

April "Earth Day" 2010 Edition

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders." - Abigail Van Buren

QUICK! Here's one more good reason to contact all of your camper parents this week. – Send a quick e-mail or letter with an intro and a list like this. Note that it's not begging for supplies, but rather sharing ideas on how to teach kids by modeling positive behaviors that parents want:

"Help us with an Earth Day project that's even better than recycling... reUSEing! You've got things we could have LOTS of fun and learning with this summer. Having your camper help you collect them gets the learning starting now! You can drop them off at camp by ____, or at "the Y" on ____, or even bring them with you to camp. THANKS!

- **Your Used Magazines!** — Outside, National Geographic Adventure, Backpacker, Fishing, Paddler, Field & Stream, Tennis, Crafts, etc etc etc. Anything that would catch the imagination of a camper learning a skill for the first time.
- **Colorful Laundry Detergent Jugs** – They make great buoys for our waterfront. Our campers use them to create kayak and canoe slalom courses. (Have any extra nylon rope?)
- **Perennial Flowering Plants** – Now is the best time to subdivide Day Lilies, Hostas, and others so they grow larger and you can spread them around your garden, and **ours!** They'll happily greet campers for years to come!
- **T-Shirts from Great Teams, Universities, & Exotic Places!** We hold an auction during staff training to raise money for camperships, and you've got some cool shirts you don't wear any more.
- **Costumes!** – This summer you can bet we'll have special events that match some of this year's big movies. Do you have anything that would be good for: Alice in Wonderland, Percy Jackson & the Olympians, Robin Hood, Karate Kid, Toy Story III... and the usual favorites for Skit Night like tacky dinner jackets (for game show hosts!), wild west, sports, Hollywood, and July 4th.
- **"Welcome Packages" for International Staff** – After traveling half way around the world to get here, our international counselors could sure use a warm welcome from the parents of a camper, a board member, or an alumnus. If you'd like to participate, fill a plastic storage bin with the things that would make camp a home for the next 10 weeks. Fitted sheets, a pillow, magazines, maps, gift certificate for a pizza or ice cream, sunscreen, insect repellent, toiletries... the stuff a friend would have ready for *you* if you visited in their country. What makes it special is that it comes from a specific family that's eager to meet them. If you'd like to "adopt" a counselor, please give us a call!

More Ideas:

Camp Board at Staff Training Graduation – I've seen this tradition at several camps, but I don't know if I've shared it yet. Near the end of Staff Orientation week, they invite their board members, key donors,

“home-stay” parents for their international staff, and the leadership of their alumni group. It typically goes like this:

- Tours of “new stuff” and favorite places at camp
- Hors d’oeuvres and conversations... time for “home stay” parents to spend with their “adoptive” international staff member (they already had a care-package waiting at camp when they arrived?)
- Dinner and “Silent t-shirt auction” of camp and college and other cool t-shirts donated by visitors and staff, hung all around the dining room with bid sheets.
- Entertainment and staff introductions!
- Board members and alumni present each new staff member with their first camp staff shirt, a handshake, and a hug!

Recycled Craft Materials – Free is good, right? – Here’s a long-time favorite from my days as a Cub Scout. Martha Stewart is taking credit for it, but that’s recycling too, right? Good for her! Have your kitchen start saving tin cans in all sizes (especially good if they can nest, as they take up less room when stored). Here’s a full description and photos (it says “for Halloween” but stars and moons work better!): <http://www.marthastewart.com/portal/site/mslo/menuitem.f41682a986dc20e593598e10d373a0a0/?vgnnextoid=0e76d0f19132f010VgnVCM1000003d370a0aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=fb28d0f19132f010VgnVCM1000003d370a0aRCRD&vgnnextfmt=print¤tslide=1&page=1>

Still Need Some Campers, Do You? – Our dear friend and camp marketing guru Joanna Warren Smith says in her *April Hints*: **“TAKE ACTION NOW!**

- **“WORK TOWARD A "NOTICEABLY IMPROVED PRODUCT"**. Request that key year-round and seasonal staff submit lists of "How we can make our camp experience better for our campers". Tabulate the responses, identify 3-5 critical issues, plan the "fix" and then make a commitment to make it happen this summer in all sessions.
- **“DEVELOP A PARENT COMMUNICATION PLAN**. Map out a strategy from May 1 to the end of the 2010 summer and your early-bird registration. At minimum, you must prepare parents with succinct and timely messages. Keep parents informed about their child's experience to facilitate positive conversations about camp. Respond immediately to parent emails and phone calls. Survey parents immediately after each session about their reactions to your business and the value of the experience, not for an interpretation of their child's responses. *Camper surveys should be done on-site*. Finally, plan an early-bird outreach that features the reasons that an individual child should return, not the financial benefit.
- **“MARKET THROUGH THE SUMMER**. The best time to see camp is when it is in action. Quality tours are critical for prospective buyers and for donors to remain emotionally connected. Also ... you must tend to the business of campers extending their stays or returning for more fun in 2010.” -- **Want specific suggestions regarding the above?** Give Joanna a call at 1-800-662-4225. Sign up for her “Hints” at <http://www.camp-consulting.com/>.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Program Specialist and Area Director Certifications – At Storer Camps (not far from Detroit Airport, served by Southwest.com). And TREE CLIMBING too!

Paddling

- Novice Instructor Development Course June 7th—10th \$400
 - Experienced Paddler Instructor Certification Workshop June 1st—6th \$600
 - Coastal Kayaking Day-Trip Leader May 22nd—23rd \$200
 - Instructor Certification Examination August 17th—22nd \$500*
- *(If combined with Novice Instructor Development Course, only \$300)

Aquatics

- Lifeguarding June 5th—9th \$210
- Swim Lesson Instructor June 2nd—4th \$150

First Aid

- Wilderness First Responder June 1st—8th \$700
- Wilderness First Aid June 7th –8th \$125

Target Sports

- Archery June 10th \$75

Adventure

- Tree Climbing June 6th—8th \$625

DOWNLOAD the registration information at:

<http://www.garyforster.com/documents/StonyLakeTrainingAcademyBrochure2010.pdf>

“Action speaks louder than words; but not nearly as often” – Mark Twain

Warm regards,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

“Camp Solutions for Great Camp Leaders”

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