

March 2012 **BONUS Notes**

Gary's Camping Newsletter

"I am a strong believer in luck and I find the harder I work the more I have of it." -- *Benjamin Franklin*

The Weakest Link... the Most Valuable Link – A mom wrote, "Can you mention more about the importance of the counselor? Our daughter isn't interested in returning to day camp *or* resident camp this summer due to last summer's bad experiences with her counselors. Things like interest in the kids, knowing their names, discipline, doing activities with them, were all missing. Frustrating. Our son, at another camp, had a great counselor (knew the kids' names, was enthusiastic, safe, etc.) and he can't wait to go back this summer. The counselor makes the difference." Advertising you've got great counselors won't make it so. Choose wisely, train well, and commit *now* to supervise *daily*. (What Michael Brandwein calls "Super Staff Super Vision.")

Be a Brilliant Boss – Consider having your key camp leader(s) join me at Michael Brandwein's unique, intensive weekend seminar April 13-15, 2012 at Sherman Lake YMCA camp in Augusta, Michigan. (So unique I'll be there, too.) Register by April 4 (extended deadline) and get \$210 in free Brandwein books. If you're serious about "Making this our best summer ever," read all about it:
<http://www.michaelbrandwein.com/pdf/Camp%20Leadership%20Team%20Seminar%202012.pdf>

Big Art for a Big Parade – I think camps need more BIG art projects that get lots of kids involved in creative fun. With luck, they'll take those skills home and try them with their friends (instead of being "bored.") Can you imagine sending a child home with photos of them with one of these giant puppets? <http://youtu.be/hOaMlclLojs> What if you just showed this video to a select group of counselors during staff training... kind of a "Dead Poets Society" for creative arts, and see who wants to lead kids in dumpster-diving art projects? It's the Olympics this summer. Why not have your own **Cirque du Soleil** opening ceremony?!

"If You Stay Ready, You Never Have to Get Ready." – I'm still amazed at how many camps I visit that are still dirty from the last group they hosted, even if it was weeks ago. "We'll clean it before the next group comes." But what did that prospective retreat-leader think during their tour today? Or the parent that dropped off their child's registration? Or the school group that's using only half of the dining hall? The best camps have a rule they don't violate: "If you *stay* ready, you never have to *get* ready." It's similar to the standard practice in theater: After the last performance, you "break" the set immediately; many hands making light work (and making the "wrap" party that much sweeter.) Ever seen the Canes Film Festival-winning 1979 movie "All That Jazz?" Roy Scheider's classic line: "It's *Showtime*, folks!"

Hope to see many of you at ACA-New England this Friday; (Join me for "Marketing" and "Great Ideas" and "Serving More Kids").

All the best,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

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