

March 2011

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"You've achieved success in your field when you don't know whether what you're doing is work or play." – *Warren Beatty*

"Let Me Do It, Dad!" – "Hey Gary, Last summer I took my 4 year old son to Lake Compounce Amusement park and while we were in the bathroom, I noticed this great product called Step n' Wash. It's a fold down step stool so that children can reach the sink...and you don't have to struggle to hold your child up while they spray water everywhere. I just ordered one for our YMCA Family Locker Room. Check it out at <http://www.stepnwash.com/index.html>" -- *Patrick Connelly, pconnelly@midymca.org*

Oops, You Missed it Again – Over the past two weeks Camp Chingachgook on Lake George NY hosted the Camp Foodservice and Camp Maintenance Conferences, and what a terrific time we had. Lots of sharing, problem-solving, experts, and laughs... just in time to strengthen us all for the summer ahead. To keep your staff from missing out *next* year, why not put a note in the 2012 budget prep file right now to include the money so they (and maybe you) can attend?

Quality Staff, Well Prepared – When I visit a camp, I ask cabin counselors the question, "Did your staff training prepare you for *the first session of camp*? Were there things you wish were covered more?" Time after time Camp Gorham counselors responded, "Absolutely. We had lots of opportunities to actually try leadership techniques in a wide range of role-play scenarios. When the campers arrived, we felt like we'd already done it before." They also felt like they'd been treated to a unique educational experience thanks to a presentation "with a twist" by a former board member and his son who revealed near the end that he has Asperger's syndrome. Being allowed to "fit in" at camp changed his life. They gave the staff an emotional message of the power of *inclusion* (rather than *just* "diversity.") For details, contact camp exec Anne Thornton, annet@RochesterYMCA.org

Fundraising Case Statement – File this one under "R&D" (rip-off and duplicate!)
<http://www.holeinthewallcamps.org/Document.Doc?id=22>

Grow Your Own Veggies (Really!) -- <http://www.cropking.com/> If you want to be *continually* planting AND harvesting so kids can really get involved (and excited), there's only one word for you: Hydroponics. AND this guy donates his summer every year volunteering at a camp!

Mom-Power – Rick Deer (of Camp Kon-O-Kwee/Spencer, PA) sent this resource for those few of us who both 1.) *Know* that *Mom is the Customer* for summer camps, and 2.) *Act* on it. "According to the [2010 Marketing to Moms Coalition Survey](#), there are more than 50 million moms in the U.S. who are in charge of 85% of the household-purchasing budget – spending \$2.1 trillion a year. And, 90% of moms

prefer brands recommended by *other* moms. How can your brand reach her; connect with her; convince her to be a brand lover and evangelist? Embrace the basic tenets of emotional branding.

Write News: “As Seen on TV” – Camp exec Ken O’Kelly of Camp High Harbor (GA) posted his “How to Thrive (not just survive) at Summer Camp” that he’s shared on TV news interview shows. GREAT stuff! http://www.scribd.com/full/31778525?access_key=key-2vndlcnk0svsu3zlwn3 Now YOU’RE ready to be on TV, too!

A GREAT Elevator Speech Example --

“What we Believe about the Camp Experience

1. “Most realizations about life, relationships, and God happen in the context of shared experiences. It is central to our mission to be a part of a lifelong continuum of these memorable moments that resonate with our guests, motivate life change, and result in Kingdom impact. These moments give camping an invaluable role in spiritual formation of the Christian faith.
2. “The outdoor setting has always had a unique way of disarming our hesitations, dissolving our reluctant spirits, and giving us a context for simplicity. This remoteness displaces us far enough from our routine where we hear God better, see Him clearer, and breathe deeper. We provide a place where our guests can take advantage of the remoteness and silence the distractions of life, so they can find true rest in Him.” – <http://phoc.org/aboutus.html>

(Is YOUR elevator speech on your home page yet? When you read something great like this, do you take it as a chance to improve your own? – Gary)

“Skills for a Lifetime of Healthy Recreation” – “Back in the day” lots of camps advertised that they taught things kids could do with their family now, as teens, and as adults. I haven’t seen that lately, even though it *should* be a great sales tool for moms worried about their kids’ inactivity. Swimming for fun, kayaking and canoeing, sailing... and fishing.

