

March 2010

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"History, despite its pain, cannot be un-lived; but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." –
Maya Angelou

Welcome back to 2003 – “The Jobless Recovery.” That was the cover of Time Magazine just 7 years ago. What a short memory we have. What worked to bring campers back in 2003 and 2004? That would be easy information to find if you ask the folks whose camps did well after the LAST recession. But if you want to waste your time (and risk your future), sit down with just your own staff, a blank sheet of paper, and ask “what do you think we should do?”

“And the Winner Is...” – Get a really original camp logo or t-shirt design by holding a design competition. Turns out there’s a web site where independent graphic artists create ideas to your specifications and fee range, and you just pay for the one you choose as the best! See samples of recent competitions at <http://99designs.com/> -- Submitted by YMCA of the Ozarks branch board chair Mark Young.

Joanna Warren Smith Follows Up After ACA Denver – “A number of camps requested that I get back in touch with them because they were DESPERATE to get focused on recruitment. Yet even with their invitations to contact them, it was difficult to reach people. Many had odd business hours and complicated voice mail systems. And surprisingly, a number of camps never had a "real person" answer their phones, rather a robotic suggestion that I go to the website. I was even more frustrated when calls and emails were not returned promptly. But I should not have been surprised because parents have told me in focus groups that it is ‘difficult, if not impossible to get through to a person at the camp,’ and ‘they didn’t return my calls.’” Discuss. Reach Joanna at camppconsulting@verizon.net or www.campconsulting.com

Camp Themes for 2010 – Percy Jackson and the Olympians? This camp is designed just for kids who have read the books! <http://web.mac.com/camphalfblood/Camphalf-blood.com/Activities.html> And I love this part – it’s sponsored by the area’s largest independent bookstore. Ever think of teaming with your local bookstore for your “Harry Potter” or “Percy Jackson” weeks? Guess you should!

Wiffle Ball Got Rules? – Yep. www.wiffle.com/about_rules.htm#rules

And... Why Should We Care? – Because you just have to see the incredible Wiffle Ball Stadium that debuted last summer at Camp Jewell. A full presentation on the design, the volunteer weekends to build it, the crazy YouTube videos to fuel camper anticipation, the cool way it’s transformed “flagpole” time into a friend and memory-making time... will be a featured highlight of the **annual Camp Maintenance Conference on Lake George** in just two weeks. A great event for ANYONE who runs camps (invite a fanatic volunteer and get him/her to pay for both of you!)

http://www.garyforster.com/documents/2010_Maint-Food_Reg.pdf

Menu Suggestion: “Squid Dogs” –This is out of the February issue of Family Fun Magazine: take normal beef or chicken hotdogs, cut them into pieces about 1 ¼” long. Take 4 or 5 pieces of raw spaghetti and poke them lengthwise ½ way through the hot dog, one at a time. Gently drop each one into a pot of boiling water and cook until spaghetti is done (usually 10 minutes). The spaghetti becomes

squirmy “legs” for your squid’s body. Serve with dip-able catsup or “marinara” sauce! Great for an outdoor cooking class.

“We’re Trying Everything” – Chris Thurber’s DVD for **first-time parents** is “The SECRET ingredients of Summer Camp Success.” Since we know there are so many moms that don’t think they or their child are “ready” for camp yet, can you see how a tool like this could give them confidence to make THIS the year? -- <http://www.campspirit.com/publications/the-secret-ingredients-dvd-cd-set.html>

Some Things You’ve Just Got To Have – An inexpensive, realistic indoor campfire (otherwise, you KNOW it will rain on your campfires this summer!) -- <http://www.indoorcampfires.com/>

The Perfect Camp Archery Bow for \$39 - <http://www.pse-archery.com/prod.php?k=318329&u=41850>
The description says “practically indestructible!” They have special pricing for camp archery programs <http://www.pse-archery.com/camps.php>
And check out the ingenious “arrow can’t fall off” bow: the Deputy Model <http://www.pse-archery.com/prod.php?k=318329&u=10021> for \$79

On Target: Ask Gary – *“Why do you recommend using the more expensive 48” archery targets instead of the less expensive 36inch? And you suggested we double the number of campers shooting at one time (for us that means going from 4 to 8 archers) so that kids get to shoot twice as often. But you said we could still use only 4 targets?”*

Gary’s Answer: “To a camper, the first big thrill is just hitting the target. A 48” target gives a kid an 80% greater chance of hitting the target on every shot! Well worth \$30 more! Why 2 campers per target? Because of the great conversations when they retrieving arrows!”

Daisy Air Rifles -- Daisy Camp Program pricing at (800) 643-3458; (Daisy model 880 pellet rifle \$79 single shot pellet, or 50 shot bb’s).

Civilian Marksmanship – Safe Air Rifle Handling Guide – Don’t let anyone supervise your bb or air-rifle range unless they’ve seen this free PDF guide. Many pages can be enlarged to make safety posters!
<http://www.odcmp.com/Programs/JrSafetyGuidetoARSafety.pdf>

Got GaGa Balls? – Before you go looking on WebMD, Mark Battig of Camp Crosley sent us this: “We tested out several different types of playground balls for GaGa and found out that ‘8.5 ‘P.G. Sof’s’ were the best. They bounce like a normal kick ball but had the foam softness of “rhino skin” --
http://www.sportinggoodsexpress.com/Color_My_Class_P_G_SOFS_p/1064957.htm or
<http://www.amazon.com/Pull-Bouy-Color-Class-Sofs/dp/B00120SEBO>” Contact Mark about his GaGa success at mark@campcrosley.org and download plans at <http://www.garyforster.com/library.php>.

