

# CampBusiness

JULY/AUGUST 2018

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## THE TIMBER RATTLER RUN

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OF PARTICIPANTS  
ATTEMPT IT, AND EVEN  
FEWER FINISH



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## QUOTE

**Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.**

—WILLIAM JAMES  
US PRAGMATIST PHILOSOPHER  
& PSYCHOLOGIST  
(1842 - 1910)

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# Summer Fun

I woke with the sun, snuck out the bedroom door, filled my water bottle and met my sister-in-law in the driveway. She was visiting from Colorado and we had planned to ride our bikes around Payette Lake in the early hours before I needed to begin work.



The early-morning temperatures were chilly—just above freezing—but the sun was starting to thaw things out. We climbed into our respective saddles and headed out. We rode through town, took a right on Wagon Wheel Road and circled the shore of the high mountain lake for 18.65 miles. Along the way, we dodged sprinklers, startled ducks on the lake, traversed dirt roads and wooden bridges, passed waterfalls and eventually, ended up back where we started in time for breakfast and work.

I grabbed a quick shower then headed to the office—happy in my soul for the early-morning effort and satisfied I could check another new experience off my list.

As I sat down to write this month's note, I thought back over this adventure and the many others I had enjoyed in the past month—keeping me more or less on track towards my goal of doing something different every day this summer.

It struck me how similar my daily fun was to the camp experience you're providing your campers this summer. Like me, they're dropping into a new world for a week or six—challenging themselves in new ways each day and growing as a result. It's a powerful experience.

This month's issue is dedicated to those new experiences you're providing and is chock-full of ideas for programming, food service, marketing and more.

I hope you like it. If you do, or if you don't, let us know. We love mail.

Till next month...

**Rodney J. Auth**  
Publisher

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# THIS-N-THAT

## Zac Brown Fulfills Dream To Launch Camp Southern Ground Programming

Ever wonder what Grammy award-winning singer Zac Brown does in his spare time? He's been busy getting Camp Southern Ground off the ground. After all, he says, what's the point of being famous if you can't give back?



Here's a little bit of info about the camp. According to their website:



“As an inclusive camp, we serve children ages 7-17, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, races and religions, with programs that challenge, educate, and inspire. We bring together typically developing children, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), learning

and attention issues such as ADHD, and Dyslexia, and social or emotional challenges. We also support and include children of military families as a vital part of our camper population.”

To learn more, visit <https://www.campsouthernground.org/#>.

## CampDoc Offers Text Message Alert Tool

Ann Arbor, Mich.—CampDoc.com, an electronic



health record system for camps, announced the release of its text message alert tool that allows camps to send mass notifications and emergency

communications to their families and staff.

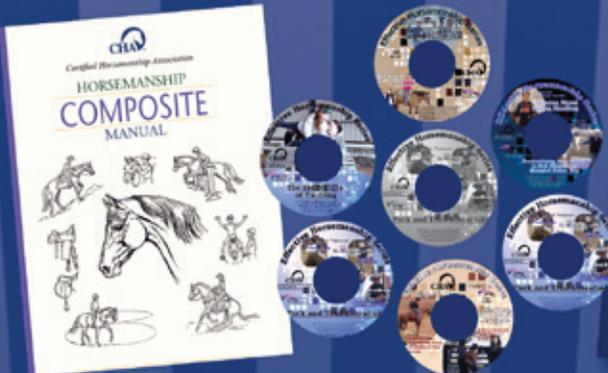
“When a disaster or emergency hits your camp, you need technology that facilitates rapid notification,” says Michael Ambrose, owner and director of CampDoc.com. “We’re continuing our mission to improve the health and safety of camp by expanding the communication tools for our camps to include text messaging.”

While delivering critical emergency notifications is essential in a crisis, many families and staff now prefer text messages over email communication for important camp announcements as well. This new service uses the latest technology and broadcast network to send large volumes of text messages reliably and quickly.

To learn more, visit [www.campdoc.com](http://www.campdoc.com).

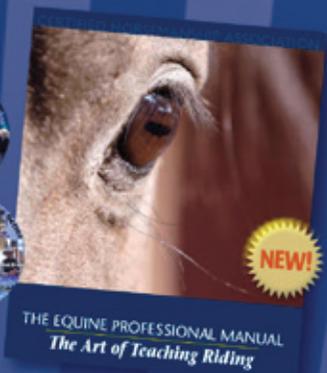
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## THIS-N-THAT



USA BMX

### USA BMX And Woodward Combine Forces

Gilbert, Ariz.— USA BMX, the world's largest BMX racing organization, and Woodward, an action sports and lifestyle camp, announced a partnership designed to benefit BMX racers of all ages, all around the world. Included in the partnership and starting this summer is a new BMX Racing program at the Woodward Pennsylvania location.

The Woodward Pennsylvania BMX Race Program will feature a brand new state-of-the-art track that will include a pro gate, asphalt turns, audio, and lights. The track design, developed in collaboration with USA BMX and track developer Lance Maguire, will allow participants of all ages and skill levels to progress and have fun.

Woodward's new BMX Racing director, Jason Toutolmin, will draw on his two decades of experience racing, event organizing and as a current USA BMX track operator to teach campers everything from bike and gear set-up to gate starts, sprints, turns and jumps. BMX Racing campers will also have access to ride on Woodward's dirt jumps, foam box jumps, and resi-landing jumps.

For more information on USA BMX or to find a local track near you, visit [www.usabmx.com](http://www.usabmx.com). For more information on Woodward, please visit [www.campwoodward.com](http://www.campwoodward.com).



CAMP WOODWARD

## CALENDAR

### OCTOBER 2018

**15-17 ACA, Southeastern 2018 Fall Conference**, Savannah, Ga.— The DeSoto Savannah; [www.acacamps.org/southeastconf](http://www.acacamps.org/southeastconf)

### NOVEMBER 2018

**8-9 ACA, Keystone Regional Retreat 2018**, Macungie, Penn.— Bear Creek Mountain Resort & Conference Center; [www.acacamps.org/keystone/aca-keystone-retreat](http://www.acacamps.org/keystone/aca-keystone-retreat)

### BETTER TO BE SAFE

#### Serving campers with Celiac disease

Alternative diets are on the rise with one of the most frequent being gluten-free related to Celiac disease. The following are a few tips to help serve gluten-free campers.

- 1** Talk to parents before camp. They understand the parameters of the diet and their child's taste preferences.
- 2** Beware that ingredient labels are tricky. Wheat-free is not the same as gluten-free. A few common hidden sources of gluten are malt, maltodextrin, and food starches. It is best to use products with the GF certification.
- 3** Remember that some foods are naturally gluten free, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. However, other naturally gluten-free foods such as quinoa, brown rice, dried beans and corn tortillas can contain gluten if they manufactured on shared equipment. Watch the labels.
- 4** Avoid cross-contact/contamination. To do so, purchase designated cooking equipment for gluten-free campers, such as toaster ovens, griddles, pots, pans, utensils, and cutting boards. Remember that purple is the color that identifies allergen cooking equipment, and if possible, designate a separate area in the kitchen to prepare gluten-free foods. To properly sanitize the workstation after food preparation, wash all surfaces with a commercial cleaning agent and hot water; allow to air dry and sanitize. Don't forget to apply all of the same food-prep safety rules when it comes to trips, too!
- 5** Introduce the camper to the kitchen manager prior to the first meal. To avoid cross-contamination, designate a location that has been properly sanitized to serve gluten-free campers.
- 6** Train your staff members to help in your efforts. An inexpensive, basic training resource for allergen training is: [www.servsafe.com/ServSafe-Allergens](http://www.servsafe.com/ServSafe-Allergens).