Teach Fishing; This Summer – LOTS of kids (especially boys) come to camp hoping to go fishing. And most of them won’t get a chance. At some camps they do, but are given no instruction. And the most disappointing thing? They don’t catch a fish. (Next month I’ll beat up on Archery where kids don’t hit the target.) Here’s a great resource I just reviewed from “Take Me Fishing.org”. A full week’s worth of class curriculum to use WHILE kids fish; including 1.) Habitats 2.) Knots 3.) Safe Boating 4.) Casting, and more. (Have *your* fishing classes ever done these things? I KNOW! This is a goldmine!) PDF’s ready to print out, activities, posters... I wish there was a resource like this for EVERY skill clinic that camps teach. <http://www.takemefishing.org/general/about-rbff/programs-and-materials/materials-request-form> . – *(If I visit YOUR camp this summer, will I see this stuff?-- Gary)*

The Camp Film Festival – Chris Pallatto of UltimateCampResource.com fame is holding a contest to promote better camp videos for *retaining* campers. It’s only for camp-staff produced videos of 3 minutes or less; with entries being accepted between April 1 - June 1. All the details, plus some good filmmaking advice, at <http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/2011-Camp-Film-Festival.html> -- *(Disclaimer: I’m one of the “celebrity judges.” -- Gary)*

“Making Memories to Last a Lifetime” – Here’s more **tagline** goodness from Nancy Schwartz . . . a whole searchable database full. You can register for her new [Tagline Database](#) where you’ll find great information and tips on creating a great tagline for your organization. You will also get a copy of her 2011 Nonprofit Tagline Report when you register. Award Winners: <http://gettingattention.org/nonprofit-taglines/database/organizational-tagline-winners.html>

From a Teacher’s Viewpoint – Clint Knox writes from Colorado: “So you’re going after school groups. I was an Executive Director at a YMCA camp for 4 years, a Program Director for 4 years before that and now am a 7th grade history teacher at a public school. As a camp executive I asked myself, ‘How can I get more school groups out to my camp?’ Seeing it from the teacher’s point of view, I can share with you some answers.

- “Missing 3 days of school is a big deal. Teachers are under massive pressure to get through the curriculum AND teach with depth. This takes time. If you don’t show specifically how your camp will help teach curriculum, don’t expect schools to come to your camp.
- “Standardized tests are how schools are judged. Yes, getting students to be more caring, honest, respectful and responsible makes for a better world, but unless you can directly prove, **with data**, that your program will help schools improve their standardized test scores, you are fighting an iced covered, uphill battle.
- “Don’t expect teachers to spend the night in cabins. By my second year as a teacher, I witnessed an all-too-common situation when a friend and co-worker went through the grueling process of being falsely accused of inappropriately touching a child after reprimanding her for failing his class. He spent weeks out of the classroom, isolated from all contact from co-workers. Asking us to spend the night in a cabin is asking us to jeopardize our livelihood.
- “Don’t make our job harder. Teachers go above and beyond every day. Our school district and politicians make our jobs hard enough. Think of what you would be asking teachers to do, and find a way to do it for them. They you’ll have allies helping you” -- *Clint Knox* clintknox76@yahoo.com

Notable Moves – Mack McElhinney (AZ) is the new camp director of Camp Kresge, PA; Greg Dodd (AZ) is the new executive of Camp Manitou-lyn, MI; Elizabeth “Eli” Cochran has been promoted to executive director of Camp Ernst (KY); Todd Lenning (WI) is now the director of Camp Lawrence, NH; Scott Peckins (Dublin, Ireland) is the Executive Director of Camp Takoda, NH, Kat Fitzpatrick (HI) is now directing Camp Wawa Segowia, MA... (others?) Whew!

“Common sense is the knack of seeing things as they are, and doing things as they ought to be done.” – Stowe, C. E

“Advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn’t.” – Erica Jong

"Consultants have credibility because they are not dumb enough to work at your company." -- *Scott Adams*

Most Sincerely,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

"Great Solutions for Great Camp Leaders"

I facilitate effective Strategic Planning with several camps each year; but the reasons many initiate the process are actually **tactical** shortcomings that can be corrected almost immediately, and at low cost. Invest in one invigorating day to reach your goals -- *this year*. Take a look at www.garyforster.com and drop me a line.

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