



Fall 2025

## A Legacy of Service, A Tradition of Impact



### Honoring Kaye & Bill Carraway

It is with great pride that we celebrate the induction of our very own **Kaye and Bill Carraway** into the **YMCAs of the Southeast Hall of Fame** at YMCA Blue Ridge. This honor is reserved for a select few who

have dedicated their lives to advancing the Y's mission, strengthening our community, and serving others.

Sloane Mayberry, former Associate Director and current Board Chair, said, "It is impossible to separate Camp Thunderbird from Bill and Kaye." Their legacy is deeply rooted in Camp Thunderbird's tradition, and their lifelong impact continues to ripple through the Thunderbird family.

Andy Kane, former Executive Director, presented the award alongside Sloane and said, "The Carraways have had a greater positive impact on the lives of the campers and counselors of this great YMCA camp than any other two people in the camp's rich history."

For all who set foot on the sunny shores during their remarkable 44 years of service, Bill and Kaye's love for Thunderbird, for every camper, and for every staff member, was unmistakable. The entire Camp Thunderbird community is overjoyed to see this dynamic duo honored for their life's work and for the generational impact they have made. They are sparks that keep the campfire glowing.

***"We are proud to honor where camp has been, to celebrate all that it is today, and to look forward with hope to what it will continue to become." - Kaye & Bill Carraway***

*Pictured above from left to right: Joshua Moore, John Bratyanski, Katie Carraway Belich, Crystal Little, Alan Welfare, Bill & Kaye Carraway, Lexie Ratliff, Georgia Harris Krueger, Kris Carraway Shipe, Anna Carroll, Jill Moore, Sloane Mayberry, Andy & Florence Kane, Lynn Lomax, Kevin Dean, Joann & Andy Calhoun (Not Pictured: Bill "Hollywood" Hollifield, Todd Low, Ed Paat)*

## Summer In Review





This past summer, we welcomed **over 3,000 campers** to the sunny shores of Lake Wylie, with 4,728 weeks of impact between our Resident Camp and ThunderDays programs! We had 317 Equestrian Add-Ons of campers saddling up in the newly renovated riding arena thanks to Tucker Windle and Showalter Construction.

In 2025, \$289,434 in scholarships opened the doors for campers of all backgrounds to experience the Thunderbird tradition, ensuring access to the magic of camp for all.

With over 40 years of tradition, the bandana program continues to flourish with **691 bandana recipients** this summer! Specifically, 389 Red Bandanas, 165 Blue, 86 Silver, 43 Gold, and an incredible 8 Double Gold Bandana recipients. To encourage our ThunderDays campers to pursue their own skill progression, we launched the new Card System, designed to mirror the Bandana Program and help bridge the journey between Day Camp and Resident Camp, strengthening community and sparking future growth.

Our 2025 summer staff did a fantastic job creating the magic of camp and leaving a lasting legacy. Over 150 staff joined us on the sunny shores, including 32 through our international staff program from

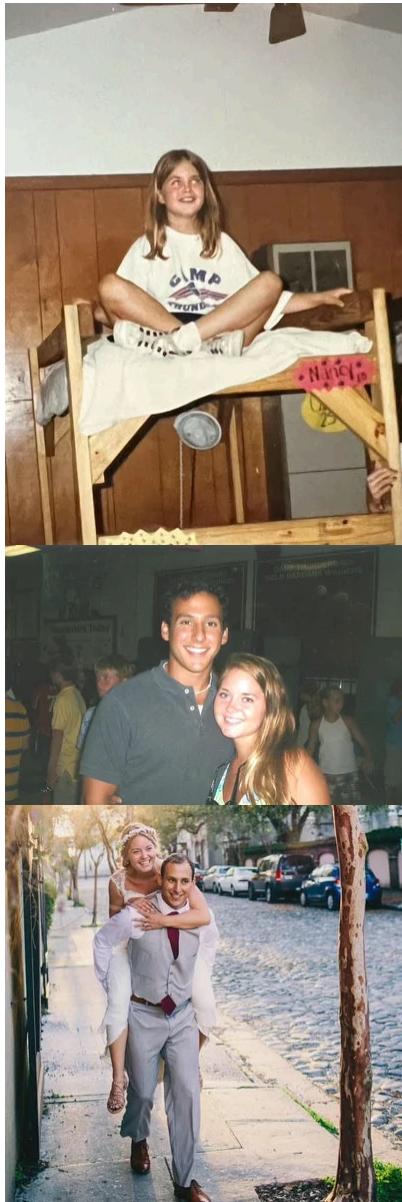
Australia, the UK, Spain, Denmark, Mexico, and more. Anyone who has been through a Thunderbird leadership program knows how invaluable that experience is and continues to be. An amazing 75% of the 2025 Resident Camp staff were once campers or CITs, and 55% of our Day Camp staff came through the LIT program. Below are the names of our inspiring staff award winners, who went above and beyond in showing what it means to be a Thunderbird legend!

