

August 2011

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"The Miss Universe Pageant is a real scam.

Somebody from Earth *always* wins." -- Emma Tilley (daughter of John and

Trisha) on receiving an invitation to enter the state miss-teen pageant.

Summer's Almost Gone – don't wait until next year to *try new things*. Try some of these, and others you "meant to get to." Now go find some kids...

Sweet Spot – Program instructor (and former U.S. Marine) Richard Rupert explained how he made an hour with 8-year-olds into something magic. "I was supposed to be supervising a game of baseball with 2nd graders. When each batter came up to the plate, I had them take at least three swings before I'd pitch the ball. I figured if I could see where they were naturally swinging, I could probably pitch the ball right there. We never had a game with so many hits, so many smiles, and so much action in the outfield. Those kids will *love* baseball." -- reach him at Rich@YCamp.org, Camp Ockanickon (NJ)

Both are Sweet -- "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. When life gives you friends, make bracelets." -- *Thought for the Day at Maine Arts Camp, after Friendship bracelets had taken rest-hour by storm.* <http://www.maineartscamp.com/>

Triple Sweet – "The World's Largest Marshmallow Roast" was a smokin' (hot) success. This is my favorite news story quote so far: "I burnt a marshmallow three times in a row, then I ate it ... that's how I roll," Blue Mountain camper Matt Beisler said.-- <http://www.njherald.com/story/news/7-22marshmallows-web> So what if the event is over? Cash in on the hype and get toasting!

Ya' Gotta Try This – I'm watching campers check into the pool for lessons at Camp Conrad Weiser (PA). Music starts and three instructors (all in matching red one-piece suits) slow jog to a nicely-loud music beat to the opposite side of the pool, line up facing the kids, and start leading dance aerobics as a class warm-up! Kids dance like crazy to the music, follow the staff in jumping-jacks and Tae-bo moves, and dance some more until everyone is checked in and warmed up. They finish with s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-s together, and the classes begin! Kids were in great spirits, and were ready to take their swim lessons as seriously as coaching in any sport. Now THAT's great role modeling. – contact camp director Sue Williams at Swilliams@smymca.org

Make Buddies out of Buddies – To prevent just "random" buddies at their waterfront, Remy at Camp Ockanickon says "I tell the kids that they need to know three facts about their buddy and be able to tell me when they hang their buddy tags. Kids ask each other questions in line, and report what they've learned to me. It gets kids talking about things they never would have thought of, at a time of day that can be as social as it is fun." – Now THAT's teaching friend-making. – contact brent@ycamp.org

Culture Club – “At Camp Sloane we have discovered the ‘fun’ you talked to my staff about during your visit last year. It’s dance party USA at mealtime. I cannot believe how much the boys’ side of the dining hall gets into techno music and ‘dancing.’ Well, they call it dancing but the move resembles a garden sprinkler. The whole place erupts after a meal. It is spilling over to the rest of camp too with flash mobs and all sorts of other fun (but safe) and outrageous activity.” -- Paul "Bear" Bryant
pbryant@campsloane.org

Shakin’ Bake – Every resident camp has their kitchen staff come out to be recognized with applause and cheers from the campers the last big meal of camp. And most kitchen staff resist it and feel uncomfortable. At Camp Coniston (NH) when the director announces, “And what do we think about our amazing cooks and kitchen staff?” *music* starts and the chef -- wielding a huge spoon like a drum-major’s baton -- comes *marching* out with his entire staff, each banging pots and pans and the wildest kitchen implements they can find to the music as kids *cheer* to the sight of this crazy “kitchen staff parade.” Those campers *wish* they could come back and have those jobs some day because they look like they’re having so much fun. And they are. – contact assistant camp director Jen “JD” Deasy at
jen@coniston.org

“Catch a Camper” – Staff at Maine Arts Camp make a note when they see a camper do a particularly illustrative act of character and share it at dinner announcements with the whole camp. This daily public “report” provides the incentive (and accountability to the camp community) for staff to look for more each day. -- contact Candy Cohn at info@maineartscamp.com

Counselor: “What should I do?”

Director: “What do you *think* you should do?”

-- Tom Archer, on coaching camp leaders -- tarcher@yogm.org

A Little Fear is a Good Thing – If you haven’t read the NYTimes article on playgrounds becoming *too* safe so kids don’t learn risk/failure/reward as kids, you’ll want to read and save this (for the next time someone says “We need to stop doing...”). Bring back the monkey bars!
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/19/science/19tierney.html?_r=2 -- Thanks to Dave Graham of Ontario.

It’s Showtime, Folks! – If kids aren’t *ready* to tell their parents about the great stuff they did at camp, don’t expect it to happen. At camp Coniston, they whip the kids into a frenzy at breakfast just before the parents pick them up. “Who had a good time at camp?” director John Tilley calls out. (Not very original you say? Just wait.) While the campers cheer, about half a dozen counselors near John jump up and pretend to be counting the kids and staff that are cheering. John says, “I’ve got people counting the results, how many had a good time?” as the cheers continue. The counselors have been pretending to confer and one whispers in John’s ear. “They counted 342. Wait, that’s not NEARLY enough! Remember Harry Potter? Remember your campout? Remember Candlelight? How many of you *really* had a good time at camp this session?!” Kids applaud and cheer, counselors count and confer, one whispers to John, and he announces, “THAT’s more like it! 512 people; that’s EVERYONE here!”

(Even louder cheering in celebration.) John's final thought-for-the-day: "Remember, the world is round; and a place that seems like the end might just be the beginning."

Finding and Getting a Job – Rick Mades, owner of Campfinders, MySummers.com, and Maine Arts Camp, has horror stories of bad job applicants. One was so completely unprepared (hadn't even looked at the web site) that it drove Rick to write a blog post that is great advice for anyone preparing for interviews. "If you're interviewing, then it's your job to do research on the camp first. Lots of people look for jobs. You need to be the person who stands out as being smarter and harder-working than the rest. And you want to be sure you find the *right* organization to work for." -- *Know someone job hunting? Send them this link: <http://campjobs.blogspot.com/2011/01/summer-camp-job-application-tips.html> Rick says their camp motto is "Ready, willing and able". Have you got a camp motto? Try one!*

"The nicest thing about the rain is that it always stops. Eventually." – *Eeyore*

"The day you take complete responsibility for yourself, the day you stop making any excuses, that's the day you start moving down the road to success." -- *Nikita Koloff*

"The best revenge is massive success." -- *Frank Sinatra*

*Best wishes and thanks for all you **do and say**,*

Gary

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