

Town of Richmond
Request for Special Appropriation

Request for Fiscal Year: 2027

Organization's Name: **Our Community Cares Camp Inc. (OCCC)**

Address: **PO Box 503**

City, State, Zip: **Richmond, Vermont 05477**

Website address: www.ourcommunitycarescamp.org

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Program Name: Our Community Cares Camp Inc.

2. Contact Person/Title: **Susanne Parent - Executive Director**

Telephone Number: 802-318-3449

E-mail address: occcvt@gmail.com

3. Total number of individuals served in the last complete fiscal year by this program:
62 Campers, 7 Counselors in Training, 20 Counselors, 11 Staff and 1 Music Volunteer

4. Total number of the above individuals who are Town residents: **19 Campers 16 Staff**
Please, attach any documentation that supports this number. ***See Charts***

Percent of people served who are Town residents: **30.65% Campers, 50.0% Staff.**

5. Amount of Request: **\$6,000**

6. Total Program Budget: **\$136,000**

Percent of total program budget you are requesting from the Town of Richmond: **4.41%**

7. Please state or attach the mission of your agency: ***See Attached Full Mission Statement***
To provide summer food for Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District children and to provide a summer enrichment camp for children who would not otherwise be able to attend a summer camp.

8. Funding will be used to:

☒ Maintain an existing program
Program ☐ Start a new program

☐ Expand an Existing

9. Has your organization received funds from the Town in the past for this or a similar program? **Yes**

If yes, please answer the following:

a. Does the amount of your request represent an increase over your previous appropriation? **No**

If yes, explain the reason(s) for the increase.

b. Were any conditions or restrictions placed on the funds by the Selectboard? **No**

If yes, describe how those conditions or restrictions have been met.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1.Statement of Need: Identify the issue or need that the program will address (use statistical data to justify the need for the program). To what extent does this need or problem exist in the Town of Richmond?

Approximately 1 in 4 children enrolled in Richmond Elementary School receive free or reduced meals during the school year. An additional number of children come from families where the cost of living (rent/mortgage and childcare) exceeds 45% of their income, and funds for enrichment activities like music classes and summer camp are not available. OCCC also has a job training program for teens 14 and older, teaching them personal responsibility, providing basic job skills, and reinforcing their self-esteem while cultivating leadership skills. OCCC activities for campers and counselors-in-training help children build resiliency within a strong, supportive community.

2. Program Summary:

a. Identify the target/recipients of program services. Specify the number of Town residents your program will serve during the fiscal year and explain the basis upon which this number is calculated. Indicate any eligibility requirements your program has with respect to age, gender, income, or residence.

OCCC will continue to serve children in grades K-12 with summer meals in July. OCCC will also offer a summer enrichment camp for children from grades K-8. We have an application and referral process for families. We receive recommendations and priority placement from the principal, special educators, guidance counselors, doctors, teachers, and MMUUSD special coordinators. The camp often prioritizes returning families. For teens in grades nine and above, OCCC offers job training through its internship program. OCCC provides high-quality summer employment for local high school and college students, as well as a few local adults. We will accept as many children as fiscally feasible.

b. Identify what is to be accomplished or what change will occur from participating in the program. How will people be better off as a result of participating in the program? Describe the steps you take to make the project known to the public and make the program accessible and inclusive?

OCCC has proven to be a staple of the community over the last 16 years providing enrichment and food services to children, internship opportunities for youth, and job training and development for young adults. This program has clear results for participants and their families: it provides the opportunity for children from less affluent families to experience summer camp, counselors provide children with positive role models and friendships that last longer than camp, and families have four weeks during the summer where their children can attend safe, fun, and educational camp for free, reducing the stress that summer often causes for families trying to work and afford to send their children to a quality program.

Through Our Community Cares Camp, we work closely with school principals, guidance counselors, and school clinicians to identify students and families who will benefit most from this service. Our registrations form includes an optional pronoun question. This enables us to respect the identity of a camper, counselor, CIT, or staff. We also promote the camp through social media, our website, Front Porch Forum, and local newspapers. Additionally, we have former staff and participants table at community events throughout the year to reach potential donors, families, and campers. OCCC has worked hard over the past 16 years to have a public appearance whenever possible. We have a presence at the Farmers Market and various events and fundraisers throughout the town of Richmond.

3. Program Funding

a. Identify how Town funds, specifically, will be used (i.e. funds will provide “X” amount of units of service.)

