SOAR

SUMMER CAMP
BOARDING SCHOOL
GAP YEAR

High Adventure Programs for Youth and Young Adults with ADHD & LDs

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**History & Mission**

**Mission**
To provide experiential education, interpersonal life skills development and outdoor adventure-based programming to youth, young adults and families dealing with Attention Deficit Disorders and/or other Learning Disabilities through outdoor adventure programs and community based services.

**History**
SOAR was founded in 1977 by Jonathan Jones, an adult with a learning disability, who believed that focusing on an individual’s strengths, rather than their deficits, was critical in ensuring success. Throughout the past 40 years, our programs have been adapted around the specific needs of the ADHD and LD community we serve. Our understanding of this population is in everything we do—in the way we approach challenges and adventures, in the way we structure each day, in the way we handle conflicts, and in the way we celebrate each participant’s abilities.
WE UNDERSTAND THE ADHD AND LD COMMUNITY, BECAUSE WE ARE PART OF THE ADHD AND LD COMMUNITY.

SOAR offers Summer Camps, a Boarding School, and a GAP Year.

Our programs give youth and young adults:

**FRIENDSHIP & SOCIAL SKILLS**
“She has grown emotionally so much from each experience and in different ways. It has been evident to both my husband and I that SOAR has immensely helped her in peer relationships and other social aspects. This year at school was her best year ever, she feels good about herself and has several good friends!”

**SELF-CONFIDENCE**
“SOAR has changed my son's life. He went from an angry, defiant, depressed and bored with life kid to a confident leader who is excited about the great outdoors and who now comes home and helps his whole family including his younger brother with the skills he learned at SOAR.”

**UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURES**
“My son loved every minute and felt he was able to test himself in a meaningful way through all of the exciting activities.”

**LIFE SKILLS**
“My daughter returned exhibiting more self-assurance and responsibility, as well as a better sense of organization.”

**INDEPENDENCE**
I could not believe the level of positive behaviors he'd developed over just 18 days. Through SOAR, we've seen him develop confidence and independence, as well as self-awareness about his ADHD and skills to help him turn the way he perceives the world into

**COMMUNITY & SENSE OF BELONGING**
“One of the most meaningful things for my son was interacting with peers who accept him. Being around kids who have many of the same challenges he does was very powerful for him!”

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SUMMER CAMP AT SOAR

ACADEMY AT SOAR

GAP YEAR AT SOAR
For 40 years, Summer Camp at SOAR has helped youth with ADHD & learning differences develop self-confidence, social skills, and life skills through unforgettable adventures. Campers participate in exciting activities such as rock climbing, horseback riding, SCUBA diving, llama treks, whitewater rafting, surfing, and so much more!

Summer Camp at SOAR offers a supportive environment where campers are encouraged to be themselves and are celebrated for their strengths. Campers set personal goals and are supported by our staff & their peers to succeed. Camp offers a fun atmosphere where participants feel like they belong and their challenges are understood. With a small group setting we are able to guide campers through social interactions as they get to know one another and begin to form friendships.
The Academy at SOAR is an accredited private boarding school that provides a unique combination of academics, adventure, and life skills development to prepare students academically, socially, and emotionally for adulthood.

Our Academy is specially designed for students with ADHD and other learning challenges. Our unique teaching approach combines differentiated instruction in a small classroom setting with two week experiential education expeditions. During their travels, school work is tailored to incorporate lessons based on their various locations. In addition to academic learning, our students gain essential social and life skills to help them become more successful individuals in and out of the classroom. As a result, students enter their future with an empowered sense of self-awareness, a zest for learning, and self-sufficiency unknown before.

What makes us unique?

Students spend two weeks on campus and two weeks on expedition field study. This combination provides an alternative and differentiated instruction that helps to engage students in the learning experience.

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The GAP (Gateway Adventure Program) Year at SOAR meets the needs of young adults who have graduated from high school but are not quite ready to step into a university or work-force setting.

We strive to empower our participants through travel, college classes, and volunteering. Participants discover their talents, increase their self-reliance, and experience life-changing adventures while preparing for their future. The GAP Year encourages participants to pursue new and existing interests and strengths, develop social skills via communal living, increase life skills through expedition planning and exploring the Western USA, and practice independent living in a small group setting. Participants alternate between residential campus phases and expeditions.

Gappers Develop & Experience:
- Independent Living Skills
- Community Involvement
- High Adventure Activities
- Expedition Planning
- College Coursework
- International Travel
- Volunteer Opportunities

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"One of the most meaningful things for my son was interacting with peers who accept him. Being around kids who have many of the same challenges he does was very powerful for him."

"I learned that I can do many things if I put my mind to it, and that I can control my reactions and actions towards people and things."

"SOAR excels in providing just the right amount of challenge to help kids develop confidence. Our son needed opportunities to interact in helpful and meaningful ways with peers, and this camp provided that most excellently."

"I learned that if I try to face my fear hard enough, I WILL succeed."

Through SOAR, we've seen our son develop confidence and independence, as well as self-awareness about his ADHD and skills to help him turn the way he perceives the world into strengths.

“There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t thank my lucky stars our family found SOAR. My daughter has anxiety, ADHD, and LD and we tried several alternative academic environments for her with no success. SOAR provides the building blocks for the kids to set themselves up for success. For the first time in her life, my daughter has made deep, meaningful relationships with her peers and developed a sense of belonging."

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**Bios**

**John Willson, Executive Director**

John has spent over 25 years working with youth diagnosed with LD and AD/HD. He joined SOAR in the summer of 1991, returned as a semester course instructor in 1993, and became Director of LD and AD/HD Services in 1994. He has lead hundreds of adventure courses across the country and Latin America, and continues to enjoy field time with campers on a variety of programs. John is currently the President of the LDA of NC, and a national board member of CH.A.D.D. He actively presents to teachers, parents and professionals at local, state and national conferences. In addition, he has been an adjunct professor at Western Carolina University and Mars Hill College teaching Outdoor Recreation, Therapeutic Recreation, and Leadership courses. His certifications include Wilderness First Responder, Lifeguard Instructor, CPR Instructor, PADI Rescue Diver, State licensed Recreation Therapist, and Nationally Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. Finally, and most importantly, he and his wife Dorothie are the proud parents of two magnificent, creative, and strong willed children.

**Jonathan Jones, Founder**

SOAR grew out of a graduate project Jonathan completed for Dr. Vincent Cyphers at the University of Northern Colorado, reflecting a personal love for the outdoors and a view of the wilderness as a place for personal growth and development. A current Board member of LDA, he is a past President of LDA NC and chaired the LDA Adult Issues Committee for many years. Jonathan has been involved in education for 33 years as a teacher, Upper School principal, and program administrator. His diverse background includes military service, convening of international conferences, and advocate work for abused and neglected children. He is an adult with learning disabilities and has an adult son with his own unique mix of LD and ADD characteristics. He is a frequent presenter at state, national, and international conferences which focus on LD and ADHD issues. His decades of experience working with youth allow him to convey a unique perspective regarding their strengths and abilities. Jonathan holds a B.S. in Chemistry and Psychology and a Secondary Education Teaching Certificate, with master’s level work in Education. He is also a licensed R.N.
Media

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