*Information provided by Jara Bauer, RD, LD, CDE, Director of Nutrition Services for Kandle Dining Services, Inc.*

# CHA OFFERS CERTIFICATION TO CAMP RIDING INSTRUCTORS

By Tara Gamble

**IT WAS A WEEK IN APRIL** that found 10 hopeful riding instructors demonstrating their teaching skills at a Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) sanctioned certification clinic. Birch Bay Ranch in Alberta, Canada, was the host site of this five-day clinic where certification at four different levels in either or both English and Western riding disciplines was possible. It was filled to capacity.

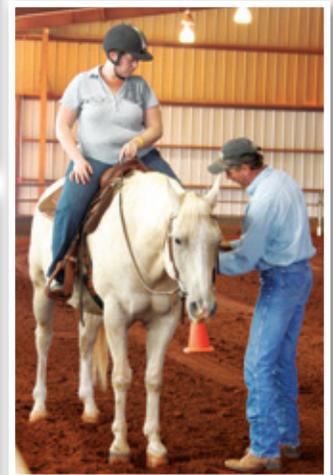
The clinic allowed participants to demonstrate their teaching and horsemanship skills in the pursuit of certification which indicates they have met minimum proficiency standards in safety, horsemanship, teaching skills, group control, and professionalism. The schedule was structured so each person taught a minimum of four lessons, a combination of mounted and unmounted lessons.

In speaking with the group, many described it as a journey in self awareness and found it to contribute to not only their professional growth, but personal as well. They felt the intensive evaluation process to be a very stretching experience, but one that was fair and standardized. The sense of teamwork and interactive group dynamics was apparent as they joked with each other about surviving the extremes of teaching.

Final personal conferences were held on the last day of the clinic, and individuals were awarded instructor certification. The group, even though each eager to get home to family, promised to keep in contact and enjoyed the camaraderie and friendships made. Although their reasons for pursuing certification varied, the end result and benefits of certification are the same, and all were eager to promote the purpose of CHA and what it has to offer.

CHA, a non-profit organization in operation since 1967, is based Lexington, Ky. It is the largest equine professional certifying organization in North America. The purpose of the organization is to promote excellence in safety and horsemanship education, for the benefit of horse industry. This is accomplished by not only certifying instructors, but also accrediting equine facilities and publishing educational manuals and producing events for the horse industry. CHA certification includes standard English/Western, Driving, Equine Facility Managers, Seasonal Equestrian Staff, College, Trail and Recreational Vaulting. CHA does not mandate any particular teaching style or method, but evaluates instruction on the basis of being safe, effective, and fun.

The annual CHA Conference is open to all horse enthusiasts and participants get to ride school horses in sessions with top instructors. It is at Colorado State University in Fort Collins from September 28 to 30. For more information, contact CHA at [www.CHA.horse](http://www.CHA.horse). To find a certified riding instructor or an accredited site, visit [www.CHAinstructors.com](http://www.CHAinstructors.com).





# THE TIMBER RATTLER RUN

Only a percentage of participants attempt it, and even fewer finish

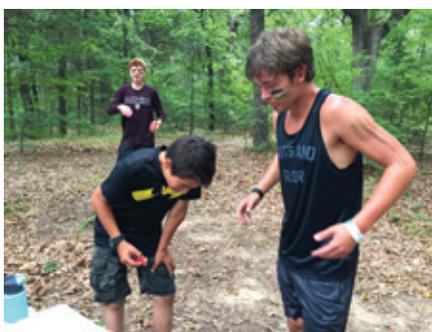


STEVE POLASKI



STEVE POLASKI

BY RUTH BENNETT



RUTH BENNETT

*When it comes to designing a course, don't offer short cuts. Use the opportunity to show campers they can push through, even when no other solution is offered.*

**B**ack in the 1980s during my college summers, I buried myself in camp culture and soaked up all the nuances it offered. Consistent themes of accepting campers as they came, warding off attempts for bullying or putting others down, introducing the idea of a Creator they might want to know, and wearing ourselves out every day for that incredible night's sleep were the prescribed order of each day. In short, the expectation of the unexpected was routine!

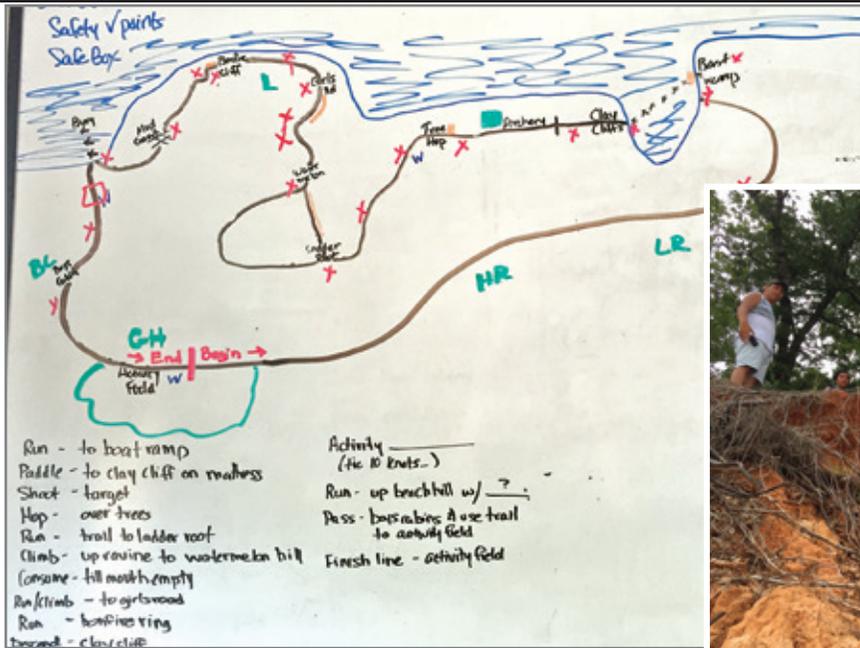
Living in that environment day in and day out brought few head-turning anomalies, which is why I distinctly remember pausing to lean in and listen one day to the idea of a non-prescribed, non-mandatory opportunity for campers who had the courage to push past the unknown and press into adventure. Now, let's just pause right here and admit that most of us enjoy camp life because it offers a front-row seat to observe people be challenged beyond their desires! But it's not as cold as it sounds. The enjoyment factor kicks in when we see them choose to step out into the uncomfortable and face their fears while taming the beast! So, as I listened to this idea develop, I was intrigued. What if an opportunity was provided for well-deserved bragging rights for campers, who, indeed, survived the course? Only a percentage would even attempt it, and fewer would finish.

### A Purposeful Course

Thirty years later and 12 years deep into my current camp-directing role, that same anomaly evaded our schedule year after year. Those involved in programming saw no need. I really wanted that non-required but highly revered event. In 2015, the time was right, and an annual tradition called the Timber Rattler Run was launched. I first established my goals and then established the course.

### The goals:

- To cause eyes to widen with wonder when the event is described
- To create an event to be used during youth camps (not kids)
- To fully exhaust the participants
- To include camp-style elements
- To create a course off the beaten path
- To include water and land
- To develop a name worthy of respect and representative of where they would perform the task.



