

December 2010

## Gary's Camping Newsletter

### *Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders*

"We recently had a new neighbor call the local township office to request the removal of the DEER CROSSING sign on our road. The reason: 'Too many deer are being hit by cars out here; I don't think this is a good place for them to be crossing anymore.'" – from true stories at <http://www.chickenhammer.com/2010/04/idiot-sightings.html>

**DANGER Will Robinson!** – After "Last Child in the Woods" came out (if you haven't read it... why?), everyone in camping took credit for "already doing all of those things!" Not so fast. Look at your camp program and see if you really *are* building stronger kids in the outdoors, or just using the same tools as "big marketing" to simply SELL. Do any of the labels (at this link) apply to your camp or family? (I wouldn't recommend having liquid in your mouth when you read them): <http://www.make-digital.com/make/vol07/?pg=187#pg187>

**Wisconsin Winter Wisdom** – Pat Murphy's one observant guy. "Having a fondness for the maintenance side of things, here are some Happy Holidays ideas:

- I visited several camps this year and two things amazed me: How many directors didn't have keys to their maintenance areas/shed, and how many were a mess! These camps were also in trouble over-all...coincidence?
- The Perfect Gift for your maintenance people, your Liability Insurance provider, (and you!) Fill a stocking full of spark plugs, motor oil, sharpening tools, Sta-Bil, etc. Now is the time to do easy maintenance on your summer equipment so it's ready to go for the spring of 2011!
- Yak Traks or similar versions of these easy-on/easy-off boot cleats work great to keep everyone upright when walking around camp and working outdoors. I wear mine all the time and have eliminated those awkward back jarring 'slip and catches' and straight out falls. No injuries mean lower insurance rates too.
- Under Armour has just come out with new glove-liners that, even though paper thin, wick away moisture and provide coverage for your skin when you have to take off your gloves to open locks, find your keys, pull a zipper...
- Ever seen them stocking milk at the grocery store? They use rubberized gloves with a lining. Buy a larger size, wear a liner glove and these keep your hands warm and DRY while snow blowing, shoveling, etc. Be sure to air dry them after each use. Thanks for all you do Gary!" -- [pmurphy1717@yahoo.com](mailto:pmurphy1717@yahoo.com) at Camp Sturtevant.

**"Please Don't Tell My Competitors They Are Not Answering Their Phone"** – Here's your ready-made plan for increasing enrollment in 2011, from George DeTellis: "My rule is that every call is answered by the second ring and all questions answered on the first call. To accomplish that, I have a secret weapon. Which I will share with you -- because I like you.

- Seven years ago we started using Vonage for our phone service at camp and at my home. With Vonage there is free web-based voice mail and call forwarding.
- The calls can be forwarded to 5 different phone numbers and will ring simultaneously.
- So, my camp phone forwards to my cell, my wife's cell and our home phone. During the summer we have the calls on simul-ring to 5 staff.

- You know in the mornings & afternoons when the phone rings off the wall?  
We have 5 lines for the price of 1, because each call is connected individually. So there could be four of us standing around talking to customers on our cell phones.
- Now we have two Vonage phone numbers at camp. The main number forwards to the second number in 15 seconds. So I have an unlimited number of handsets, and forwarding to cell phones.
- I live in FL during the winter. My camp is in MA. During the winter we answer calls 24/7. With the free caller ID, I know who the camp calls are, and answer the phone "Hi this Camp Woodhaven, how may I help you?"
- Customers are blown away -- expecting to have to leave a message -- but get me and their answers.
- Another RULE is that every time someone calls, I get their name, address, phone # and email, and add them to the mailing list.
- If I spend \$1,000 on an advertisement and get 10 calls, it cost me a \$100 per inquiry. When I explain this simple CPI (Cost Per Inquiry) to new staff they are horrified." -- *(And then they answer the phone!)*  
Gary's note: Some camp directors will say, "That's a lot of work!" (Here I channel Dr. Phil,) "Yeah, well how is missing-your-budget working for ya?" *Thanks George, we like you, too.*  
<http://www.campwoodhaven.com/index.html> and [george.detellis@gmail.com](mailto:george.detellis@gmail.com)

