

March 2013

## Gary's Camping Newsletter

### *Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders*

"Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge." – *Charles Darwin*

**Round? Rectangle? BOTH!** – Dining hall acoustics are typically horrible, making it hard to hold a conversation at meals... and that's what meals are for. Big round tables (72") are the worst because kids yell to be heard. Folding "picnics" are the easiest for cleaning the floor, but the counselor can't see everyone. **Camp Joy (OH)** found the best of both (why didn't I think of that!).



**Hi-Ho Silver!** – Steve Heiny, my go-to guy for clever marketing, writes: "Our latest nugget is for this coming spring. We will be hosting a 'Welcome Back to Camp Party' ... for our horses. They always get delivered in early May. Usually it's just my kids and me that get to watch the horses come off of the trailers. We look forward to it every year. Which horses make it back is always a big deal for our campers...it's just that none of them ever get to see it. This year we are inviting our ranch girls and everyone else to be here when the horses arrive. 'Smokey's Back!!!' 'It's Elvis!!!' It will be a very exciting day. We may even let them name the new ones. We'll also have our usual open house going with tours, canoeing, archery etc. It'll be a fun day." -- Steve [sheiny@indymca.org](mailto:sheiny@indymca.org)

**Cutest Camp Staff Cottage Ever** – <http://tinyhouseblog.com/stick-built/house-in-a-box/>

**Get Mom Into the Story of Camp** – I've urged you to feed your camper-moms "open ended questions" that they can use when they debrief their camper on the way home from camp. (Her typical "yes-no" questions leave her frustrated. Ask me if you'd like a list of suggested questions – [gary@garyforster.com](mailto:gary@garyforster.com) ). But some brilliant folks in Denver came up with a wonderful idea. Lots of moms are already familiar with making bound photo-books with the likes of "Snapfish" and "Shutterfly." But with <http://tumbleweedphotojournals.com/> they create a yearbook specifically for your camp with spaces for mom to sit with her camper and choose which pictures they want to add from your own camp's photos of the summer. I can just imagine the conversation, "Which counselors do you want in your book? Which activity pictures? Tell me about this special event!" Then they get a finished book

with your camp's "brand image", even down to the choice of font, key photos, and text. What mom wouldn't pay for such a personal, tangible memory?

**Camping's Own "Mr. Green Jeans"** – Jim Parry has just published [Resident Outdoor Environmental Education](#), a complete "how-to" guide, including programming, booking and planning, staffing, facility and food, marketing, budgeting, and fundraising. It offers practical tips and real examples that should be useful to new outdoor and environmental educators as well as to veteran managers. Sample ROEE lesson plans and a sample teacher planning booklet are also provided. \$24.95 – Contact Jim at [jkkparry@gmail.com](mailto:jkkparry@gmail.com)

**"I Hate Meeses to Pieces!"** – (dating myself with that Mr. Jinx quote from Pixie and Dixie cartoons?) George Painter has found the ultimate mousetrap. He's used it to "sanction" 31 mice in his camp home and never had to touch a single one. Here's the description: "With the Raticator Plus you simply add 4 AA batteries (good for 50 mice), bait and place the Plus where you suspect the rodents are located. The red indicator light on top will blink to inform you of a catch (from instant electrocution). Cleanup is easy; there is no blood or gore and no poisons to endanger your pets or the environment. You simply pick up the unit and dump the little stiff into any appropriate receptacle – never touch a dead rodent again!" Available for less than \$40 on [Amazon](#). – Contact George at [gpainter@cdymca.org](mailto:gpainter@cdymca.org) (batteries not included).



**Web Page of the Month** -- <http://www.bearcreekcamp.org/camp-news/>

Somebody got really serious about keeping connected! Take a look at all of the ways they offer to "connect with camp."

**Counselor of the Week Awards** – You can give out a pizza coupon as a staff "thank you" for a job well done, or you could give them a billboard that puts a smile on everyone they meet, and brings back warm memories for years to come. (Guess which one I suggest?) My friends at On-A-Roll Screenprinting sell single copies of their "camp well" shirts, so you can buy a dozen different shirts as gifts for as little as \$9 each.