The requested funds would be used to provide funding toward the camper program costs. Including enriching activities for music, art, cooking, physical activities, and food. \$6.000 would cover the cost for about six campers to attend the camp.

b. List the other agencies to whom you are submitting a request for funds for this program and the amount requested. How would this program be modified should revenues be lost?

We are submitting requests to the other 4 towns served by OCCC to assist with the programming costs. Additionally, OCCC will continue to submit grant applications to several philanthropic organizations-mostly private foundations, soliciting donations from individuals and businesses, and sponsor fundraising events each year. We continue relationships with previous donors while making connections with new ones.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

1. Describe your agency's capability to provide the program including its history, previous experience providing this service, management structure, and staff expertise.

OCCC has been a staple of the Richmond community for the past sixteen years and has grown incrementally each year in terms of the number of students it serves, feeds, and nourishes for four weeks during the summer. Throughout this time, stability and staff structure has been a critical growth area for the organization. Under the direction of the Executive Director, there are kitchen leads and lead counselors that run the programs and have been trained to be self-sufficient and this year we were able to run with minimal supervision from the Executive Director. Within the programs, there is also a level of redundancy that has allowed the organization to shift with any staffing changes that inevitably happen while employing teenagers during the summer months.

2. How will you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you will assess program outcomes. Your description should include: what (what kind of data), how (method/tool for collecting the data), from whom (source of data), and when (timing of data collection).

We conduct annual anonymous surveys of participants, families, and staff that are given and data collected after camp. We also connect with the MMUUSD superintendent, school principals, and staff throughout the year and assess how the program is working. Participants are surveyed each week on different data points - friendships, games/activities, food, art, and music. We use this information in program planning, staff development, and communication. Please see the attached camp report.

3. Summarize or attach program and or service assessment conducted in the past two years. **See Attached – Charts and Surveys**

4. Does your organization have a strategic plan and a strategic planning process in place? **We do not have a formal strategic plan. We are currently working with consultant, June Heston who is assisting us in laying the foundation working towards developing a strategic plan.**

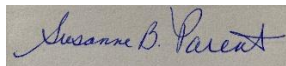
The strategic plan should include a mission statement, goals, steps to achieve the goals and measures that assess the accomplishments of the goals.

What is the authorized size of your board of directors? **5 - 9**

How many meetings were held by the board last year? **8-10**

I, undersigned, confirm the information contained herein is accurate and can be verified as such. I understand and agree that if the requested funds are approved, the disbursement of funds are subject to all conditions established by the Richmond Selectboard. I also understand that I must adhere to all rules outlined in the **Town of Richmond Discretionary Funding Policy, which appears as a cover sheet to this application.**

Signatures of Applicants

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susanne B. Parent". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light-colored rectangular background.

Susanne Parent, Executive Director, Our Community Cares Camp, Inc.

Date 10/8/2025

[illegible]



Our Community Cares Camp

Mission, Vision, & Core Values

Mission:

Creating a caring, nourishing community for Chittenden East children where every child can find success.

Vision:

Developing a rich culture of community that includes health, safety, happiness, gratitude and citizenship that the campers carry with them throughout their lives.

Core Values:

Nutrition: Combating food insecurity by serving campers two meals a day prepared with fresh, high-quality food and helping them make healthy food choices.

Community: Fostering an inter-generational community of inclusiveness and diversity, and service. Encouraging campers to continue service in their greater community.

Opportunity: Offering access to a variety of activities such as art, music, sports, creative play, gardening, and cooking.

Discovery: Supporting each child to discover new talents, for each child to glimpse more of their potential.

Encouragement: Create positive, supportive relationships with caring teens and adults, reinforcing good choices in food and behavior.

Empowerment: Inspiring children to envision their future and work for the common Good.

Racial Equity: Learning to understand, see, and disrupt racism in our community.

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Building a caring community - where every child can find success.



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802-434-6006



Jana Brown ~ Connie van Eeghen ~ Jessica Johnson ~ Gretchen Muller ~ Marikje Shelmandine

Dear Supporter,

It's truly incredible to reflect on how many years ago, a few compassionate individuals came together to engage local children during the summer. Today, that small initiative has blossomed into the fully incorporated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization we know as Our Community Cares Camp, Inc., which proudly celebrates its 16th year of summer camp! Our growth has been remarkable, yet our mission remains steadfast: to create a caring, nourishing community where every child in the Mount Mansfield School District can find success. We're driven by a vision that fosters health, safety, happiness, gratitude, and citizenship, values that our campers embrace and carry with them throughout their lives. We anticipate many more years of collaborating to create a positive impact and enhance our community together.

