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Kent's camps are featured in new exhibit

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KENT >> In a nostalgic, varied exhibit, the [Kent Historical Society](#) explores the town's camping past. Kent's natural beauty made it a natural for camping, especially given its proximity to New York City and Hartford. During camping's heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, a surprising number of camps were tucked into the hills and hollows of Kent.

Illustrated with numerous artifacts, the exhibit covers the entire range of Kent's camps. Some were for relief workers, such as Near East Camp in Kent Hollow. There were lesser known ones, including a few about which little is known. Three camps are still active. This look into Kent's camping legacy provides a vivid picture of the changing meaning of childhood and recreation, and will resonate with everyone who sojourned in Kent.

Many of Kent's camps may be gone, but they often have alumni networks that help alumni stay connected. Through various social media outlets, the Kent Historical Society has been in touch with the alumni associations for Camp Francis, Camp Kent, Kenico, and Leonard/Leonore. This has proved crucial for the exhibit, because many past campers provided the artifacts and memorabilia that are on display.

For some of these campers, summer camp proved to be among the warmest and most significant of their lives. In fact, time spent camping in Kent's woods has led many people to seek out Kent as adults. A number of current residents came to Kent because they remembered the enchanted place where they spent their summer. At the same time, many longtime Kent residents had little direct experience of the camps in their midst, and one goal of the exhibit is to help them appreciate what actually went on there.

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Exhibition Sponsors include Kent School, The Marvelwood School, South Kent School, Victor Fink in memory of Camp Leonard-Leonore, Nicholas/Tobin Insurance, Union Savings Bank, Bain Real Estate, Ira Goldspiel and William Pitt/Sotheby's International Realty, and Barry Labendz and David Birnbaum of Kent Falls Brewing Company.

The exhibit will be just one part of the summer's activities. The exhibit has prompted many Kent camp alumni associations to hold reunions over the summer, and the Kent Historical Society will dovetail its programming with their gatherings. Two camps, Camp Kent and Camp Kenico, are holding reunions that coincide with the exhibit's opening weekend June 13. There are also hikes planned at several locations this summer.

The Kent Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret and present the rich history of Kent as well as to provide educational and research material to enrich the public understanding of Kent's artistic and cultural heritage. For more information, see www.kenthistoricalsociety.org or call 860-927-4587.