PHOTOS: RUTH BENNETT

### The course:

- There is a central starting point with numbered participants and time keepers.
- Element 1: Run to the next element on an open road (ours is about a quarter of a mile).
- Element 2: Enter the lake with a floating mat and float to the exit point (I had extra foam mattresses that I used to avoid purchasing mats).
- Element 3: Run to the archery target setup. Each participant must hit the target (10 yards away) before moving on.
- Element 4: Run to the edge of the woods and climb over a huge downed tree.
- Element 5: Run through wooded trails and climb down into deep ravines and back out (with a rope going in and out of the ravine for assistance).
- Element 6: Stop at a watermelon station where each participant must eat a prescribed piece and swallow it completely before leaving. After swallowing, if watermelon “reappears,” run on!
- Element 7: Run (a quarter of a mile), following instructions/signage through woods; this is off-trail and includes use of ropes to climb out onto the path.
- Element 8: Continue running to a 12-foot cliff drop-off; participants are instructed to use a rope for descent.
- Element 9: Enter a mud crawl.
- Element 10: Enter the lake to swim out to a specific item and touch it and return.
- Element 11: Pick up a sandbag, climb a hill, and resume the trail to the finish line (a quarter of a mile).

### Keys To Success

The first summer event took the most time. Although we knew the property and what we might want to include, we wouldn't know for sure if it would work until we walked it out, tried it ourselves, installed all the equipment, and watched others use it. I had two young college athletes scoffing at the course,

so I asked them if they would be my testers once I set it up. They reluctantly decided they would do it after lunch. On a full stomach, at 100 degrees outside, they ran the course. When they exited the woods to the finish line, they were sputtering, red-faced, asking for water and whispering, “It's no good. Getting in and out of the water makes it too tough and climbing the hill and ... I lost my lunch.” “Perfect,” I said, with a smile and a wink, as I filled their cups with more water.

I carefully organized the course to be doable, but one that others would never underestimate. Out of 200 campers, I had 45 participate in both weeks. For all those who crossed the finish line, I provided a wristband that read, “I survived the Timber Rattler Run.” The true test was the second year that we ran the course. There was still some apprehension from programming as I took the microphone to announce that the run would be offered again, but the raucous, standing ovation that drowned me out caused wide-eyed respect from the programmer, which caused that deep place in my soul to smile. You know what I mean!

**Tips:**

- Schedule for the morning if daytime temps will be sweltering.
- Position non-participating campers along the way for support.
- Don't create impossible situations at any one stop.
- Offer great supervision along the course. Participants will hurt and some may puke, but this is not a need for rescue as they dig deep.
- Offer drinking water strategically; i.e., don't offer it right before participants eat watermelon because they won't be able to fit it all in. While that may sound fun, ultimately, it won't achieve the overall goal of helping campers succeed.
- Don't offer short cuts—campers need this to prove to themselves they can push through, even when no other solution is offered.
- Greatly praise all participants for trying—not just finishing.
- Create a way to track the winner each year for returning campers to brag about.



PHOTOS: RUTH BENNETT

**Ruth Bennett** is the Director of Camp Victory, an outreach of Victory Life Church in Cartwright, Okla. She has been involved in Christian camping since the 1980s and serves in the cabinet of the Ozark Section of the Christian Camp and Conference Association. Reach her at [ruth.bennett@victorylifechurch.com](mailto:ruth.bennett@victorylifechurch.com).

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READER SERVICE #20



# TOO MANY COOKS IN THE KITCHEN

## *Operating a successful contractor relationship*

By Quinn Ryan

**M**a-Ka-Ja-Wan Scout Reservation in Pearson, Wis., and Kandle Dining Services entered into a partnership three years ago to provide dining services for two sub-camps and to pack daily lunches for excursions. The scout reservation made the decision to contract these services after 87 years of in-house food-service control. The decision was made for several reasons, with the increase in prevalence of food allergies and special diets being one of them. It should come as no surprise that the relationship started with some turbulence. The camp staff had some deep-running traditions and vast institutional knowledge of food service. Upon arriving, Kandle employees had a steep learning curve to address in order to be successful. On the other hand, Kandle brought a wealth of knowledge in navigating the current best practices in the food-service industry. Together, a strong partnership was created, using the methods highlighted here. Many of these were hard-won lessons with much trial-and-error along the way. In hindsight, it all seems much more natural than it did in the moment, but that is often the case when forging new paths.



# If you cannot define the benefits in the relationship between vendor and client, there is conflict.

## Tips For Success

Shared goals and open communication are essential to forming a successful partnership with a food-service contractor. The following pointers will help to achieve success:

- Open lines of communication will enable you to work as a team to develop a food program that meets your shared goals.

- Begin the relationship early in the season—like October—so the new company can learn camp traditions, camper demographics, and staff preferences.

- Make sure the new partner visits the camp and its facilities to properly develop a program and menu that is feasible.

- Establish major and expendable equipment requests early in the season. This will allow you to work together to develop a dining program for the future.

- Communicate to establish mutual first-, second-, and third-year goals for dining services.

- Establish routine conversations to discuss the progress of food service, staffing, menu planning, special events, and food deliveries.

Above all, a successful partnership is built upon communication and trust. During the summer season, communicate with the contractor your goals for the upcoming season and trust that the contractor will listen and plan accordingly. Also, communicate with the dining-services team on day-to-day activities and trust that it will serve campers in a friendly, professional manner.

## Becoming Camp Staff

It became beneficial to think of the Kandle staff members as our own, working hard to bring them into the fold of the camp staff. In fact, many of the issues during the first year of operation began to evaporate when the contractor's staff felt like camp staff members. The first year was rocky at times—the camp staff did not see the Kandle staff as part of the team—but as outside actors simply providing a service. It all changed once the vendor's staff members learned the songs, attended campfires, and joined us in the daily administrative meeting. One of the biggest challenges in any vendor/client relationship is getting past the “who benefits” feelings. Obviously, Kandle is a business, but so is our camp. Kandle wants to provide the highest quality food service, at the most competitive price. As a camp operator, I want to provide participants with the best quality food at the most competitive price. The goals are in alignment, but the benefits are not as simple. Kandle benefits from our business monetarily, and the camp benefits from reducing overhead for

operating the kitchen. If you cannot define the benefits in the relationship between vendor and client, there is conflict. Once the vendor's staff members felt like the camp was their home too, we all started rowing in the same direction.

There are simple ways to make a contractor feel like a camp staff member:

- If members are willing, put them in camp staff uniforms.

- Include them in staff-recognition programs.

- Work with vendors to put them into the camp's organizational flow chart.

- Include them in evaluations of camp.

- Invite them to staff-training opportunities.

## Mutually Beneficial

Even doing a few of these procedures will improve a relationship. The benefit we saw—almost overnight—was efficiency in the kitchens as vendor staff began to feel more comfortable going directly to camp leadership with questions. We experienced more anticipation of the needs of the camp, like special meal requests. And for the first time this year, we have talked about leveraging the relationship with Kandle to obtain a better deal on food pricing for other programs—using vendor relationships to create purchasing power.

Understanding what is needed from a food-service vendor and working with the business to provide that will help create a beneficial relationship. Dining-service providers entered the field with a desire to feed people; if they are given that opportunity and work together with the vendor, they can deliver on that promise. Before we had a food-service vendor, there were many options we wanted to offer campers but were unable to because of the complexity of the situation. The major example is the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables offered on a daily basis. Previously, we were having difficulty managing the cost control of a regular salad bar. Today, we not only have salad at lunch and dinner, but a yogurt and granola bar every morning. This is in addition to three choices of fruit at every meal.

