

April 2011

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul." – John Muir

Banana Boat S'Mores – It's got Bananas! Must be healthy! For overnights or campfire cooking:

- 1 banana
- 2 heaping tablespoons chocolate chips
- 10 mini-marshmallows
- 1 full Graham cracker (crumbled)
- 12" square of aluminum foil.
- 1 plastic spoon (for eating!)

Split the banana lengthwise, skin on. Lay halves "spooning" on the foil. Layer with chips, minis, and Graham cracker crumbs. Fold carefully and lay on hot coals for 5 minutes or until oozy-gooey good!

First Evening of Each Session – "Welcome Party!" at Camp Gorham (NY) is the best first-night activity I've seen. Cabins rotate between senior staff members' "stations" where they facilitate teambuilding exercises and games that focus on learning names, working together to solve challenges, learning about the camp, and laughing. Campers get to know not just the names of key staff, but also their unique personalities. Counselors get to lead their own cabins through appropriate challenges, too. -- Contact exec Anne Thornton at annet@RochesterYMCA.org

Web Site of the Month – All the stuff most of us put in our websites; but just laid out clean and easy to find. <http://www.campkodah.org/>

Beautiful Decks n' Docks – Finally, a *simple* way to install any type of deck boards without peppering the surface with nails or screws: <http://www.camofasteners.com/index.html>

Fish Finder – "Day Camp Keith" from CT writes, "I got a chuckle out of your recent newsletter about teaching Fishing at camp. We actually have always had fishing as a free-choice period for older campers but we've now decided to add it as a regular activity area for all ages this summer. The website you provided was excellent. <http://www.takemefishing.org/general/about-rbff/programs-and-materials/materials-request-form> It really is a no brainer to teach fishing at camp if you have the capacity to do so." -- Keith Garbart, keith@windingtrails.org (Ed note: if you offer fishing, please commit to kids catching fish. That means good bait, every day. Maybe it's time to start a worm farm. And you've got a whole *SECOND* skill class: Worm Wrangling! -- Gary)

Don't Design – Everyone thinks they can design a cabin. They can -- a BORING cabin. To prevent that, at least start by looking at what kinds of kits you can get pre-designed; even delivered ready-to-assemble with your own crew. Here are a few examples that convinced me that even *I* shouldn't start with a blank sheet of paper: <http://www.unclehowards.com/BarnKits.aspx>

Great Architecture – Check out what's possible. In this case, a beautiful little interpretive center. <http://hubbellandhubbell.com/portfolio/elfin-forest-interpretive-center/> (*Thanks to Laura Hunter, volunteer at Camps Marston & Surf, CA*)

Start Staff Training Right Now -- Jennifer Deasy, or "JD", assistant director of YMCA Camp Coniston writes, "We started using Expert Online Training in 2009 and now we can't go without it! The videos add variety to staff training, rather than having staff listen to me and John over and over again. We feel that the greatest strength of the Leadership Essentials modules is that they 'back up' the Camp Director by offering a different 'expert' voice. The videos also help our staff absorb the concepts and expectations of youth development professionals before they even get to camp. Last summer, two of our staff ran over to me from the lodge, excited, 'JD, we just talked with a camper and it went just like the Chris Thurber video!!' That completely made my day!" <http://ExpertOnlineTraining.com>

Who Makes Those Cool Nature Center Signs? – You know, the indestructible ones you see in National Parks and museums? Here you go: <http://www.folia.ca/fofia-eng.html?col1=open#all>

Fundraising in the Deep End -- <http://www.marketingfornonprofits.org/2010/12/4-forever-facts-about-fundraising.html>. A good, short, and sweet reminder of what works (even when you're in the thick of it.) Summer is the best time of year for potential major donors to visit with you at camp. Just to show them "All the good stuff that kids are doing here." People are starving for good news.

Sailing – If a kid learns to sail, and have that invigorating and social outdoor sport for a lifetime of recreation, it's likely to happen at camp. Your camp? Maybe it's time to ask some alumni to pitch in for new boats, or at least fix up the old ones. YMCA Storer Camps (MI) has a "Boat Boys" week each spring where alumni "of a certain age" get together and cut fiberglass, breath resin fumes, repair rudders, and generally act like sailors (out of earshot of campers!) If you're buying new boats and all you know is "Sunfish," consider these. Each cost about \$3,000 and provide for learning real sailing skills. The "RS Tera" is built tough with real sailing hardware, holds two people and even has a jib. <http://www.rssailing.com/fleets.asp?fleet=RS%20Tera&selection=Details%20and%20Spec> The Hobie Bravo is darn near foolproof with a roller-furling sail, arm-braced "no guy" mast, and no boom (so no head ka-booms.) <http://www.hobiecat.com/sailboats/bravo/> (*Thanks to J Keeley of Huntington Beach, CA*).

War Canoes – I could only find one manufacturer that still makes these camp classics. I had a boss once that insisted we call them "Peace Canoes." (I thought that was hokey at the time. It's grown on me.) But they can be memorable way to develop cabin unity. Though I think tying several canoes together into a raft would do the trick, too. Some tools are better improvised than bought! <http://www.clippercanoes.com/bigboats.php?PHPSESSID=db173be5da6bbe64c9d39ad6ccb502d>

Support Our Troops' Kids – Camp Foster (IA) exec Josh Carr writes: “Here’s a resource to help children of deployed military attend camp for free. Could you pass this information on to other camps so more kids can attend? <http://www.ourmilitarykids.org/> We had 5 kids our first year. And thanks for all that you do, Gary. Your name comes up in conversation quite often!” – *contact Josh at josh.carr@campfosterymca.com and check out their beautiful camp, too: www.campfosterymca.com*

More “Notable Moves” – Rick Burris (Classen, OK) is now exec of YMCA Camp Greenville, SC/NC. Steve Maynard (CT, IN, VT) is the new camp director at YMCA Storer Camps, MI/OH.

Jobs Openings – Two separate, excellent camp executive jobs will soon be posted for the Pacific Northwest. If you might be interested, send me a confidential e-mail and we can talk about “the right fit.”

“Not only can everyone be conned, we all believe in nonsense. We are sold water that comes in plastic bottles from Fiji and told it is better than tap... We are, in short, a crazy bunch of monkeys.” – *David Mamet, screenwriter, playwright, and director.*

“We must develop knowledge optimization initiatives to leverage our key learnings.” -- *Scott Adams*

“Those are my principles, and if you don’t like them... well, I have others.” — *Groucho Marx*

Most Sincerely,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

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