## Summer 2025 Award Winners

- Bill Climer Leadership Award: Lexie Kerutis
- Resident Camp Counselors of the Year: Graysen Gibson & Reid Salmon
- Day Camp Counselor of the Year: Ethan Castillo-Fenske
- Resident Camp Rookies: Rose Fuller & Adam Delamere (Sr.), Alanna Diamond & Cam Larranaga (Jr.)
- Day Camp Rookie: Zeplin Moore
- Additional Award Recipients: Marni Herendeen, Fuller Smith, Ben Lindsey, Sofia Diaz, Travis Woods

## Alumni Spotlight





## Pete Lempesis & Nancy Sisk Lempesis

**Nancy** - Camper ('94-'00, Session 2 4Lyfe), Staff ('04-'07- GA, GA Chief, Asst Land Director)

**Pete** - Camper ('95-'00, Session 2 4Lyfe), CIT (Block A '01), Staff ('04-'07, Special Ski, Outpost, Sailing Chief)

### Nancy & Pete's Story

We were campers the same session every summer growing up but never knew each other as kids, being from different states! We met as counselors during our first summer at Staff Week and bonded over having gone to camp at the same time (and that I was starting college in Pete's hometown). We ended up being cabin counselors for the youngest group of campers—Cabin 1 (girls) and Cabin 7 (boys)—we got to know each other when we decided to make our campers do a talent together for the talent show!

## **Life Now**

We live in Charleston, SC and run a business together. When people ask how we can work together and still maintain a happy marriage, we always tell them that we met by working together, so we've never known anything different and wouldn't want anything different!

## **Gracie's First Summer at Thunderbird**

There are no adequate words to describe how wonderful it is that our daughter Gracie experienced the same love and excitement for camp that Pete and I shared many summers ago. We tried not to fill her head with all the hopes we had for her; we wanted her to experience it herself. So, on closing day, when we picked her up and she shrieked, "Thunderbird is the absolute best place on earth!" we knew she felt that same magic!

## **Staff Spotlight**



### **Alexis Garrick**

Alexis, a South Carolina native and first-generation graduate from Winthrop University, joined the Thunderbird team in 2023 as Director of Community and Membership Initiatives. She manages community engagement, membership programs, and events, creating meaningful

year-round experiences for families. Alexis' lifelong desire to help others and serve her community led her to the Y, where she creates inclusive, welcoming experiences that reflect the diversity of our Thunderbird family, ensuring every participant feels heard, seen, and valued. She brings fresh ideas for diversifying camp, working to ensure that programs, traditions, and experiences are welcoming and reflective of all communities.

Alexis' Camp Story: "*I did not grow up as a camp kid; I was heavily involved in programs through my local recreation commission. Being a part of those programs and having amazing afterschool counselors shaped my desire to impact my community. Fast forward, I found the YMCA of Greater Charlotte, which then led me to Camp Thunderbird – allowing me to do that beyond what I ever imagined. My favorite things about Thunderbird are the vast communities we get to serve, the people within them, and most of all, the Camp Thunderbird staff team who make it all happen. I am honored to serve in a space with endless possibilities and to contribute to a culture that impacts lives both near and far. My mantra has always been 'I want to be the shoulder I needed growing up,' and I will forever be grateful for my leadership, peers and Camp Thunderbird for allowing that dream to come to life.*"

## ThunderNews

### ThunderBabies

- Matt and Kate Haynie Blanton – boy – Jack
- Wyatt and Kayla Thorpe – boy- Palmer
- Graehme Hejl – boy – Asher
- Graham and Sarah Laws – boy – Remey
- Brandon and Emily Chessier – boy – Cooper
- Ryan and Christi Collins – boy – James David
- Sam and Sarah Murphy Obando – boy – Santiago
- E.J. and Amber Cassidy Bachman – boy – Eli
- Peyton and Beth Ann Miralia – girl – Mia
- Ryan and Hannah Fullham – girl – Reid
- Greg and Kaitlin Gaskey – boy – Austin
- Thomas and Kayla Clanton – boy – Beau
- Joe and Link Garland Doliner – boy – Hank
- Drew and Ali Ambigoni Glenn – boy – Jagger
- Mitchel and Emma Merritt Hurley – boy – Merritt
- Wesley and Emily Carpenter Mabry – boy – Levi Rhett

- Matt and Brianne McMullan – boy – Franklin Wylie
- Anthony and Bethany Vawter Sweat – girl – Addilyn Gaile
- Stefan and Taylor Goodnight Flores – boy – Milo
- Zach and Chase Cutler Kline – girl
- Brad and Julia Kahn Beringer – boy – Hayden
- Jeff and Rachel Bloom – girl – Lennon
- Keefe and Ashley Cox Purcell – boy – Keefe Thomas, Jr.
- Rusty and Chea Vause Richardson – boy – Beau
- Matthew and Lauren Warwick Grigg – boy – Carson Cole
- Will and Kay Townsend – boy – Jackson
- Kevin and Mary Deane – boy – Peter
- Jim and Weldon Hussey – girl – Millie
- Stephen and Emma Deane – girl – Natalie

## **Weddings**

- Francisco and Olivia (Comer) Pelaez – July 19, 2025
- Mark and Kimberly (Coleman) Snoddy – September 6, 2025
- Clifton and Mary (Williams) McCrory – October 18, 2025





We want to celebrate, acknowledge, and share all of your ThunderNews! To submit marriages, births, and obituaries, click [here](#). For births, be sure to include a mailing address so we can send you a little surprise. Thank you for being part of our Thunder Community!  
--Lexie Ratliff, YMCA Director of Alumni Relations

## Calendar Updates



### Alumni Event

Thursday, October 23

6-8 p.m.

Join us at Sycamore Brewing  
TOMORROW

[Click here!](#)



## Holiday Tree Lighting

Sunday, December 7

4 p.m.

Come enjoy hot cocoa, holiday music, storytime, and an ugly sweater costume!



## 90th Anniversary Weekend

August 28-30, 2026

**Save the Date!**



YMCA of Greater Charlotte, 400 E. Morehead Street, Charlotte, NC 28202

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