[http://www.onaroll.westhost.net/cgi-bin/mivavm?Merchant2/merchant.mvc+Screen=CTGY&Store\\_Code=OAR&Category\\_Code=d-cs](http://www.onaroll.westhost.net/cgi-bin/mivavm?Merchant2/merchant.mvc+Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=OAR&Category_Code=d-cs) (What if by the end of the summer, you'd found an individual reason to give EVERY counselor a shirt, just for them?)



**What Makes Your Camp Different?** – Kyle Lynback was talking about his former boss: "Dave Wright, recently retired exec of Camp Tecumseh (IN) was a preacher for not only customer service, but customer *compassion*. He'd say, 'We need to be the

friendliest and most helpful place that our guests have ever visited. We need to keep this in mind when greeting guests and campers, answering the phone, taking complaints, speaking on the microphone, etc. We must constantly portray a friendly and helpful demeanor.’ He would often give examples at each Monday staff meeting of how one of our staff recently exemplified exceptional customer service, or talk about how he’d experienced wonderful (or poor) service at another camp or business. It’s still resonating with our staff.” -- Kyle Linback, Group and Retreat Director, [www.camp tecumseh.org](http://www.camp tecumseh.org)

**Trust Fall Failures** – Every time I visit a camp and see trust-fall platforms, I cringe. Why? Take a look: [http://www.summertimeculture.com/trust-fall-fails/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+SummerCampCulture+%28Summer+Camp+Culture%29](http://www.summertimeculture.com/trust-fall-fails/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SummerCampCulture+%28Summer+Camp+Culture%29) (Thanks to Matt Ralph’s “Summer Camp Culture” blog.)

**The Essence of Camp Benson** – Not a new fragrance (though that *would* be a good idea!) It’s their smooth new camp video, completely filmed and edited on an iPhone:: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WyUAVBuBGU> – Contact your fellow Apple geek Cory Harrison at [charrison@srfymca.org](mailto:charrison@srfymca.org)

**Just Like Falling Off a Ladder** – Risk expert Mike Gurtler writes: “Falls from portable ladders are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries according to the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration ([OSHA](http://www.osha-slc.gov)). Accidents occur frequently in many types of organizations and industries. Some common reasons for ladder accidents include lack of training, use of defective ladders, failure to properly inspect equipment, use of an improper ladder for the job, over-reaching and improper set up or securing of ladders. More information about ladder safety is available in the [Online Resource Library](#) and from [OSHA](http://www.osha-slc.gov)”. --Read more at <http://safe-wise.com/risk-management/newsletters.html>

**Star Wars Feedback** – No, they’ve heard enough about Jar Jar Binks already. It’s Jeff Merhige at YMCA Camp Kern who kindly asks a favor of your advice. Jeff is once again working with Lucasfilm, LTD to enhance the free Camp resource tool kit ([www.clonewarscamp.com](http://www.clonewarscamp.com)) and it would be a huge help if you could respond with your feedback to the questions below. **PLEASE reply directly to Jeff ([Jmerhige@daytonymca.org](mailto:Jmerhige@daytonymca.org)) :**

1. What is your initial reaction to [www.clonewarscamp.com](http://www.clonewarscamp.com) as a resource?
2. What aspects of a Star Wars themed camp resource toolkit would interest you in having a Star Wars day or a themed camp around Star Wars at your camp?
3. Are there things that Lucasfilm LTD could provide your camp that would drum up interest from campers and camp directors alike to run a Star Wars game, day or week long camp?
4. Would you be interested in running a Jedi themed program based around character, community service and camper recognition within your program?

*Thank you for your responses. -- Jeff*

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Judge each day not by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant. -- Robert Louis Stevenson

"If your ship doesn't come in, swim out to meet it!" --  
*Jonathan Winters*

"I have the planet's largest collection of seashells. I keep  
it on all the beaches of the world... Perhaps you've seen  
it?" -- *Steven Wright*

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Keep those e-mails coming!

And consider getting a review of your camp's program this summer...

*Gary*

Gary Forster, LLC

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