It was genuinely refreshing to have a winter and summer without the marks of flooding or other events. In October, Our Community Cares Camp participated alongside many community members participating in Halloween activities at the Richmond Town Center. During our November Annual Meeting, Jessica Johnson, after a unanimous vote, moved up from Vice President to President of OCCC. With that role, Jessica has contributed many hours of fundraising, energy, and fresh ideas. Additionally, we welcomed new members to our board while our experienced members remain.

As winter passed and spring approached, OCCC received generous support during spring break by the Stone Corral, which donated the proceeds of their specials, along with a matching gift from Cold Hollow Cider, and the sales of Stone Corral canned beverages sold at Beaudry's Store in Huntington. As a result of President Jessica Johnson's event planning efforts, we received over \$500 in just one week. This new annual event is one we anticipate growing each year!

The Camp continued its presence in the community by participating at the Farmers Market each Friday, up to the beginning of Camp. Many children had a place to play with Legos, take a break, have a snack, color, play games, and be with friends while families chatted nearby. We met new people and introduced them to the many facets of what our Camp has to offer the community.

The Camp was restructured this summer, as the Executive Director, Susanne, broke her ankle badly in July and was unable to be on the premises. Grace Butler confidently took on the role and became the Summer Director of Our Community Cares Camp. Grace has many years of OCCC experience. She started as a CIT, then became a counselor, Assistant Director, Co-Director, and is now the Summer Director. Grace is a teacher at Essex High School. She is a graduate of MMU herself. She clearly understands how individuals feel in different roles.

With ease, Grace ensured that our traditional camp operations continued and children were engaged, active, and scheduled in a diverse range of activities, including STEM, Music, Art, Cooking, and the most popular swimming field trips to either Mills Riverside Park or the

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Audubon Center. CLiF made its annual visit, and each camper received two new, free books. Our two oldest groups, Otters and LAC, participated in our popular "Chopped" competition. Campers planned and worked together in teams to create multi-course meals for a panel of judges. A huge hit was a "Twister Tournament" organized by the LAC counselors. The Campers utilized the Volunteers Green and the Green at Browns Court. Our younger groups (Chipmonks and Bunnys) visited the Richmond Free Library for a special storytime. Many kiddos enjoyed the basketball "tournaments" in the gym at CHMS. Our campers and staff did a great job being active outside, avoiding the miread of construction projects around CHMS and RES. Families were invited on the last day of Camp to watch the talent show, featuring over 15 acts of singing, dancing, gymnastics, piano, guitar, and ventriloquism. The Camp concluded with exciting field day activities.

Every year, Our Community Cares Camp adapts to serve our campers and their families better. We continually enhance our programs to ensure that children have fun while developing essential skills and creating lasting memories. Our nurturing environment empowers children to build confidence and face challenges with a positive attitude. The success of the Camp reflects the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and supporters. We create an inclusive space for children of all backgrounds and partner with organizations to fight food insecurity and address the opportunity gap. Access to activities such as music, art, and sports is vital for building connections and enhancing lives. Your support is essential in making a meaningful impact, and we're grateful for the community's commitment as we look forward to more joyful summers.

The MMUUSD Transportation Department plays a crucial role in removing barriers and providing valuable support for our program. Our Camp is committed to reaching a diverse range of families and children each year. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have observed a notable increase in the number of children experiencing trauma, social and emotional challenges, and mental health issues. Additionally, families continue to face significant obstacles related to childcare, child protection, substance misuse, domestic violence, housing instability, and incarceration. Our Camp plays a crucial role in assisting these families by providing support that addresses their needs and alleviates the stressors they encounter.

The Camp will operate at a cost of \$1,276.35 per camper for FY26, maintaining the same rate as last year, until all revenues and expenses are accounted for. This compares to the cost of \$1,101.68 from the summer of 2023. Our expenses have increased due to several factors: the State of Vermont raised its minimum wage, inflation has led to price increases for most goods, and additional charges related to the supply chain, as well as a 30% increase on many food products. Our budget for this year will also remain level-funded. We have received stable funding from Ben & Jerry's and other past donors.