Vendor/client relationships do not have to be adversarial or contentious—they should be mutually beneficial for everyone involved. As a camp operator, I had a need to fill, and Kandle provided those services. In turn, I was able to relieve my camp of the burden of the food-service operation to provide what the camp does best—summer fun and value-based programs for young people! **CB**

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# BE A FOOD HERO

*With New Quantity-Sized Recipes*

**By Cindy Brown**

**D**oes your camp kitchen menu need some fresh ideas to accommodate campers' changing dietary needs, reflect new cuisines or food trends, or include a wider variety of healthy items? You can be a "Food Hero" with new quantity-sized recipes for your camp.

Oregon State University's (OSU) Food Hero website (<http://foodhero.org/>) is a go-to resource for quick, tasty, healthy recipes and helpful tips. Food Hero was launched by the OSU Extension Service to encourage

healthy eating among low-income Oregonians, in part by promoting home cooking as well as increased fruit and vegetable consumption.

For those cooking for a crowd, the website offers Quantity Recipes developed and approved by child nutrition specialists to meet the USDA meal pattern requirements for schools and child centers. There are currently almost 80 Quantity Recipes on the website, ranging from breakfast items to main dishes to salads to healthy desserts and snacks. Some examples include:

## Breakfast

- Apple Spice Baked Oatmeal
- Breakfast Banana Split
- Breakfast Pumpkin Cookies
- Morning Muffins
- Overnight Oatmeal

## Salads

- Asian Carrot Salad
- Broccoli Raisin Salad
- Cowboy Salad
- Spring Green Salad
- Wheat Berry Salad

## Main Dishes

- Baked Bean Medley
- Chicken and Dumpling Casserole
- Garden Sloppy Joes
- Minestrone Soup
- Pasta with Greens and Beans
- Rice Bowl Southwestern Style
- Southwestern Stuffed Potatoes
- Turkey Pumpkin Chili

## Vegetables

- Parmesan Peas
- Baked Cauliflower Tots
- Roasted Green Beans

## Fruits

- Not Your Everyday Apples
- Cranberry Applesauce
- Creamy Fruit Salad

## Desserts

- Blueberry Bling
- Cherry Oat Crumble
- Peanut Butter Cereal Bars
- Fruit Pizza
- Carrot Cake Cookies

## Snacks

- Do-It-Yourself Trail Mix
- Banana Bobs
- Dry Roasted Garbanzo Beans
- Hummus

At least 30 recipes are “kid approved.” This means the recipe has been tried and approved by at least 25 kids throughout Oregon, and at least 70 percent of the kids who tried the recipe “liked” the taste. A complete listing of kid-approved recipes is available on the website. You can also read comments from readers who have tried individual recipes.

The quantity recipes are available for small groups (ranging from 12 to 32 servings, depending on the recipe) and large groups (ranging from 48 to 128 servings). The

quantity recipes provide cooking time and directions; a list of ingredients by weight and measure; number of servings; servings of food as required by various government food programs; yield by weight and volume; and nutrients per serving. The cooking directions are generally given for the use of a steam table, but camp cooks will easily be able to modify the directions to use their stove top, regular oven, or convection oven to prepare the recipe.



## BLUEBERRY BLING

### Ingredients:

- 3 cups frozen or fresh blueberries
- 2 teaspoons margarine, softened
- 1 Tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 Tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Place frozen blueberries in a 9-inch pie plate. If using fresh blueberries, wash and drain before placing in a pie plate.
3. In a small bowl, use a fork to mix margarine, flour, sugar, oats and cinnamon.
4. Sprinkle oat mixture over the blueberries.
5. Bake for about 25 minutes. Enjoy while warm!
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

- Prep time: 5 minutes
- Cooking time: 30 minutes
- Makes: 2 cups

## BREAKFAST BANANA SPLIT

### Ingredients:

- 1 small banana
- 1/2 cup oat, corn, or granola cereal
- 1/2 cup low-fat vanilla or strawberry yogurt
- 1/2 teaspoon honey, optional (skip for children under the age of one)
- 1/2 cup canned pineapple tidbits or chunks

### Directions:

1. Peel and split banana lengthwise. Place half in two separate cereal bowls.
2. Sprinkle cereal over banana, reserving some for topping.
3. Spoon yogurt on top and drizzle with honey.
4. Decorate with reserved cereal and pineapple.
5. Serve immediately.
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

- Prep time: 5 minutes
- Makes: 2 servings



## CREAMY FRUIT SALAD

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup pineapple chunks
- 1 large apple, chopped (3 ¼ inches in diameter)
- 1 banana, sliced
- 1 orange, chopped
- ¾ cup low-fat piña colada yogurt

### **Directions:**

1. Put pineapple chunks in a medium mixing bowl.
2. Prepare apple, banana, and orange as directed and add to bowl.
3. Add yogurt to bowl and mix gently with a spoon until fruit is well-coated.
4. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

- Prep time: 10 minutes
- Makes: 4 cups



## DO-IT-YOURSELF TRAIL MIX

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup whole grain square-type cereal
- 1 cup whole grain o-type cereal
- 1 cup whole grain puff-type cereal
- 1 cup dried fruit of your choice
- 1 cup small pretzels
- ½ cup nuts or seeds

### **Directions:**

1. Set out a bowl of each ingredient with a serving spoon.
2. Let each person add a spoon of each ingredient to a plastic bag or other container. Shake to mix.

- Prep time: 5 minutes
- Makes: 6 cups

## MINISTRONE SOUP

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 large carrot, sliced
- 1 large potato, peeled and chopped
- 1 can (15 ounces) chopped tomatoes
- 2 cans (15 ounces each or 3 ½ cups) low-sodium vegetable or beef broth (see notes)
- 1 can (15 ounces) kidney beans, drained
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ½ cup uncooked macaroni
- 2 small zucchini, sliced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

### **Directions:**

1. In a 5-quart saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery, and carrot, stirring constantly until onion is soft but not browned.
2. Add potato, tomatoes, broth, beans, and basil.
3. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes.
4. Add macaroni and zucchini. Cook another 15 minutes.
5. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

- Prep time: 15 minutes
- Cooking time: 45 minutes
- Makes: 10 cups



## RICE BOWL SOUTHWESTERN STYLE

### Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped vegetables (try a mixture such as bell peppers, onion, corn, tomato, and zucchini)
- 1 cup cooked meat (chopped or shredded), beans, or tofu
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 2 Tablespoons topping: salsa, shredded cheese, or low-fat sour cream

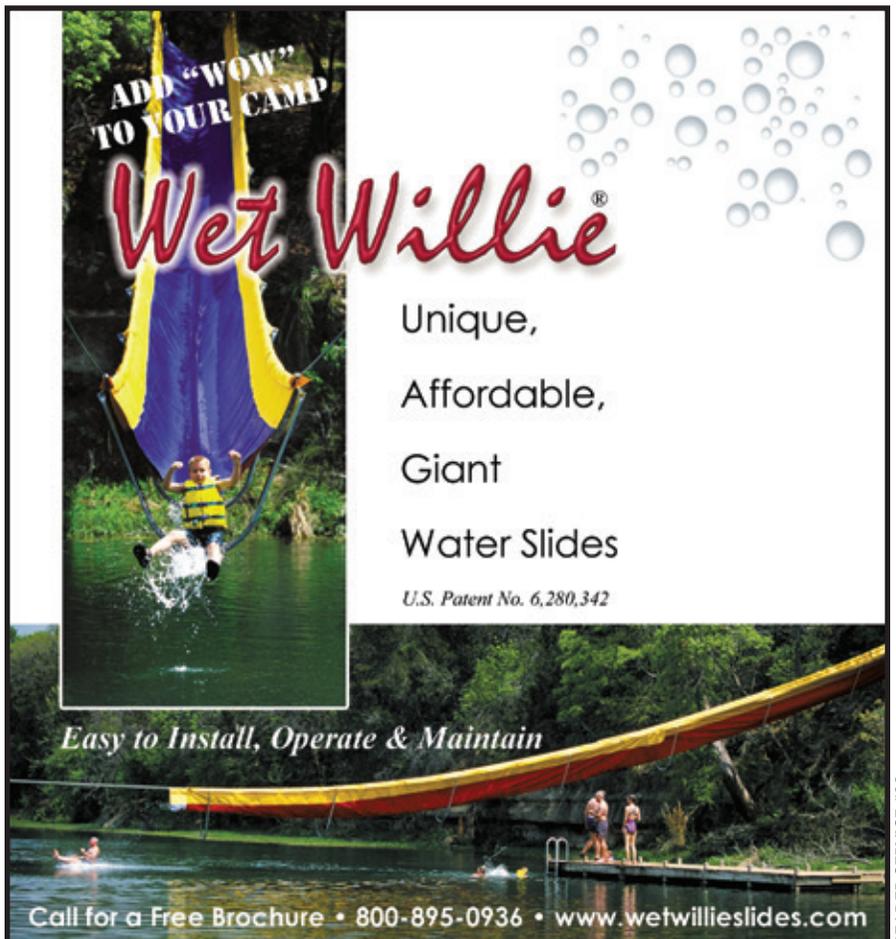
### Directions:

