

April 2010

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bow-lines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." – *Mark Twain*

Think You Know Teambuilding? – How about *cooking* as teambuilding? Brilliant!

<http://www.partiesthatcook.com/team-building-events/>

Ahead of the Curve – Camp Sloane, CT is anticipating having a couple of full sessions for the first time in years; but don't want to wait until *next* year to have people talking about it. Andy came up with this *remark-able* idea: "Hey moms and kids! Pick the date session II will fill up this spring and win a free camp shirt of your choice! E-mail your guess to..." And they can reply with "status reports" on percentage full, record number of registrations this Monday, etc. Time to "flatter" Camp Sloane!

Fix your Website Now (and Reap the Rewards) – "You helped me tremendously with our website redesign last year and we've had great feedback. www.campjornymca.org People tell us it's easy to navigate, easy to find what they're looking for, well laid out etc. We've turned on Google Analytics and have gained wonderful information about website traffic. (Does anyone want to share what they think good monthly visits are?) Thanks again; it's greatly appreciated. !" -- *Emir Butler*
registration@campjornymca.org

Free On-line Listing – at Camp Business Magazine's new parent resource:

http://www.northstarpubs.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1112&Itemid=1012

Fresh Coat Before Summer? – You've got some walls you want painted before summer. WAIT! First try cleaning them. In my experience people are too quick to paint. (Well, actually no, we're all too slow to even see they're dirty!) But we should never paint over dirty walls anyway, so give it a test with a damp Mr Clean "Magic Eraser" and you're very likely to say, "Wow! That was Magic!" If so, just wash the wall. Magic Eraser is good for continual touch-ups around light switches, spills on walls, etc. For a whole wall, check out the instructions on a box of Spic-n-Span (or similar). MUCH cheaper than bottled spray cleaners, and just as effective.

Yep. We Really Need to Paint – Learning to paint well is a valuable life skill, but most people never get a lesson. You can see the mistakes lousy painters have made at most camps: paint on historic stone or brick fireplaces, paint slopped on ceilings from walls, drips dried into concrete floors... A bad inexpensive painter is no bargain. But lots of people just need to be taught, given a chance to practice, and held accountable to follow through from prep to clean-up. So, start with a good written "Paint Policy" and lesson plan. Not surprisingly, Martha Stewart has some you can print out.

<http://www.marthastewart.com/photogallery/painting-prep-tips> (9 tips for a good policy), and a full lesson plan http://www.marthastewart.com/article/painting-a-room?xsc=eml_org_2010_03_27. Print 'em out. Laminate 'em. Make 'em the law, and you'll be giving your staff (and your facilities) a gift to last a lifetime.

Mother Earth Says – I get a surprising number of questions from camp execs wanting to know how their camp could go green. They usually ask about solar and wind energy. I ask them if they've replaced all of their incandescent light bulbs with screw-in spiral compact fluorescents yet (now for as cheap as \$1 each for GOOD ones if you look), and they ALWAYS say “no, we haven't gotten around to that yet.” News flash: there is no Energy Fairy. Here's your list to REAL savings right away:

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Renewable-Energy/Save-Money-On-Energy.aspx>

What Cards are in Your Hand? – “Jamie Childress from SHR uses www.uptinting.com, getting 1,000 postcards for \$57. Jamie reports they are high quality and he's very pleased.” -- Dave Hennessey, *YMCA Camp Tuckahoe: Where Friendships Are Made!* hennesseyd@ymcarichmond.org

Playing Chicken – Kids love caring for animals. But how do you know which types are the best for camp? Like which chicks to order? Turns out it can make a big difference if you get the right hens, for instance: <http://www.motherearthnews.com/Sustainable-Farming/Best-Chicken-Breeds-For-Backyard-Flocks.aspx> Jerry Huncoski's advice after several years of a successful and growing Farm Camp at Frost Valley: Soft and Cuddly. Very few kids show any interest in pulling weeds (go figure?) But they'll spend DAYS with bunnies and chicks, collect eggs, run and play with midget goats, and groom a pony like a Labrador.