**Holiday Marketing at Camp Flaming Arrow** – There's no moss growing on Bill and Allison Hinton: "We just wrapped up our Pre-Holiday Phone-a-thon; a great success. We divided up the phone list between the staff and made calls. We focused on the holidays being a great time to get your summer plans all put together. We're also doing a drawing for a \$500 Visa gift card for all the folk that signed up before Dec 10th. We told them to watch the mail for their camp Christmas present (Cabin Pictures from last summer, a newsletter and a registration form). Wow what a response. Only got a few 'No's, left lots of messages, and had tons of, 'Yes, thanks for reminding me! I'll do it today.' We also caught some folks that were worried about money and we talked about setting them up on a payment plan. They were pleasantly surprised at how low the payments were if they started now. We plan to do another phone-a-thon in the spring with returning counselors, volunteers, and older campers making the calls. We're running a counselor contest to see who can get their entire cabin registered for camp. If they do we'll send them to a San Antonio Spurs game together!  
Gary, Thanks for everything you do.  
In the Spirit of Camp,  
Why 182 ????  
Bill Hinton"

**OK Bill, What's the "Why 182??" in Your Signature Block?** – Bill responds: "It did just want I wanted, you asked about it. Now I can tell you we had 182 scholarship campers last summer, and I can ask you for a gift to serve more. (I 'borrowed' this from Jerry Huncosky of Frost Valley. Pretty cool.)" -  
- Reach Bill at 830-238-4631 x 22; [billh@ymcasatx.org](mailto:billh@ymcasatx.org) and see [www.ymcacampflamingarrow.org](http://www.ymcacampflamingarrow.org).

**Removing Dangerous Trees? GOOD!** – Landscape architect Tom Nepl offers this advice worth filing away: "It was good to see you this month in Nebraska. Thanks for presenting and helping support our ACA Great Rivers annual conference. I just read this excellent article in Trees Forever's *Leaflet Magazine* and thought of camp directors: <http://www.treesforever.org/FAQ/How-to-Hire-an-Arborist/8.aspx>." – reach Tom at [Tom@NepplLandscapeArchitecture.com](mailto:Tom@NepplLandscapeArchitecture.com)

**"You Light Up My Lettuce" Request** – Rachel Grostern asks, "I am curious to know if you have any more information regarding the actual Cornell study you mentioned in the November newsletter (*twice as many kids choose fruit and salad if you have lights over them*)." You bet, Rachel. LOTS of cool ideas at <http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/> -- Share your own healthy eating ideas with Rachel at [rgrostern@ssymca.org](mailto:rgrostern@ssymca.org)

**Last-Minute Christmas Gift?** – Legendary camp exec Stew Brown writes: “Just checking in to say how much I appreciate receiving ‘Gary’s Camping Newsletter.’ Besides keeping up-to-date with the camping world, I enjoy reflecting on my 42 years of camping with the Y.” -- [stewspot@chaffee.net](mailto:stewspot@chaffee.net) (Your friends don’t need to know that you signed them up for the newsletter *for free*... it’s the thought that counts!)

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“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.

. . . these three remain: faith, hope and love.

But the greatest of these is love.” – *Paul of Tarsus: tentmaker, student intern, biographer, community organizer, theologian, convict, saint.*

“Now THAT’S a Strategic Vision worthy of adoption.” – Gary

(One more shout-out to an amazing storyteller: Happy Birthday, Jesus! )

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Warmest Wishes,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

**“Camp Solutions for Great Camp Leaders”**

Consider inviting me to help *reset* the priorities in your to-do list and help find effective and efficient solutions. Invest in one invigorating day to reach your goals -- *this year*. Take a look at [www.garyforster.com](http://www.garyforster.com) and drop me a line.

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