1. In a medium skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat (350 degrees in an electric skillet).
2. Add vegetables and cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp.
3. Add cooked meat, beans, or tofu and cooked rice to skillet and heat through.
4. Divide rice mixture between two bowls. Top with salsa, cheese, or sour cream and serve warm.
5. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

- Prep time: 15 minutes
- Cooking time: 10 minutes
- Makes: 2 cups 

**Cindy Brown** joyfully works for the Oregon State University Sherman County Extension as a 4-H Youth Development/SNAP-Ed Educator in Moro, Ore. As camp director for the Sherman County 4-H Camp, she also uses the Food Hero recipes in many of her kids' cooking classes and day camps, and is currently working with the staff at Sherman County School to conduct cafeteria taste tests of Food Hero Quantity Recipes that are being considered for school menus.

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# Kids Or Corporations

## *Who are you planning for?*

By Sandy Bliesener

**S**ummer youth camps are all about the kids, right? Creating friendships, building confidence, learning and improving skills are the ideals that nature-based resident camps foster. And many do it incredibly well in the most marginal of facilities that have been renovated and repurposed on shoestring budgets for decades.

Much of this challenge exists because non-profit youth organizations want to offer the summer-camp experience to economically diverse populations within their communities. Therefore, camper fees are kept as low as possible, and many camperships are subsidized. It is difficult to generate adequate revenue to cover costs under these circumstances, and facility maintenance is often what falls by the wayside when budgets are tight.

Many non-profit youth organizations are faced with this dilemma in developing a facility master plan for their resident camp property. The goal is to provide high-quality programs for the kids, but the facilities are often inadequate and maintenance-intensive.

Many camps have considered boosting their non-summer use by building facilities that can accommodate year-round rentals by higher-paying clientele. The idea of money pouring in from corporate groups holding mid-week conferences, with a steady stream of weddings on weekends, is enticing. Adding large buildings at camp to bring in the money needed for deferred maintenance on aging facilities may seem like the best way.



***Modest program-support facilities can be designed whimsically to add depth and quality to the activities that kids have grown to love at summer camps.***

But keep in mind that often the summer-camp programs that kids love most are run in open lawn areas, under a tent, or in a clearing in the woods with log seating. Adding a barrier-free, target range shelter from which campers can be out of the sun or rain; a small garage with a roll-up door that can be used as a pottery or woodworking shop; or a shelter built on stilts off a hillside so it feels like a treehouse, can only make the programs better. These simple, inexpensive, easy-to-maintain facilities can add incredible depth and quality to the activities that have been helping kids learn and improve skills, create friendships, and build confidence at summer camp for generations.





*Creating state-of-the-art facilities may be tempting to attract corporate meetings and weddings, but will the facilities be too nice for campers to use?*

Modest program-support facilities can be designed whimsically, such as a paintball range target that looks like an old western town, or a deck built around a large tree, to enhance the camp character and campers' experience. These facilities can be easily disassembled or moved if future programming needs a change.

And most importantly, they can often be designed to fit within the cost parameters of interested donors. Funding a \$5,000 deck that can be built before summer camp begins is much easier to sell than a \$5-million conference facility that requires two years or more of design and construction.

But if the \$5-million conference facility is the direction supported by the camp board and administration, here are a few things to think about before getting too far into the master-planning process:

**1** Have competing conferences or wedding venues been assessed to see if a demand for additional

facilities exist, and if so, how far are groups willing to travel for an event?

**2** The quality standards of corporations—and brides—are often quite high, so what level of quality can realistically be maintained?

a) Easy vehicular access, close parking, and barrier-free pedestrian walks are critically important to attract groups and have them come back and recommend the facility to others.

b) Cleanliness and a high level of service are expectations of this clientele.

c) Availability of the facilities during summer can be a great attraction to rural-camp settings. Being able to use the lake and challenge course might be the primary reason to choose a camp's conference facility, but how does that fit in with the summer youth-camp programs?

**3** How will rental-group facilities be used during summer camp?

a) Will they be flexible and sturdy enough for camp, or will they sit empty

all summer because they are too nice for the kids to use?

b) If rental-group facilities are intended to serve only outside groups, can they be located so separation from campers is maintained?

Many youth camps throughout the country have successfully developed multi-use facilities that work for both summer-camp and outside-rental groups. However, their success is typically based on having popular programs that have outgrown the existing camp facilities and having to turn away consistently profitable, returning rental groups. Rarely have they achieved their success by constructing new buildings in the hope that they would attract new business, particularly if the summer-camp sessions are not running at full capacity.

But if the demand for conference or wedding facilities is warranted, here is a final word of caution regarding the long-term costs associated with operating and staffing them.

■ Keeping year-round buildings heated and cooled is an expense that many seasonal summer camps do not anticipate, especially if they are multi-purpose gyms or dining halls with commercial kitchens.

■ Having staff available to cook, clean, and launder linens for overnight guests will be necessary, and there is no expectation that program staff that has a day or two off between rental groups will spend it changing sheets and cleaning bathrooms.

■ Maintaining a new facility at a conference or wedding level of quality will be challenging to a staff of three or four that is already trying to keep up with maintenance of 20 or more camp buildings.

These long-term costs are often not considered, resulting in already limited resources being pulled from summer-camp facilities and programs to support the new expenses.

So, if summer youth camp is all about the kids—creating friendships, building confidence, learning and improving skills—careful consideration must be given to where the facility development focus should be. Ask yourself and your team the following:

■ Can buildings intended to serve rental groups to generate alternative revenue streams also be used by campers?

■ Is there demand by existing and potential rental groups for the type of facility that can be affordably and sustainably built, programmed, and maintained?

■ Which will bring about more successful delivery of life-changing youth programs—facilities for rental groups that can bring in revenue, or small, simple structures that support programs that are already engaging campers?

Since it really comes down to the question of kids or corporations, who are you planning for? **CB**

**Sandy Bliesener** is the President of O'Boyle, Cowell, Blalock & Associates, Inc. (OCBA), and has more than 30 years of experience as a landscape architect. She received a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from Kansas State University, and has been with OCBA since 1993. Most of her career has centered on working closely with clients to develop designs in the charrette setting, and facilitating public meetings. In addition to corporate and educational campus, park, and public plaza design, she has worked with more than 35 youth organizations throughout the U.S. to develop camp master plans using a participatory process.

