



Oyase Community School

A Program offered through Vermont Wilderness School

(802) 257-8570

PO Box 2585

Brattleboro, VT 05303

www.VermontWildernessSchool.org

office@VermontWildernessSchool.org

May 2016

Dear Oyase Families & Interested Families,

Oyase Community School has played a critical role in the lives of many young people (and adults) over the years meeting and fostering the enthusiasm youth bring naturally and renewing the spark in youth who have a hard time in traditional schooling. This spark and inner flame comes from being in the natural world with peers and adults engaged with learning to be at home in the woods and being in our bodies and senses. The experience also brings into our consciousness our connection to "all our relations" - our relationships to trees, rocks, earth, animals, insects, birds, water...and how to live resiliently with them all.

In 1999, the Founders chose the name "Oyase" inspired by a teaching on that word from Tony Ten Fingers, a Lakota teacher. Tony Ten Fingers shared that in his family's lineage, Oyase means the "Burning Desire to Learn, to know all our Relations." And that is what we aim to continue to foster in the students and families who get involved with Oyase Community School whether for one year or ten years.

Myself (Amy Hyatt, Director) and Bob Etzweiler (Field Director) look forward to hearing back from you about your intentions for 2015-2016. We are currently envisioning a set of nested programs:

- **Oyase Weekly Program for Youth ages 6*-15:**
 - Tuition \$1250-\$1850 for 26 Day Sessions + an Overnight (Full Thursday + Friday Morning) (*Note: 6 Year olds need to be hardy and up for a 6 hour day in the woods in Winter and being part of a group. Not all 6 year olds are ready for this experience).
 - 4-Week Trial Period available at the cost of \$200
- **Oyase Monthly Program for Returning Oyase Students** concurrent with the Weekly program
 - Tuition \$450 - \$660 for 7 Day Sessions + an Overnight (Full Thursday + Friday Morning)
 - (Note: this was created as an option for older Oyase students attending school who could no longer come on a weekly basis but wanted to stay connected with Oyase).

\$50 Discount of the Weekly/Monthly Tuition if you sign up by June 30, 2016. If you are signing up for the Trial Period, you will get the \$50 discount if you and your child decide to sign up for the full year after attending the Trial Period.

We anticipate having three Weekly groups with a maximum enrollment of 36. Should we have another 8-12 children interested in the program, we will expand into four groups for 2016-2017 plus one group of Monthly Students (maximum 12). See below for more information on these programs.

Opening (First) Day for Oyase Community School is Thursday September 29, 2016. Family Orientation is Thursday September 22 (more information to come in August). We will be having a Community Work Day prior to September 29th to do some clean up and preparing for the new program year.

You can let us know about your intentions by sending in the enclosed reservation form with a deposit or by emailing Amy Hyatt at VWSAmy@gmail.com or calling Amy at 802-275-2904. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Amy through any of the mentioned methods.

In relationship,
Amy Hyatt, Program Director



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Oyase Community School Overview Information

Oyase Community School is a series of nested programs offered by Amy Hyatt and staff through Vermont Wilderness School. Amy Hyatt has been a staff director of the program since 2006 and today directs the program with the support of parents past and present and the program staff. Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to building resilient communities and relationships rooted in nature connection. The program community is committed to creating a web of relationships and culture surrounding our children valuing the intangible skills of thankfulness, awareness, respect, observation, and common sense as well as the tangible skills of building shelters, matchless fire making, plant identification, silent movement and other earth living skills. We invite you to join us on an adventure of discovering and deepening our relationships to self, each other, the natural world, and our relationships to all that is.

When:

The core Weekly Oyase Children's Program runs from 9:00 am to 3:15 pm, Thursdays from fall to late spring, (with periodic Thursdays off for seasonal and holiday breaks). The weekly program meets 27 Thursdays with one session in March extending into an Overnight for a total of 28 Program Days. The first session is Thursday September 29th.

The Monthly Oyase Program meets concurrent with the Weekly Oyase Program on nine Thursdays and includes the March Overnight totaling 9 Program Days. The first session is Thursday October 20th. *The Monthly Program is primarily for Oyase students who have attended at least one year of the Weekly Program.*

Where:

Oyase Community School meets at former Camp Arden - a beautiful and varied 80+ acres of land in Dummerston, VT with some frontage on the West River. The Farwell Family graciously allows us to be on this land at no cost for which we are continuing to be deeply grateful. We have met on this land since September 2006 which has allowed us to get to know the land well as well as invest in building a large lodge, a primitive cooking area, and deep relationships with the land.

A Typical Program Day:

We usually have games and natural mysteries while people are arriving. Around 9:30am, we circle up for a welcome and thanksgiving with everyone – this usually happens in the Village which is a 10-15 minute walk from the Parking Area. Following Morning Circle the children separate into groups based on age and/or interest until the Afternoon Story and Sharing Circle around 2:30pm. The small group activities during the day range widely based on weather, season, and the energy and passions of the group. Examples of activities include: a woods wander to see what we find and practice how not to get lost; introduction to or further practice on a skill such as fire making, cooking, shelter building, cordage, plant identification, tracking, camouflage and stalking; sit spot; sensory awareness games and challenges; bird language; naturalist journaling and research. All of the days, parents and siblings are welcome to spend time on the land as part of the Red Oak Clan, working on your own skills and passions and learning from each other and nature.

