team looked like I realized that it was worth it to expect more from the campers as a team, which also makes the experience better for the camper. You can't learn that from babysitting. Making the transition to a Lead Instructor already gave me the boost of confidence I needed to be a bit more of an authority, so now I feel I can demand the attention and discipline that makes the activities work well and more fun. It really is just confidence in the end, and the support at Galileo was so strong without being overbearing that I could step out of my comfort zone and try some new things. I can pretty safely attribute my transition from a camp-counselor to a pre-teacher, and maybe even teacher after this summer, to Camp G and its encouraging environment.

~ Tamar Sberlo, Belmont Science Lead Instructor (2008), Belmont Outdoor Lead Instructor (2007), Belmont Team Leader (2006)

Working for Camp Galileo over the last few years really has been a life changing experience for me. One of the things I value most is the people that Galileo attracts and hires and thus, the people I get to work with. Not only are they intelligent, hardworking, and dedicated; they are the most passionate group of people I've ever come in contact with. And it's not just most of the people who work here, it's EVERYONE who works here. Being around people who are so committed to and passionate about summer camp and education has really helped me to recognize where my own true passions lie and find the best ways to pursue them. Now, when I look at a job opportunity or really any endeavour I want to pursue, I really think about who that means I'll be spending time with. It's become a top priority to me to work with people who share the same commitment and passion that I do. Not only that, but I find it hard to really spend time on something that I can't put my full heart into. My choir director recently said, after spending time with a group of professional musicians who weren't putting their full hearts into their music, "Why do something half way, when you can do it the best you can?" I think that really captures how I feel about the things I commit myself to now, and a huge part of why I believe that is because of my experience with Galileo.

The other thing that has been amazing about my experience with Galileo is how much I've learned about leadership and what it means to be a great leader. I came to Galileo with many years of experience managing people in a lot of very different types of jobs and I really wanted to hone my skills as a manager. What I discovered is that it wasn't just management skills I wanted to develop, it is leadership skills. I'm a person who loves to be inspired. I seek out opportunities for inspiration, and now I find that not only am I seeking out opportunities to be inspired, but I want more opportunities to inspire others as well. The training I've gotten on leadership, and the opportunities I've been given to be a leader and discover my own leadership style is absolutely invaluable, and I feel so lucky to have been allowed to learn in an environment where people are so supportive and genuinely want to help you grow. I've learned that being a leader and inspiring people means putting your heart out there for others to see and being as honest and true to yourself as possible. When people see that true honesty they want to believe in the vision you offer them and become part of it and help you grow that vision into something amazing, and through that experience they end up growing from it too.

I honestly can't imagine my life without Galileo and without the passion and leadership that I've found within myself through this experience and for that I will forever be grateful!

~Charlotte Tucker-Perkins, San Jose: Almaden Camp Director (2006 – present)