**Jon Rambow** of Slocum Architects and **Marlies Manning** of Manning Design are also members of this collaborative camp master-planning team, and contributed to this article.

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# Elevate Your Game

*Use positive self-talk to keep campers coming back*

By Adrienne Shibles and Susan Langlois

**A**re you just getting a new basketball camp off the ground? Or are you a veteran camp director who is looking for a new approach to boost the motivation of staff members and campers? Stephen Covey's advice would be the same for every camp director: "Begin with the end in mind." Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, a bestseller, is heralded as a bible for owners of any business because it puts the focus on people.

So how can camp directors "begin with the end in mind?" Start by answering this question: What do you want campers to say about your camp?

Here are some answers from people who loved their camp experience:

- "Camp was so much fun!"
- "I made new friends and we all want to go back to this camp next year."
- "I have more confidence because my coaches taught me what I need to practice."
- "I improved so much—now my goal is to practice even harder and make varsity this year."

A successful basketball camp experience requires a staff that values exceptional teaching of skills and character development, as well as an environment in which campers have fun. Staff training must emphasize the camp mission and clear expectations to support the camp's goals. A great way to reinforce the actions that support these values is through the words of the campers themselves.

**Positive self-talk can pay immediate dividends and have lasting effects on how people invest their energy.**

When there is an awareness and then a commitment to state what people are doing right, positive self-talk influences what the brain filters out (the negative). Positive self-talk puts the focus on what is working. The result: People believe they are already making progress, and their mindset is to expect more success. "Our campers loved designing their own out-of-bounds plays yesterday. And it looks like our

new drill that creates space is working. Creating space was part of almost every out-of-bounds play. Let's see how often they create space when they scrimmage today."

Positive self-talk also helps the brain identify more solutions to problems. Some of these solutions may have been there all along, but the brain may have missed them when negative self-talk diverted their focus.

### Generate Celebrations

One strategy to reinforce values is to gather at the end of the camp day to generate "celebrations." Ask staff members and campers to recognize someone whom they appreciate at camp. Teaching campers about the importance of gratitude enhances the goal of character development. Also, for a camper to stand before a group and articulate a sentiment of gratitude can promote confidence. Positive comments are also directed toward staff members who encouraged campers or took the time to teach them a concept.

When campers are given the space to think about and articulate the positive things that happened to them on that given day, they leave feeling good. In addition, the staff is rewarded, and each coach becomes even more invested in ensuring that every camper has a wonderful experience. This is a good strategy to reinforce camp values in a transparent manner.

### Use Positive Self-Talk

Experts in human behavior, especially in sports psychology, recommend teaching campers how to use positive self-talk. It's all about describing "what's working well."

Here's an example of a camp director who uses positive self-talk to share "what's working well" with staff members: "We have over 90 percent of our campers returning this year. The camper evaluations showed their number-one reason for coming back was that their coaches cared about them and helped them improve."

It can be so easy to slip into negative self-talk: "Ten percent of our campers aren't planning to come back this year, and most of them didn't give a reason. A few said it was too expensive. I don't buy it because we are the lowest-priced camp in the area. We need to make sure that every camper wants to return next year. Make sure that they know what a deal they are getting."

Positive self-talk delivers because it affects perception.

### Positive Self-Talk Can "Go Viral"

When campers remark, "Camp was so much fun," a director who practices positive self-talk might simply say, "I love to hear you say that." Now the campers are aware that the director appreciates what they said. Because the campers and the director are focused on the positives, their brains are most likely filtering out the negatives. They are also more likely to talk even more about what they did at camp to have fun. These campers' positive self-talk also reinforces their anticipation of having more fun at next year's camp.

Positive self-talk can pay immediate dividends and have lasting effects on how people invest their energy. When the focus is on "what's working," it can also instill confidence and insights from the staff. These insights can identify the next best steps in order to elevate the camp experience for everyone.

Self-talk about what's working well gives everyone more energy, which can make all the difference! **CB**

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**Adrienne Shibles** has over 20 years of collegiate coaching experience and has directed numerous summer-camp programs. She spent nine years as an Associate Professor of Physical Education and the Head Women's Basketball Coach at Swarthmore College, and is entering her 10th year at Bowdoin College. Reach her at [ashibles@bowdoin.edu](mailto:ashibles@bowdoin.edu).

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# Life-Skills Training

*Start small  
to achieve  
big results*

By Philip Lilienthal

**T**his space is often filled with articles about the ways that camps add value to children's lives, such as providing and identifying skills that stimulate leadership, independence, sportsmanship, cooperation, group living, and outdoor living skills. For those who want an additional way of making the camp experience unique and beneficial in the short- and long-term, consider building life-skills training into a curriculum.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in 1966, I established Ethiopia's first residential summer camp. Later, I decided to draw on that experience, along with my years as a camp director, to pursue a new goal—to help children affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa. I partnered with a large South African organization based in Soweto whose goal was to bridge the chasm from teen to healthy, productive, caring adulthood.



## A Place To Shine

Camp Sizanani is one camp in a country that has very few organized camps; instead, the notion of camp is achieved largely via weekend retreats organized by community and religious groups. Not only did we want campers to have the time of their lives, but we wanted them to gain skills that would empower them to realize that they could, if they chose, move beyond the environments in which they were raised. We wanted to help them find the tools to do so.

As we contemplated adding the layer of life-skills training to the curriculum, we decided that we could always return to the more conventional camping model if ours didn't catch on. I was confident we could provide great activities with lots of fun, and those would include the accompanying soft life skills of teamwork, communication, sportsmanship, and so on. But we needed to address some of the major impediments that teens were facing, as determined by South African staff members, and then find ways to provide the education they needed to meet those challenges.

## An Effective And Interesting Curriculum

The South African public school system is very poor and ill-equipped with resources, both human and material. Classrooms are crowded (often 50 or more students to a class with one teacher), teachers are poorly paid, and many have little motivation to perform. Stories are rife about teachers simply not showing up for class or changing exam schedules on the day of the exam to fit their own needs. There is a life-skills curriculum in the schools, but teachers are not trained in it and are embarrassed to talk about sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and related issues. The challenge was to make teaching these subjects effective and interesting.



***Studies are showing those who participate in life-skills training in South Africa's Camp Sizanani are staying in school, earning scholarships to university, finding jobs in a country with very high unemployment, and thriving in a culture that has not traditionally provided paths to a world outside the environments of their birth.***



In developing what is now our curriculum, we also developed methods for bringing life-skills training into the mix. We were fortunate to have Michael Brandwein for the first staff training. Not only do many of his training techniques continue to this day, but the entire ethos of camp was established and adopted by the staff from that first training in December 2003. Experienced trainers from the U.S.—Bev McEntarfer, Nancy Frankel, and Bob Ditter—came to South Africa for multiple camp sessions and contributed mightily to staff development. Many other camp professionals have been with us and given their best practices to help get us to where we are today.

We selected staff members with life-skills training, and then we gave them more training. We collaborated with other organizations to determine which teaching methods would be most effective in a camp situation. We then tweaked those to fit into a one-hour activity segment. Over the years, materials have been refined and emphases have shifted with time. We have expanded to two life-skills activity segments a day and at least one optional evening activity that campers can attend to get more questions answered.

Camp sessions are eight days long, and campers are permitted to attend only one session. Because we work in the Soweto area (population estimated to be 3.5 million), we have an enormous base of camp-age children, ages 13 through 15. We want the high impact of the first camp experience to be enjoyed by as many young people as possible.