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For Camp this year, we chose to reduce the number of campers for two reasons: to be mindful of donors' giving and to strive for a positive bottom line. We had 62 campers this summer; our goal was 60. There were 71 registered Children. Five children withdrew for various reasons, four were placed on a waitlist, and were not able to fit into Camp. With creative scheduling, we were able to take nine campers off the waitlist and offer them at least two weeks of Camp. Two campers were emergency placements/requests. 85% were returning, and many new campers were siblings. It's interesting to note that approximately 42% of our campers have a support plan in school.

It is encouraging to note that this Camp has positively impacted 16.5% of the graduating class from MMU in 2025. This statistic not only showcases the effectiveness of our small organization but also highlights the potential we have to positively impact many lives. It highlights the valuable outcomes of our efforts and initiatives, motivating us to continue making a meaningful difference.

During our four-week program, we served 2,028 meals to OCCC campers, staff, and 21 Extended School Year students, including Pre-k, MMU (ESY), and staff. It's important to note that the USDA meal counting process has changed. All school-year meals are reimbursed. However, this change does not apply in the summer. Only meals for children who qualify for free/reduced meals can be reimbursed. The overhead associated with participating in the USDA program is cost-prohibitive, and the return on investment is not worthwhile.

The Camp still believes in supporting local, making meals that are minimally processed and prepared with loving hands. This year, we had a retired MMUUSD cook who made fresh, warm muffins and other morning treats each day. She told me, "She was so happy to be a part of something special and help kids." Our culinary experts have crafted a menu that features a delightful array of offerings. It includes fresh smoothies, chicken Caesar salad, pizza, a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, chicken and veggie wraps, quesadillas, and an extensive selection of salads from our salad bar. It has been truly wonderful to see campers making healthy choices and heartwarming to watch them share meals with friends. They are building new connections and enjoying delicious, freshly prepared dishes together.

Our team of counselors, counselors-in-training, and directors is essential to the success of our Camp. This summer, we were fortunate to work with an exceptional group that included many students from MMU, Essex High School, and CHMS. Among them were both new and returning counselors and CITs.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District, Camels Hump Middle School, and the Transportation Department at MMUUSD for their invaluable support. Their assistance was essential in making this Camp a success for the children and teens in our community.

We are excited to announce that OCCC has achieved an impressive milestone with 283 logged volunteer hours! This accomplishment reflects our strong commitment to serving the community and effecting positive change. We extend our gratitude to our local towns,

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churches, lodges, grantors, and, most importantly, our amazing friends and community members. Your generous support underscores our shared belief in the vital role that the Camp plays both today and in the future.

The Community Cares Camp is an essential organization within the communities that comprise the Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District. Our achievements highlight the unwavering support from various community organizations, funders, and dedicated volunteers. The enriching experiences we provide to our campers will certainly have a meaningful and lasting impact.

OCCC encourages you to ignite your passion and commitment to boost community involvement and safeguard the future of this essential resource. Your donations can profoundly change the lives of children and families who rely on our program, while also uplifting our entire community. Together, we can achieve extraordinary outcomes. While we may not have all the answers, we passionately encourage the community to come together and share your insights, suggestions, and expertise. Without robust community support and increased funding, we risk becoming another nonprofit hindered by the aftermath of COVID-19, and we are determined to preserve our invaluable role in this community. Together, we can create a powerful legacy of hope and empowerment for those we serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne Parent
Executive Director