Put Andrew Carnegie in Charge of Staff Training – Carnegie said, “Take away my people, but leave my factories and soon grass will grow on the factory floors.....Take away my factories, but leave my people and soon we will have a new and better factory.”

Seth Godin’s take: “Is there a typical large corporation working today that still believes this? Most organizations now have it backwards. The factory, the infrastructure, the systems, the patents, the process, the manual... that’s king. In fact, shareholders demand it.

It turns out that success is coming from the atypical organizations, the ones that can get back to embracing irreplaceable people, the linchpins, the ones that make a difference. Anything else can be replicated cheaper by someone else.”

Read Carnegie’s quote again. It reminds me of the summer *after* the Des Moines Y camp lost their dining hall and much of camp to a flood. Exec David Sherry said, “I don’t know what we’re going to do for an emergency *next* summer. Our staff rose to the challenge and made this the best we’ve ever had.” Think about *that* when you plan orientation.

A Place to Make Memories – “Hi Gary, you encouraged me to share photos of the authentic Adirondack Lean-tos that I build as a side business.

http://millandhammer.com/Mill_and_hammer/Products.html.”

Families drive hundreds of miles to vacation in places where they can take photos of a piece of history like this. Can you imagine it on your web site? Can you imagine campers sitting around the campfire in front of it? THAT story will be easy to share with mom and dad because they’ve always wanted to write themselves! Jonathan Gorgas’ prices are so reasonable; and he loves the authenticity. Reach him at jgorgas@millandhammer.com where he is the property manager for a camp on Upper Saranac Lake, NY.)

Breaking Bread Together – “As a part of its ongoing program of community support, Five Guys Burgers and Fries will raise money tonight for YMCA Camp Cristina. From 5 to 8 p.m., the restaurant will donate 10 percent of its proceeds to the camp's Building Strong Kids Campaign, which supports [camp scholarships](#) and school supplies. Come on over, enjoy dinner and support a great cause. For information on how you can help support Camp Cristina, call (813) 677-8400.” This was an article in Tampa’s South Shore Tribune. Will they raise a lot of money? Enough for a couple more kids to go to camp; but even more valuable will be the “flash mob” of Y Camp parents, campers, alumni and volunteers who all gather for a huge, happy (greasy!) banquet; building community, reviving memories, and strengthening friendships. Yeah, it’s worth it. (*I’ve been to similar camp gatherings at Cold Stone Creameries and Fuddruckers*).

YMCA Rag & Leather Programs have been an effective tool in promoting one-on-one counseling and personal growth for over 96 years. The program is designed to help people take a closer look at themselves in relationship to their own strengths and weaknesses, religious beliefs, and relationships that surround them. It provides an opportunity to promote positive growth in Spirit, Mind and Body, encouraging quality time between staff and members, counselors, campers; even family campers. Much of the longevity is due to the camaraderie built on the use of traditions, symbolism, and easy to use resource materials. You can download the entire manual from <http://christianleadershipconf.org/rags/>

Attend Gary’s “Purple Cow” Workshops –

- March 12 & 13 ACA Mid States in St. Charles IL (2 workshops)
- March 23-25 Camp Maintenance Conference; call 518-656-9462 (4 workshops and a new keynote show).
- March 26 & 27 ACA New England, Manchester NH (4 workshops; & **Gary receives the Peter Kerns Award**: “given to an individual, group, or organization that has shown extraordinary commitment to the development of camp professionals.” I’d love to share that day with you.

A Powerful Story of the Value of Camping – by Laurie Roberts (*worth sharing with board members and CEOs*):

At this, the dawn of a big election year in Arizona, Vernon Parker is the most intriguing candidate running for governor. This great-great grandson of a slave is the mayor of the wealthiest, whitest town in Arizona. He's a black man running for the top job in a state that was one of the last to establish a paid holiday honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King. And he's a Republican.

As a kid, he didn't have much in the way of material possessions, as he tells it, but there was an abundance of love and that was enough to keep him out of trouble. That, and sports. And a grandmother who was determined that he would be the one to break out of the neighborhood.

By day, she cleaned houses for a living, often taking him along, and at night, he would read the Bible to her, as she couldn't make out the passages herself. Summers were highlighted by a trip to

YMCA camp in Big Bear, but to get there, he had to sell butter toffee peanuts. It was in those tins of butter toffee peanuts that Parker says he found the underpinnings of his Republican philosophy.

“They didn't just give it to you,” he said, of summer camp. “There was a sense of responsibility. I'm sure it cost the YMCA more to send us to camp than those butter toffee peanuts (raised), but what it did was it taught work ethic and it taught that if you are going to get something out of life, you're going to have to work for it because if you didn't sell them, you weren't going.”

There was never any question in Parker's mind. He was going. To camp. The first in his family to college. Eventually to law school.

He was accepted at Georgetown and had enough for one semester's tuition when he bought a one-way ticket to Washington. “My thought,” he said, “was if I got out there and succeeded, they'd have to keep me.”

He did and they did.

– From <http://www.azcentral.com/members/Blog/LaurieRoberts/70853>

“Lord, when did we *see you* hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?” –

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” – *Mathew 25: 37-40*

“Multi-task *stuff*, not *people*. Look someone in the eye when you talk to her.” – Terri Trespicio

“Oel ngati kameie.” – *Na'vi* for “I See you.” (In the *Avitar* script the “s” in “See” is capitalized.)

Warm regards,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

“Camp Solutions for Great Camp Leaders”

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