### **Evidence Of Success**

Studies by outside evaluators have shown progress and improvement in a number of areas. All reports from parents, teachers, and campers show that camp has made a difference in



their lives. These young people are staying in school, earning scholarships to university, finding jobs in a country with very high unemployment (about 40 percent), and thriving in a culture that has not traditionally provided paths to a world outside the environments of their birth. Moreover, we have received no negative feedback from the families of the 8,500 campers who have been through the program.

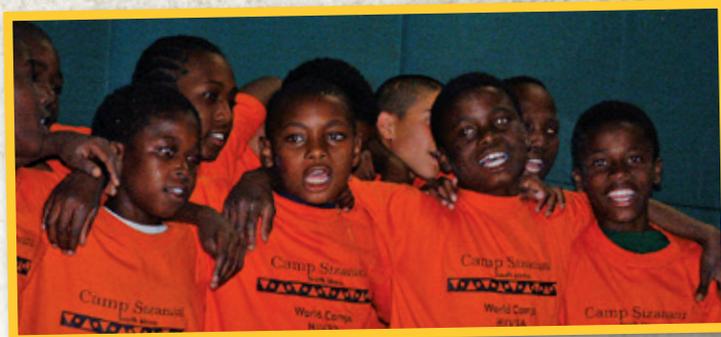
The camp experience, amended by life-skills training, has been the force behind these indicators of progress. Would a traditional camp curriculum of sports, swimming, arts and crafts, and theater (all of which we have) have achieved the same thing? We don't know, but we suspect not. When negative influences are all around and children experience supportive camp activities that address those issues, we think people are better equipped to deal with the negative forces.

In South Africa, experts have determined that the following areas need attention:

- HIV/AIDS
- Sexuality
- Reproductive rights
- Gender bias
- Abusive behaviors
- Teen pregnancy and parenting
- Drugs and alcohol
- Gangs
- Prostitution
- Women's empowerment
- Self-empowerment
- Crime.

In a U.S. camp, topics could include these:

- Drugs (including opioids)
- Sex education
- Bullying
- Empowerment
- Self-worth
- Smoking
- Alcohol abuse.



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### Give It A Try

Like so much else at camp, the effectiveness of the curriculum depends on the staff members. Many organizations can train counselors to be effective leaders in life-skills subjects, but the first step is to make the decision to provide this value-added component. Life-skills training can start as an optional, late-night activity for older campers who get to stay up later than the rest of the camp. It might need parental consent. It could meet once a week as a start, but we expect its popularity to soar and demand to increase.

For those who run into resistance to the idea of incorporating life-skills activities, listen respectfully and suggest that camp has more of an obligation to its campers than to continue as it always has. Remind concerned voices that the program would be optional and would not interfere with any other activity.

Your obligation as a camp director is to lead parents and children in new ways to make camp valuable for campers. After you have incorporated this idea into the curriculum, consider consulting parents again after summer to get additional feedback. Chances are you will know the success of it even earlier as the summer progresses and campers provide their own feedback.

We are all looking for new activities at camp. At the same time, we want to make a significant contribution to campers' lives. This approach can do both. **CB**

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*Philip Lilienthal is president of Global Camps Africa, headquartered in Reston, Va. Reach him at [phil@globalcampsafrika.org](mailto:phil@globalcampsafrika.org), or visit [www.globalcampsafrika.org](http://www.globalcampsafrika.org).*

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## PART 1

# GROWING

## From The

# INSIDE



### *Cultivating great leaders from participants of all ages*

Internal leadership development (ILD) is a program of hiring, training, and promoting front-line staff members and supervisors from the camper ranks. The benefits for day camps, overnight camps, and other summer youth programs include:

- Enhanced loyalty (because you are hiring people who love your camp)
- Reduced liability (because you are hiring staff members whose behavior you have observed over multiple summers)
- Heightened expertise (because staff training week focuses on advanced skills, not teaching new staff members the schedule)
- Easier spring hiring (because ILD can eventually become your primary source of new hires).

Although critics deride homegrown staff as incestuous, that characterization is invalid. The diversity of experiences staff members enjoy in the nine months of the off-season guarantees they will return to your camp with fresh perspectives, new ideas, and incisive questions about your traditions.

#### **Great Camps Don't Just Happen**

“You could take skilled leaders and put them in a parking lot with a bunch of kids and make a great camp,” said Tom Giggi, one of my mentors, more than 30 years ago. I was a proud, first-year cabin leader, smitten with my newfound power and the immense privilege of having been chosen to return to camp after my Leader-in-Training year. Tom was charged with the prodigious task of keeping me humble and focused on my job: the children—not the equipment—at camp. His comment has become one of my mantras because it speaks to the tremendous potential that youth leaders have to transform a perfectly good camp into a great camp.

This transformation hinges on something simple but

increasingly uncommon: a leader's secure relationship with his or her campers. From that, other elements of a great camp follow: strong traditions, long staff and camper tenure, and a spirit that transcends the fancy equipment. Of course, finding talented leaders, who can keep children their top priority, is not simple. Even if you are an expert interviewer, you don't really know how a new hire will treat your campers. Fortunately, there exist alternate methods for finding skilled staff members. In fact, they are right there in your camp already, enjoying their camper years and beginning to absorb the camp's philosophy.

Nurturing, selecting, and training the campers who best exemplify a camp's values is a complex process that lies at the heart of ILD. But before you make a commitment to internal leadership development, you must ask yourself key questions, understand fundamental training techniques, and design a model that incorporates essential core elements. What follows is an outline—which you can customize—of those questions, design elements, and training techniques.

#### **Begin With A Leadership Self-Examination**

Whether you are looking to enhance existing ILD program or start fresh, first ask yourself some conceptual and pragmatic questions. More than an academic exercise, these questions are a prerequisite to designing an ILD program and mentally committing to its success.

Responses to these questions will help determine whether ILD is right for you and lay the foundation for your version of an ILD program. Plan at least a day-long retreat to discuss these questions with senior staff members. (Some camps may elect to invite an outside facilitator to objectively guide this crucial stage in their camp's leadership development.) Allow each person to ponder each question and provide detailed answers. Without understanding why you are doing what you are doing, you cannot justify the program's workings to staff members, see where it needs improvement, or obtain cooperation in following through on its stated goals.

QUESTION	RATIONALE	APPLICATION
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>What is leadership?</b></p>	<p>Youth-development professionals have different definitions of what leadership means. To answer this question in the camp context, ask yourself why young participants do or do not follow staff members' words and deeds, both good and bad.</p>	<p>Formulate a description of the ideal qualities youth leaders should possess.</p>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>What is leadership development?</b></p>	<p>You must understand how one's leadership skills grow, whether through observations of mentors, on-the-job training, workshops, readings, or simple maturation.</p>	<p>Discern what the camp is or is not doing to cultivate leadership among the campers and younger staff members.</p>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>What is internal leadership development?</b></p>	<p>Leadership can be cultivated in many places, including outside of your day camp, overnight camp, or summer youth program. An ILD program presupposes seamless integration with pre-camp hiring practices and in-camp activity programming.</p>	<p>Consider how you "bring campers up through the ranks" and hold out camp employment as a reward for exhibiting trainable leadership qualities.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>What are the benefits and challenges of internal leadership?</b></p>	<p>Good resumes are not hard to find, but good people are. Begin thinking about how cultivating your own staff from within the camper ranks could enhance the program's quality. Consider also the disadvantages to a homegrown leadership.</p>	<p>Whether you are starting a new ILD program or improving an existing program, keeping the pros and cons in mind will prevent you from becoming discouraged over multiple summers.</p>
<p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>What are the alternatives to leadership?</b></p>	<p>Some camps are not focused on leadership and are run as a bureaucracy or an autocracy. There are alternatives to consider, based on the camp's mission.</p>	<p>Consider where or under what circumstances you are unwilling or unable to let spontaneous leadership take its course.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>What are the alternatives to internal leadership?</b></p>	<p>Before you commit to an ILD program, consider all of the other ways camp staff members get hired (friends of staff, family of director, Internet job boards, international staffing agencies, camp fairs, etc.). How have those alternatives been working? How can those alternatives be enhanced?</p>	<p>It takes an ILD program a minimum of seven years to run smoothly and act as a significant source for new hires. You won't want to let go of other hiring practices just yet.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>What is your goal in developing an ILD program?</b></p>	<p>After answering questions 1-6, you should begin to formulate one or more goals. Think of the reasons why you want to draw leaders from the camper ranks. Consider all the people who will benefit as well as the ways in which that will enhance the camp.</p>	<p>Staff members are the lifeblood of your camp. The goals in developing an ILD program will motivate you and force you to think creatively about the program's future.</p>