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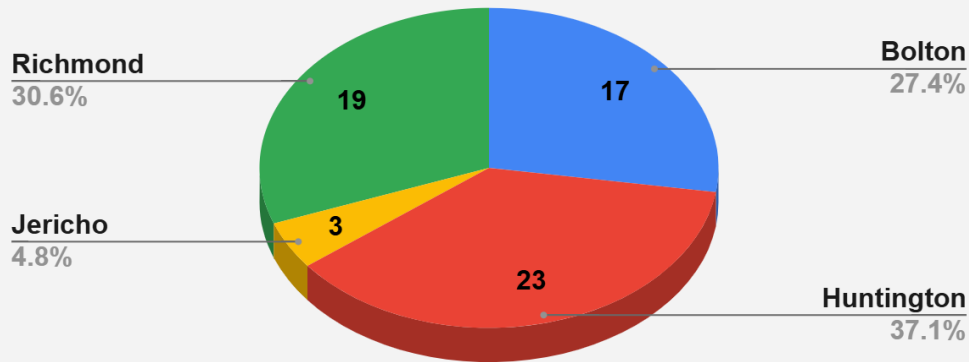
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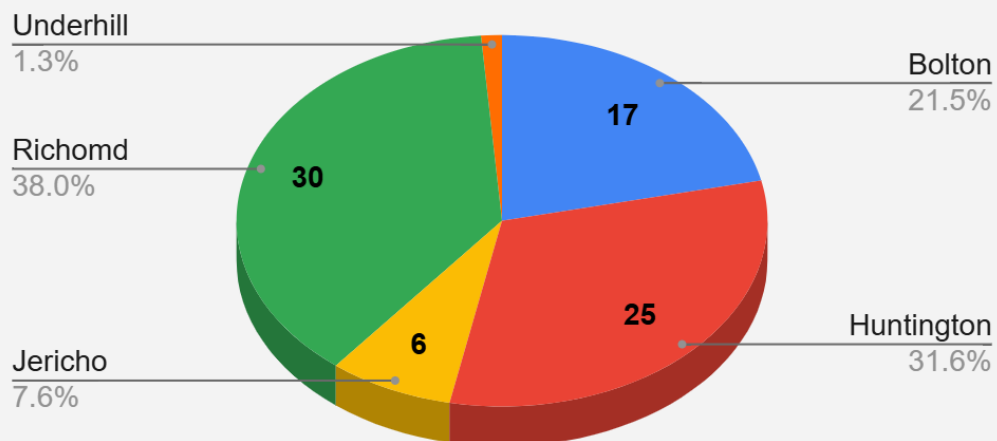
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Campers By Town Summer 2025



2024 Campers By Town



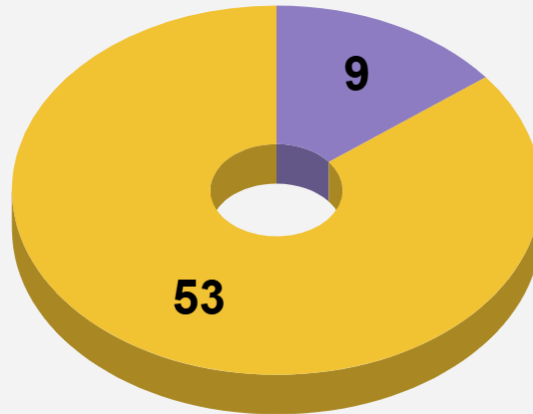
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2025 New and Returning

