

October 2010

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"Suppose you were an idiot. Now suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself." – *Mark Twain*

"The Road to Mediocrity is Paved with Good Intentions" – How many ideas do you have in file folders that you never got to this summer? "Out of sight, out of mind," comes to mind. So starting right now, commit to NOT hiding the great ideas that come your way. Create an "Idea wall" where you can hang them so everyone can see what your dreams are, visually, emotionally. You'll be surprised at how many of those cool ideas actually get done because somebody becomes even MORE excited than you and finds the time to do it... and feels great for the experience. How? Pick a wall; remove all other stuff, and start push-pinning 3-5 cards, photos cut from magazines, ideas from this newsletter. As often as possible include a photo, even if it means taking an extra minute to follow a link to the source material or photo file. Visual stuff gets done first; it's stored differently in the brain. It jumps out every time anyone walks by. To get you started, I suggest you print-out and post THIS idea from Camp Coniston, NH:

<http://www.garyforster.com/photo/displayimage.php?album=12&pos=2>

The Great Camps – This month, let me introduce Camp Olympia, Texas. In almost every state I visit, I run into alumni of Camp Olympia who are now camp directors. This place trains leaders, and has since it was first established in 1968 by University of Texas All-American football players, Chris Gilbert and Corby Robertson, Jr. Watch the banner slideshow on their web site. At this place, it's all true.

http://www.campolympia.com/about_camp#about Even the themes they pick for each summer tell a story: **Ready, Set, GROW!... Light the Fire... The Best Just Got Better... Catch the Spirit...No Boundaries...R U Ready?... Get Real...Movin' at the Speed of Life...**

Constant Improvement is a Choice – From Camp Seymour, WA: "As I settle back into prep for 2011, I wanted to thank you for helping me re-design our program to yield better age-appropriate results. What we did...

- Broke out our "campitivity" sessions by age group (better age-appropriate activities).
- Rec Time (Free time) activities were in age specific sessions (instead of the whole camp at once).
- Re-focus on the cabin and the Unit and away from the all camp activities - Unit themed events (again, more age-appropriate).
- Created opportunities to "lead" activities for younger kids - role models, retention, etc.

It went fantastic. Our outcomes with kids were amazing and we'll see results in registration numbers for 2011 and retention, too. Thanks a lot, Gary!"

Scotty Jackson, Camp Director, YMCA CAMP SEYMOUR WA sjackson@ymcapkc.org

My Favorite Science Dog Ruff Ruffman Brings his Lab to Camp -- The national hit PBS' show, *FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman* has created the Camp FETCH! Guide - a FREE science activity kit with challenges for 6-10 year old campers. Each activity calls for easy-to-find, inexpensive materials that will keep your camp under budget. And you don't even need a TV! It contains seven activities that explore air, chemistry, and simple machines, and a directory of over 35 additional science activities organized by theme. Also, tips for using the activities in a camp setting. Order your FREE copy of the guide now –

while supplies last! Send an e-mail to fetchnews@wgbh.org . Include your name, organization, and mailing address (please indicate work or home). **And when you get it, see if you can find someone you know in the “credits.” (Ruff even signed an 8x10 for me!)** Forward this to *anyone* else who would use a guide, too.

Partners in Global Know-How – “This year the Staten Island Y Day Camp partnered with the Tanenbaum Religion and Education Team. Tanenbaum is a secular, non-sectarian organization founded to carry out the teachings of the late Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, who was known as “The Human Rights Rabbi.” Youth programs offered by the organization are aimed at helping young people learn about global cultures, good sportsmanship, teamwork and respectful behavior. The curriculum reinforces skills in literacy, math, social studies, science and art. The program culminates with an Olympic-style ‘Global Challenge’ that lets kids show off their new skills and know-how.” -- Mark Fowler, director of programs for Tanenbaum. Visit www.tanenbaum.org

Props for Using Props -- At ACA-SE this month, and YMCA “Campfire” last January, watched an engaging couple show how juggling can give kids and staff a new, universal language to help meet new people and build self esteem. Balloon animals have similar results. (Imagine, “Mom, watch this!”) They’ll work with your kids for one day, or even facilitate a week-long specialty camp. “Human powered fun?” This is it. Meet Dawn and Paul at: <http://www.flowcircus.com>

Gossip Guy – Isn’t it *fun* knowing a celebrity? Then let me introduce you to Louie Repucci, lifelong YMCA kid, camper, Ragger, counselor, and current chef at YMCA Camp Campbell near Santa Cruz, CA. And... (wait for it)... contestant this year on Fox TV’s “Hell’s Kitchen!” (I think he filled the slot they save for “hot young hunk.” See if you agree at <http://www.fox.com/hellskitchen/bios/louis-repucci/index.php>). His camp kitchen feeds one of the busiest Outdoor Education programs of any camp in the country. Want to share ideas with a famous chef? louie_repucci@yahoo.com

Discount Gear for Outdoor Ed Staff -- <http://www.outdoorprolink.com/>

Web-Site Wow – Camping legend and mentor Skip Wilke writes, “You often point out excellence -- benchmarking to strive to be better. Last summer, Steve Heinle of Camp Kooch-I-Ching (long time successful camp on Rainy Lake MN) and I did an ACA standards visit together. In preparation for the visit, I went to the Kooch website -- wow! One of the best I have seen. Check it out, see if you agree. <http://www.koochiching.org> -- With best wishes, Skip.” -- rrwilke@mac.com

“Used One of Your Tips!” – writes Andrew Plyler. “I wanted to thank you for www.animoto.com . I went ahead and spent \$30 for a year, and so far I’m not regretting it! It’s a simple, cheap, quality, and fun way for me to promote YMCA Adventure Guides and Princesses on our website, branch Facebook pages, at schools, afterschool programs, YMCA basketball/soccer/t-ball/flag football games (essentially all tribes!).” -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPfdigoBvHw> – reach Andrew at a.plyler@ymcanwnc.org

Good Neighbor Policy – Last month I heard from lots of camps excited about the ideas on using RV’s and “Park Model” mobile homes for staff housing. But “Engineer to the Camps” Rick Stryker reminds us that “Camps often have poor reputations in their local town halls because they tried to get away with things without permits in the past. Don’t add to that reputation. Tell them what you’re doing and ask how

to do it the right way.” Rick’s suggestion for no-permit seasonal staff housing? “Tents!” Furnish them like an eco-resort, and folks will be fighting over them. Reach Rick at rstryker@ptd.net

November 9th-11th, 2010 Camp Services Conference: Food, Maintenance & Housekeeping -- ACA Texoma at [Camp For All](http://www.acatexoma.org/servecon.php) Burton, TX -- <http://www.acatexoma.org/servecon.php> – (thanks to Allison Hinton allisonh@ymcasatx.org)

January 9th-12, 2011 YMCA “Campfire” Conference, MISSION: POSSIBLE! Join us at YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, NC. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to join us to kickoff the 2011 with experiences where you can learn from workshops, keynote speakers, interaction with peers, and gain knowledge from camping professionals both in day and resident camp. Refocus YOUR mission! More information available at www.ymcampfire.org

“A door is what a dog is perpetually on the wrong side of.” – Ogden Nash

“I like pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals.” – Sir Winston Churchill

“Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.” – Groucho Marx

Next year is likely to be much like this year... for you and your camp. Working harder won't make it better. Consider inviting me to help *reset* where you put your time and money. One invigorating day. Take a look at www.garyforster.com and drop me a line.

Warm regards,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

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