

July 2010

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"You teach best what you most need to learn." – Richard Bach, author of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*

Camp Executive as Coach – Last week I was at a brief Sunday noon staff meeting before the new campers arrived at YMCA Camp Gorham, NY. Anne Thornton gave feedback on a brief activity from that morning's Flagpole that hadn't gone off quite as well as planned. She said, "Remember back to staff training when Christina (Sipple, camp director) and I told you that much of what happens at camp comes as a result of *you* making quick decisions to help your group get the *most* of an opportunity? Not every activity will be completely planned out. We'd all need to pitch in to "Put On the Show!" Well here's a better word for it: *Improv*. Many times a day you'll get the framework of a situation for an activity, a skit, a song, a game, but you won't have been told what your specific role is. It's like Second City or Saturday Night Live; once you see what's started, it's your responsibility to *fill-out* your role, and include your campers. Improvise. It's one thing that helps fill life with joy. And *not only* do we get to practice it here, we get to *model* it in front of campers." I wish every donor, every parent, could have seen the enthusiasm at *that* evening's Flagpole. I saw it in their eyes, "*Look* what we're doing! This is *so cool!*" - contact Anne Thornton annet@RochesterYMCA.org, and give this mid-summer pep-talk in your own words.

Campers Going on a Field Trip? – Still got some of those rubber wrist bands from the *last* fad? (Of course you do). Write your camp phone number on the *inside* with a Sharpie (or the cell phone number of the trip leader) and have every camper and counselor wear one.

Need Good Curriculum for Camp Activity Areas? – "Be Prepared." The Scouts are, so I look to them when I need a good deed. Their Merit Badge Books are all recently updated, and less than \$5 each for everything you need. Archery, Canoeing, Basketry, Climbing, Cooking, Horsemanship, Indian Lore, Insect Study, Leatherwork, Nature, Orienteering, Rowing, Wilderness Survival... Buy them in person at your local Scouting Store, or have them mailed right to you:

http://www.scoutstuff.org/BSASupply/default.aspx?cat=01RTL&ctgy=PRODUCTS&C2=BOOKS_LIT&C3=MB_PAMPHLET&C4=&LV=3

Master Course in YouTube – What if a parent could sort through videos of your camp as quickly as through photos? See the opening campfire; the funniest skit that sent their kid into hysterics; and get snuck some camp news at the same time? This is what's possible when you learn how to do it:

<http://www.youtube.com/camp TecumsehYMCA> (the Camp Tecumseh YouTube page). Here are a couple videos I especially like; one of the funniest camp skits ever:

http://www.youtube.com/camp TecumsehYMCA#p/u/11/LPW1_xenRds (The Gunfighter); and a classic

opening night camp song <http://www.youtube.com/camp TecumsehYMCA#p/u/10/zTBXGF7HpzI>

(Welcome to the Family). -- contact Davie LeFevre at davidl@camp Tecumseh.org

Web Site of the Month – Simple, clean, clear... powerful. <http://www.northwaters.com/>

Why Read Gary's Camping Newsletter? -- Jude Dooley writes: "Gary, Thank you for sharing the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka Day Camp website/brochure in your latest email. My day camp director and I spent hours going over it last night. It's amazing how a website can provide such good insight on what a strong day camp is built around. We have already contacted them for more details." (see http://garyforster.com/documents/6_June_SECOND_EDITION.pdf)

And... "Gary, another great newsletter – Thanks for continually sharing. Do you have your old list of questions *parents can ask their kids on their drive home?* I lost my original copy and want to send again this summer!" (Yep. http://garyforster.com/documents/Parent_open-end_Questions.pdf)

How Big Are Your Fans? – Patrick Connelly of the Middlesex YMCA in CT writes: "I always love when I stumble across a company that seems to be able to advertise its sprit as well as its products. Check out this website for the company Big Ass Fans (yup that's what it's called). <http://www.bigassfans.com/company> Be sure to click on 'Genius Not at Work.'" – *share your oversized finds with: pconnelly@midymca.org*

Goin' Bug-Eyed for Flies – Bria Cartwright of Camp Ravencliff CA ("where enrollment is up 160% over last year!") says there ain't no flies on them: "Did we ever share our fly tip with you? Learned it from the bug guy in Humboldt County. To keep flies from sneaking in your doors, you can hang a gallon Ziploc bag about ½ full of water over the doorways. It looks like a prank, but at Ravencliff it essentially eliminated our fly problem once we did it. Something about the water and all their eyes, I guess. Keeps our kitchen and dining room fly-free, even in August. Not everyone believes it, but we saw a real difference!" – *bug Bria at bcartwright@ymcaEastBay.org*

"Here's Another Bead Idea" – writes Mark Mullen. "Our director at Scout camp gave each staff member a "friendship bead" at a ceremony. We all put them on the lowest lace on our boots or shoes. I still have beads on my boots from six years ago, and every time I look at them I'm reminded of the commitments we made to each other. Camp on!" -- ranger.campjoy@dejazzd.com, *Facilities Manager at Camp Joy.*

Recycle Your Craft Budget – Michael McGinnis ponders, "Imagine how many plastic juice-box straws get used every day for about 5 minutes, and then go directly into a land fill. Save your colored straws, wash them well, and then cut them into various bead sizes. Strung together they make great 'Green' necklaces and bracelets. I easily collected a grocery bag full!

Idea #2: If you have a horse program, and your hay comes wrapped in colored twine, get your maintenance folks to whip up some place-mat or hot-plate sized plywood scraps. Drive finishing nails at even intervals, creating simple looms. Weave the bailing twine through making a beautiful matt that mom will cherish forever. Do just these two activities, cut your craft budget in half, and clean the planet as well!" -- *Get more "recycled art" ideas from mmcginnis1@yahoo.com*

Build Fairy Houses – One of the best activities in the woods I've ever seen for little campers: http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/705691/how_to_make_a_fairy_house_a_fun_free.html?cat=6

“There are two types of people – The ones who think there are two types of people; and those that know better.” – Tom Robins, “Still Life with Woodpecker”

“You can't *fix* stupid, but you *can* put it on the ignore list where it belongs.” – Mark Twain

“Pull up a rock and teach a worm how to swim.” – Cliff Fowler, fishing guide, KBHR

Act cool, stay cool, be cool!

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

“Camp Solutions for Great Camp Leaders”

It's a good time to book fall board presentations to prepare for strategic planning. How can I help the camp you love? Take a look, www.garyforster.com and drop me a line.

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