

# LARCHMONT *Living*

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Larchmont



*Taking it to the*  
**Next Level!**

Photo by Jane Goodrich





# Larchmont Residents Take Summer Camps to the **Next Level!**

By Ellen Warren

*Danielle and Carmen taking advantage of Wacky Wednesday*

**E**d Metzendorf, founder and director of Next Level Day Camp for Girls and Next Level Day Camp for Boys, is admittedly a camp geek who spent many memorable summers as a camper and counselor at day and sleepaway camps. In 2000, Metzendorf caught the start-up wave and parlayed his camp experience into Bunk1.com, a summer camp technology company that he developed with other former campers to help camp directors with registration, administration, communication and back-office issues. While visiting more than 200 camps across North America on behalf of Bunk1.com and lecturing at camp conferences about technology and marketing, Metzendorf took note of trends in the camp industry. He realized that summer camps needed to evolve to meet the needs of today's busy families, and that he was passionate about creating exceptional summer camp experiences. He also believed that there was an untapped market for single-gender day camps in Westchester.

In 2015, with the help of Larchmont resident Ann Lefever, Metzendorf pursued a dream to create an empowering camp for girls—a day camp that would allow children of all abilities to explore their interests, without fear of failure. Launching Next Level Day Camp for Girls at The Ursuline School, enrollment exceeded his expectations when

more than 260 girls signed up. Parents liked Next Level's flexible session options, and campers enjoyed customizing their own schedules from an array of activities that included team and individual sports, Arts, STEM projects, unique electives, and traditional, camp-wide events like Color War and Apache Relay—all focused on achieving goals, making friends and having fun.

### Hiring Local

Metzendorf knew he had developed a recipe for a winning day camp, but he also knew that the foundation of an extraordinary camp program is hiring great staff. Research by the nonprofit American Camp Association in 2004 found that one of the positive outcomes of a summer camp experience is the opportunity for children to develop beneficial relationships with “nurturing counselors and adult leadership at camp.” He knew from his personal experience that camp counselors can be mentors and role models who leave a lifelong impression on children and teens.

“Our camp staff are the ‘secret sauce’ that make Next Level Day Camp so special,” says Metzendorf. To build his team, he started with his local network. “As an area resident, I knew from my pre-existing relationships that if I hired local people, I could find the right mix of educators and local parents with

passions in several areas—adults who would create a strong camp community. I knew that to make Next Level a truly superior camp, I needed to find energetic and talented men and women to help inspire, teach, lead, nurture and grow our campers,” he says.

One of the first parents he contacted was a Larchmont mother, Amy Rosen, who Metzendorf knew for years, and who already operated a home-based cooking school for kids. “Amy was a former camper and counselor and a perfect fit for Next Level,” he says. “Her energy was infectious. All the girls wanted to try cooking with Amy.”

Another good fit was Lisa Boren, who teaches CrossFit programs to many local families. “Lisa is a mother of three, so she understood our goals for empowering kids. She came in the first week and found that some of the campers were not enthusiastic about exercise, but once word spread about her fun CrossFit workouts, she was soon running several full classes a day. The girls came to love the workout, and even the staff joined, which also modeled healthy habits,” says Metzendorf.

To offer high quality STEM programming, Metzendorf enlisted experts Henry Smith and Carol Ann Deljudice, who he knew as the STEM teachers at his daughter's school in Larchmont. Working with the STEM

Alliance of Larchmont-Mamaroneck, Next Level created a very popular STEM program at camp that included computer programming, Lego® Robotics, tinkering in a self-made makerspace and Keva® Planks, which inspire thinking in design and engineering.

Metzendorf credits much of Next Level's first successful summer to Camp Directors Carmen Ortiz and Danielle Basher. He says, "Carmen and Danielle inspired our campers to explore new challenges, and helped to create the traditions and culture that make Next Level one of a kind in local day camps."

**Next Level's Next Move**

After last summer's success, Metzendorf and his team are replicating the formula in 2016 with Next Level Day Camp for Boys, which, like its sister camp, will feature sports, STEM, and exciting electives in a skill-based program that focuses on building character and confidence, with flexible, family-friendly session scheduling and an equally extraordinary staff. Next Level Day Camp for Boys will be held this summer at Archbishop Stepinac High School,

offering full or half-day sessions for one or more consecutive or non-consecutive weeks from June 27 through August 5, 2016. Metzendorf is already cooking up the boys camp's own "secret sauce," hiring many outstanding Larchmont residents, such as Physical Education and Wrestling Coach Scott Gilberti; Ben Foster, Director of the Larchmont-Mamroneck Soccer Club; and yoga instructor Meghan Graham.

With less than 90 days until the first day of camp, Metzendorf enjoys seeing snow melting and hearing birdsong in the air. For him, this means camp is on the horizon, and he's working hard now to blend a secret sauce that will make the second summer of Next Level Day Camp for Girls and the inaugural summer of Next Level Day Camp for Boys an integral part of life in Larchmont. "We all care about our children here. Our staff is dedicated to providing exceptional summer camp experiences. They are the inspiration, the role models and the transmitters of our camp spirit. Next Level counselors are the secret sauce of camp, and we know they will make the magic happen again this summer."

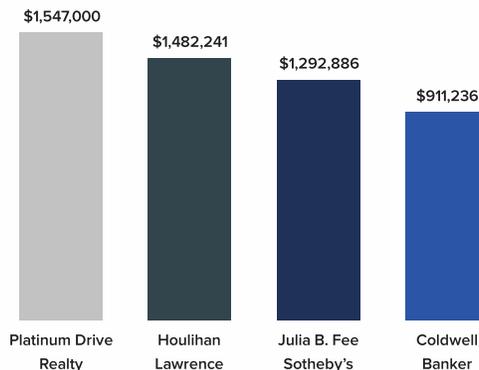


*Camilla with Next Level staff member*

**Learn more about Next Level Day Camp for Boys and Next Level Day Camp for Girls at <http://nextleveldaycamps.com>.**

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