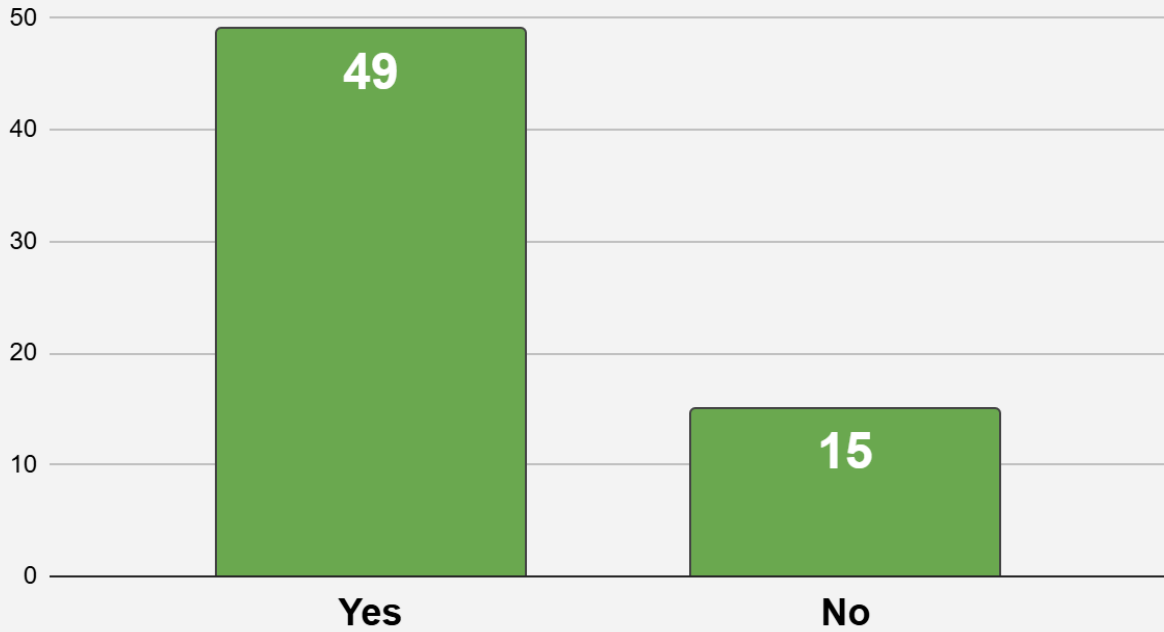


● New ● Returning

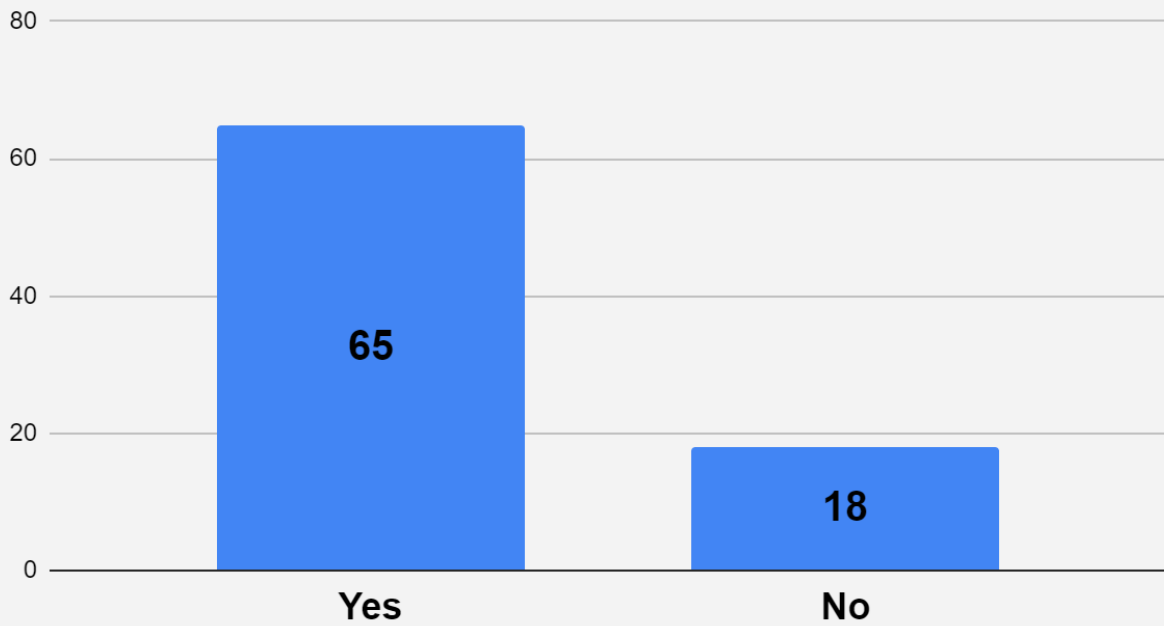
2024 New and Returning



2025 Summer Request for Transportation

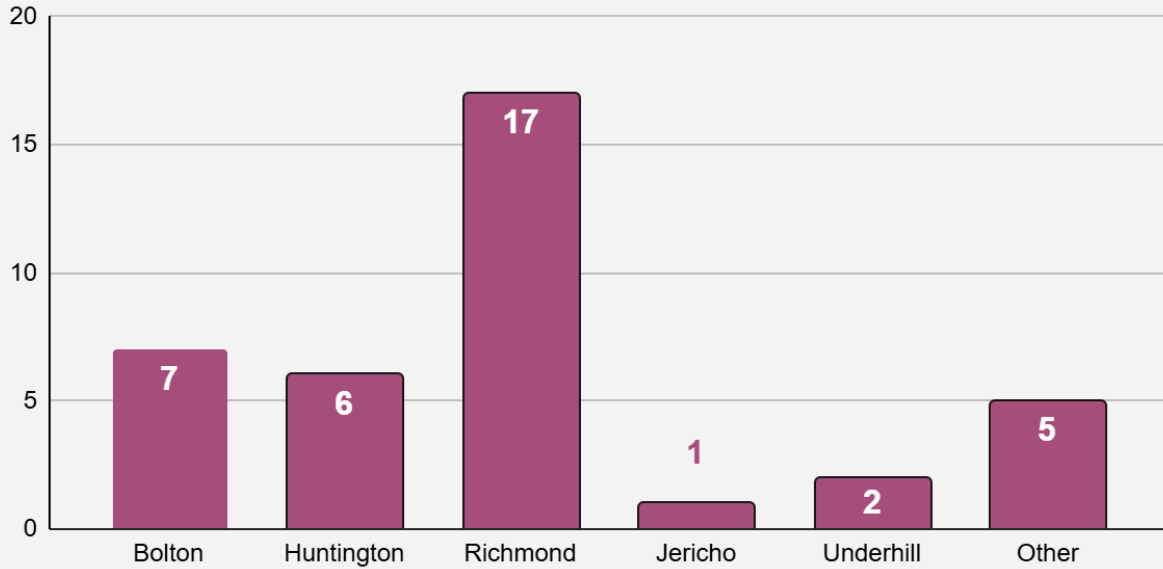


2024 Request For Transportation



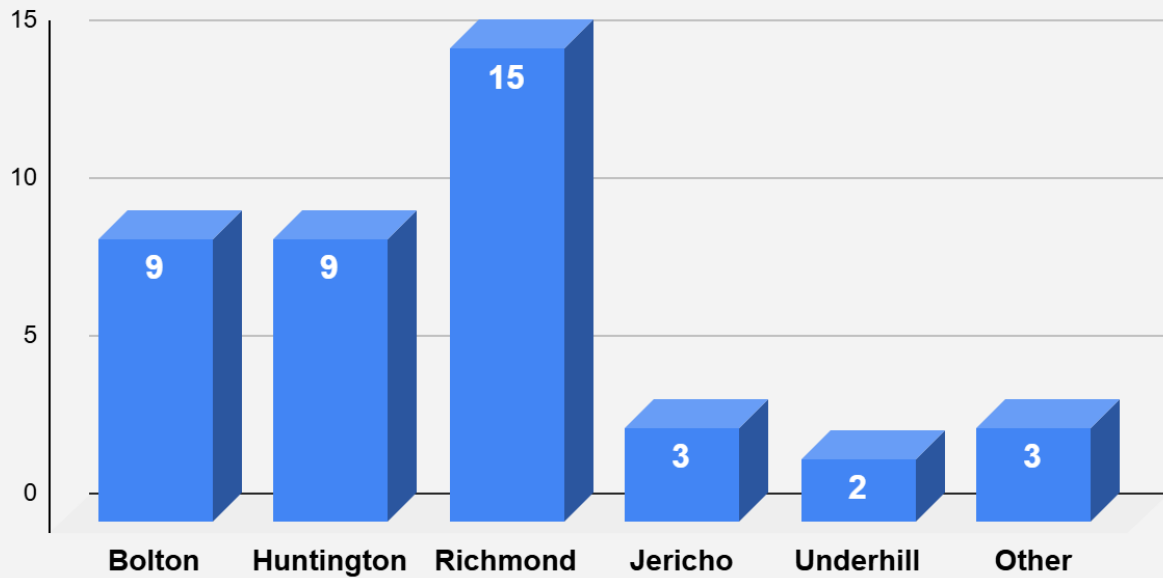
Staff and CIT's By Town

Summer 2025



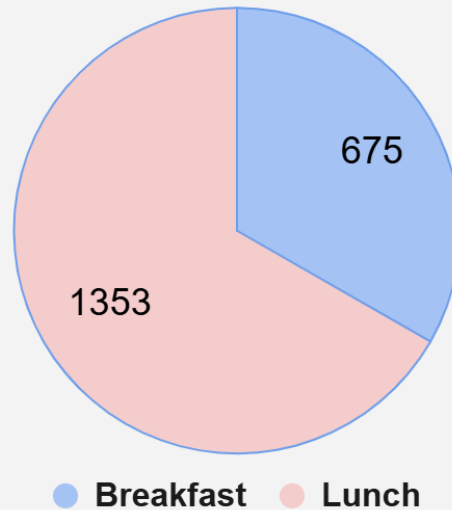
Staff and Interns By Town

2024



**OCCC
Summer Tutoring, Pre-k & Other District Camps on
CHMS Campus**

2,028 Total Meals Served - Summer 2025



2024 OCCC and Summer Tutoring Meals

2176 Total Meals Served

