Indianapolis, IN (February 9, 2012) — Over 1,200 camp and youth development professionals will gather at the American Camp Association’s (ACA’s) National Conference in Atlanta, February 21-24, 2012, at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta. The conference will bring together some of the nation’s top child and youth development experts for four education and inspiration filled days in over 150 education sessions.

An exciting line-up of keynote speakers for the conference includes:

- **Christine Carter, Ph.D.**, is a sociologist and happiness expert at UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center and is the author of *Raising Happiness: 10 Simple Steps for More Joyful Kids and Happier Parents*. Dr. Carter shares ways that we can teach children skills for happiness, emotional intelligence, and resilience.

- **Niambi Jaha-Echols** is an author, visionary, artist, and inspirational speaker. She wrote and self-published *Project Butterfly: Supporting Young Women and Girls of African Descent through the Transitions of Life*, and founded Camp Butterfly, which serves girls nationally and internationally. Niambi was recognized in 2005 by *Essence Magazine* as one of the “Women Who Are Shaping the World.”

- **Richard Louv**, author of *The Nature Principle* and *Last Child in the Woods* is also the founding chairman of the [Children & Nature Network](https://childrenandnature.org). Louv is well-known for supporting the idea that “The future will belong to the nature-smart — those individuals, families, businesses, and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of the transformative power of the natural world and who balance the virtual with the real. The more high-tech we become, the more nature we need.”

- **Dr. Rodrick S. Lucero** is an Associate Professor and Associate Director of the School of Teacher Education and Principal Preparation in the School of Education at Colorado State University and has 10 years’ experience as a camp staff member. His educational career has been heavily influenced by the relevance inherent in a natural environment and he continually advocates for a myriad of learning environments in order to educate every student effectively.

- **Peg Smith** - Peg Smith is the chief executive officer of the American Camp Association. She has over twenty-five years of career dedication to children, youth, and families.

Educational highlights from this year’s conference include:

- **Camp-School Partnerships** – Camps today play a critical role in education. More and more camps are partnering with schools to provide outdoor or environmental education programming. This series of educational breakout sessions will focus on camp-school partnerships and provide resources and tools to help camps develop and maintain quality partnerships with schools.
• **Children and Nature Forum** – Keynote speaker Richard Louv will kick off the Children and Nature Symposium, which will feature educational sessions that explore different facets of the Children and Nature movement.

• **Research Symposium** – Started in 1984, the Research Symposium continues to serve as the premier outlet to discuss and share critical, peer-reviewed camp-related research. All research is discussed in terms of practical application for camps and youth development programs.

For the complete program lineup, visit [www.ACAcamps.org/conference](http://www.ACAcamps.org/conference).

**About ACA**
The American Camp Association® (ACA) works to preserve, promote, and enhance the camp experience for children and adults. ACA-Accredited® camp programs ensure that children are provided with a diversity of educational and developmentally challenging learning opportunities. There are over 2,600 ACA-accredited camps that meet up to 300 health and safety standards. For more information, visit [www.ACAcamps.org](http://www.ACAcamps.org).