The Witching Hour – Woodchuck says: “Practicing Water Witching with the campers has been a favorite demonstration at our camp. Using divining rods, it's fairly easy to find and locate sources of water, and really neat how accurate it can be. From what I hear some well drillers still use this method today to locate the best place to drill. We use copper welding wire feed that you can get at any hardware store. Handle = 4in and Rod = 18-20in Then set up a bucket of water and practice. Here is a video that does a pretty good job at explaining the process: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W95J85E7DNU>.” -- Chuck Bennis cbennis@siouxfallsymca.org

Minute to Win It! – “I have been patiently waiting for this NBC show to premier. It was worth the wait; TONS of “one minute” challenges that will work at camp. We'll be doing them with campers and staff before and after lunch. The “Minute to Win It” web site lists all of the games and also has video.” (But you better download and save the games now; no telling how soon it might be cancelled!)

<http://www.nbc.com/minute-to-win-it/how-to/index.shtml>. -- Thanks to "Woodchuck" Bennis cbennis@siouxfallsymca.org and Mark Battig, Camp Crosley mark@campcrosley.org

Help Parents Get Ready For Camp – This sweet little article comes from *Bottom Line Personals*, so it's got credibility; and it's a quick read with memorable points. Send it out to all new parents? All parents? (Make sure your front desk staff have read it?)

http://bottomlinepersonal.com/article.html?article_id=15898

Good Designs Sell T-Shirts – You've got to see their Jolly Roger with crossed burning-marshmallow-sticks instead of bones! I like their “Nature and Critters” collection that can use leaves or animal footprints from your local area, or the “Swatch Collection” of really nice “icon” art of camp activities that can be combined to create a classy design of what your camp is all about. <http://www.camp-shirts.com/art-from-the-heart.html> Dave, the owner, has been a long-time supporter of regional camp conferences for ACA and YMCA.

Great Balls of Friendship -- One of the really useful things that came from my “Building Friendships” work with Cathi Cohen is how Camp Kern staff used beach balls for “question roulette” to learn more about each other and gain practice in asking meaningful questions. But you need a beach ball, and not an

el-cheapo one; one you can keep flat in your backpack and pull out and inflate whenever you and your kids have time on your hands. Well here you go:

http://wilderdom.com/store/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=22_55&products_id=237&zenid=000b94fd8ad89c2442b728165f061d

And What Do I Do With This Beachball? – Start with questions from books like “The Book of Questions” (also “for Kids, for Teens,” etc), one written on each colored panel. Toss the ball around until someone with their eyes closed yells “ANSWER!” Where your right thumb points, a person next to you reads, and you answer! Later in the week ask the kids to come up with questions for a NEW ball.

(Order “*Building Friendships, a Camp Counselors Manual*” from <http://www.advantagebooks.net/> and read my synopsis at <http://www.garyforster.com/documents/Three%20Wishes%20-%20Making%20Friends.pdf>)

A Mom Speaks Out -- <http://www.svmoms.com/2010/03/live-blogging-a-summer-camp-registration.html> An article by a mom who shares her frustration with how hard we are to do business with; in this case, simply sign her child up for camp. Printed out, it could be a great way to analyze another camp’s problem at a staff meeting to see what could be learned about *your own*. -- *Thanks to former Y camp director libbystaley@gmail.com for sharing this with us.*

There are Two Types of Handymen – and I’m both of them. ONLY when I’m in a rush do I knock over a box of screws or nails, (and usually into a toolbox full of tools or onto a workbench covered with parts). I take pride in stopping and picking up every one (I can find) and putting them back in the box (after utilizing my private “stress relief” words). But sometimes I’m the guy that just says “screw it” and runs off to the “fix-it” job I was already late for. Here’s a great idea: spend just a couple minutes creating a “spilled nail and screw” kit and you’ll save TONS of time, money on lost screws (swept up and thrown away), and feel pretty darn clever each time you use it:

<http://www.finehomebuilding.com/item/10986/drywall-screw-pickup-tip> Oh, you’ll need a strong magnet: <http://www.kjmagnetics.com/proddetail.asp?prod=MM-E-36> \$5.95 plus \$5 postage.

“I do not at all understand the mystery of grace - only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us.” – *Anne Lamot, author*

Warm regards,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

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