“Typical” for the Monthly Day:

In 2012-2013, we began offering a monthly option for older Oyase students who wanted to continue coming but could not come on a weekly basis. One of the hallmarks of Oyase and magic of the program is having a mix of different ages ranging from 6 or 7 up to 15 or 16 years old. Most students who start with us young, can name an older student who they looked up to and many of the older students appreciate having the chance to help out the younger children and to share what they have learned over the years. So, it was important for us to adapt the program so that the older students could continue to have a presence at Oyase both for their continuing learning journey and for the younger students.

Depending on enrollment the monthly operates on two different format. One format is we circle with the weekly students in the morning and afternoon and then during the day our focus is particularly on survival skills and seasonal themes. The other format, based on enrollment, is that the monthly youth are integrated into the weekly clans or participate in community choice board activities.

Success for a monthly student has a great deal to do with their pre-existing relationships with weekly students, staff and the program. If a student doesn’t have pre-existing relationships, this particular monthly program generally does not work for the child. We recommend considering participation in a program specifically designed to meet monthly.

Trial Period for Oyase Weekly Program:

For those unsure about committing to the program fully, you can sign your child up for the four week Trial Period. If the program doesn’t feel like a good fit for your child after 4 weeks, there will be an opportunity to withdraw at that time with no further commitment. The cost of the trial period is \$200 regardless of income or number of children in the program. If you and your child decide it is a good fit, then you complete a contract for the year with \$200 as a first payment on the year’s tuition.

“Trial” Periods for the Monthly Program can be discussed. Please contact Amy if you would like to explore that possibility.

Cost:

The cost of the programs is on a sliding scale based on gross family income. *This is a guideline – please consider extenuating circumstances your family may have such as having a large family or long commute.* Also take into consideration that the actual cost of the weekly program is around \$1400/student and \$500/student for the Monthly/Overnight programs. Also remember that we are committed as a community to covering our expenses (and we are very frugal with our budget).

Gross Family Income Greater than \$60,000	Gross family income Between \$40,000 - \$60,000	Gross family income Less than \$40,000
\$1850 – Weekly \$660 – Monthly (Attended Weekly for a Year)	\$1550 – Weekly \$555 – Monthly (Attended Weekly for a Year)	\$1250 – Weekly \$450 – Monthly (Attended Weekly for a Year)

Multi-child Tuition Discount per child:

1 st Child	2 nd Child	3 rd Child	4 th Child
Full tuition	\$100 discount - Wkly \$50 discount – Mthly	\$150 discount - Wkly \$75 discount- Mthly	\$200 discount - Wkly \$100 discount -Mthly

Payment Plans:

We do have a variety of payment plans to meet the variety of income patterns present in our community. You can pay in full, on a quarterly basis, monthly basis or weekly. However, you do have to make an

overall commitment at the beginning of the year once trial periods are over (or before if you can). Please don't hesitate to contact the office about different payment options.

Financial Aid:

If you cannot afford the bottom of the scale, you can apply for financial aid (this application process does ask for information regarding your financial situation). We are limited in our financial aid capacity and can only grant up to a 50% tuition financial aid. If the financial aid available to your family is insufficient for your child to attend, you can apply to the Vermont Wilderness School Great Blue Heron Fund. We are also willing to work with you to figure something out. We as a community are committed to allowing participation of everyone regardless of income.

Community Service:

One of the unique aspects of Oyase Community School is that it is based in the community and depends on community contributions of time, skills, talent, wisdom, and love to function. As such we require a minimum level of participation from each family with children in Oyase. Each family is asked to contribute 8 hours of service throughout the year. There are many ways families can contribute including: attending and contributing to Community Councils, serving on the Advisory Committee, publishing a newsletter, heading up one of our community celebrations, assisting with celebrations, making phone calls, helping with projects on the land, organizing the community service activities of the families, or organizing and hosting "neighborhood gatherings." If you absolutely do not have any time to serve, there is a "buy-out" option of \$120.

If you are a monthly family, the community service commitment is 3 hours or \$45.

Please keep in mind, we believe this community service helps build and deepen our relationships together as a community for our children, each other and the future generations—one of the goals of Community Wilderness Initiative.

Getting Registered & Oriented:

Print up and fill out the enrollment form and send your deposit in. In the beginning of August, you will be receiving forms to fill out for each child registering for the program. This year's parent handbook and calendar will be emailed to you in electronic form. We appreciate you getting the forms filled out and sent into the office by September 14th. This gives our staff a chance to plan appropriately for the beginning of the year. Then we will be launching the beginning of the program year with a community celebration, council and mandatory orientation on September 22nd. The first program day will be September 29, 2016.

Please contact Amy at Vermont Wilderness School for registration forms, information and questions, (802) 257-8570.

Look forward to adventuring with you!

Amy Hyatt, Program Director



For more information or to contact **Amy Hyatt:**
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