Committing to ILD, or to an enhancement of your existing program, is a bold step to take. Besides the obvious regular meeting times you will need to set aside to evaluate senior campers and junior leaders, you will need patience and perseverance over many years, as the program evolves and you work the kinks out. It also means slowly hiring fewer staff members from the outside and sometimes putting a young leader's interpersonal skills above his or her athletic or artistic skills. Most importantly, it means carefully designing a system of selection, training, and promotion that cultivates qualities you desire in leaders. These design elements are the subject of Part 2 in this series. 

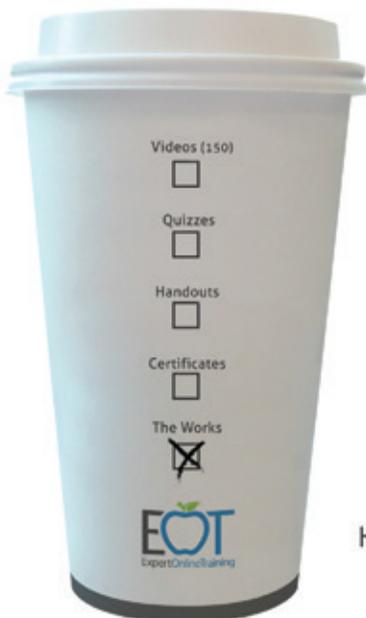
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**Dr. Christopher Thurber** is a board-certified clinical psychologist who enjoys creating and presenting original educational content. He serves on the faculty of Phillips Exeter Academy and consults for schools, camps, and other youth-serving organizations worldwide. Learn more at: [DrChrisThurber.com](http://DrChrisThurber.com).

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# Untangling The Web

*Advice on design and development  
from someone who's been there*

By Matthew Smith

In February 2016, I helped launch our new website for Longacre Leadership Camp in Pennsylvania. After much analysis of the design and development process, we came up with something of which we're proud. For those of you looking to tackle a similar project, here are the steps we took and the logic behind them. We hope this helps you navigate the process.

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## Background Research

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**We took note of the stuff we liked.** Pretty much, this started the day after we launched the old website in 2014. During normal e-routines, we noted websites we really liked and the features we wish we had.

**We monitored trends in design and development.** Here's an example: Did you know that mobile is a big deal? Yes, you did. But how big of a deal is it? In 2008, Americans spent 11 percent of their online time

on a mobile device. In 2015, that number was 50 percent.\* That's a lot. Our old website had responsive design, but didn't look good enough to accommodate 50 percent of our traffic. As it turns out, there's a lot that goes into the design and development of a site to make sure it looks great on mobile. Responsive design without intent is not good enough for half your traffic. So, because of this trend toward mobile, we made "looking/working great on mobile" a priority.

**We asked other people.** Advice came from some surprising corners. For example, my Uncle Jeff owns a business in Boston that connects vacationers with home rentals on Cape Cod—nothing in common with summer camp, but he knows a ton about web development, and he and my Aunt Joan were a great resource. We also asked the Summer Camp Professionals group on Facebook, and they had some great ideas.

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## Setting Priorities

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Here's the most valuable thing we learned about website development: you can't have it all. Building a website is about trade-offs. You have to set priorities and then make decisions according to those priorities. This really changed our perspective and made the decision-making process easier. Here were the three priorities we established for the new site:

- Fast
- Simple
- Appearance/works great on mobile.

We chose *simple* in part because of Steve Krug and his wonderful book, *Don't Make Me Think!* It was easier to follow Krug's advice with a simple design. Also, we learned about the paradox of choice. Intuitively, giving people more options (i.e., links) seems smart because people prefer options to no options. But, interestingly, the

science shows that having more choices tends to overwhelm people. And this certainly holds true for website usability.

We chose *fast* because of the science around load times and conversion rates. Higher load times = lower conversion rates. In plain English, people have no patience for slow sites.

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### Choosing A Designer/ Developer

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This part was relatively easy. There's a startup we've been following called Crew. If you need to build a website or an app, Crew connects you with capable designers and developers. The company understands how scary it is to trust people you've never met with something as big as your website. So Crew handpicks designers and developers (a few hundred is my guess, but I don't know) and then connects you to that pool. For this service—the matchmaking—the charge is 15 percent. Seems stiff, but for us it was worth it.

So we went to Crew, signed up, paid the \$100 yes-we're-serious deposit, and submitted a brief. Six applicants responded to our brief. We interviewed three of them over Skype.

Originally, we told Crew we had a \$5,000 budget. But we ended up spending \$8,000 to get the team we wanted—about one third of the amount I wish I had (budgets!). We went with our first choice, Series 8, a small shop in London.

When the contract is signed, you wire Crew the entire amount, and the company holds it in escrow. The designer/developer then divides the project into phases (two in our case) and requests funds upon completion of the phases. Crew doesn't release the funds until you give approval. It seemed smart, and it worked great.

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### Design

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If I think about the nine-month process in terms of excitement level, it definitely peaked during the design phase.

Mario, the guy at Series 8, worked

with us using software in which he put up wireframes (of page templates), and then we would go back and forth until the pages looked the way we wanted them. Mario and his colleagues were very good, and it was thrilling to get glimpses of what our new site would look like.

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### Development

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As soon as the design phase was finished, the excitement level plummeted and, honestly, it stayed there until we launched. Development was boring. Basically, we just watched the developers build our site. It took much longer than the design phase, and my role felt a lot like nagging: "Move that here, please" or "Make this look like that" or "No, that's not quite right." To Mario's credit, he was patient and gracious.

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### Content Creation

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Content creation was also boring. There was plenty of writing, revising, editing, finding images, sizing and compressing them (the worst!), uploading them, etc.

The exception (the only not-boring part) was the homepage. The challenge there was to make the ultimate case for Longacre Camp, and I loved it.

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### Feedback And Beta Testing

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Feedback and beta testing are an essential part of launching a website. Having noted that, they're not much fun.

After putting hundreds of hours into this project, it was tough to hear criticism, even tough criticism, of the site, especially after I expressly solicited it. Still, all the feedback and testing helped us:

- a) Work out a lot of the kinks
- b) Say things in a better way.

So it was worth it. There were three parts to feedback and beta testing:

**Part 1:** We put up the new site at beta.longacre.com (so new visitors to

longacre.com wouldn't be bothered). Then we blasted out that URL to our email list and asked for help. You never know who likes beta testing and, right on cue, we received a bunch of responses from people who love us, but still have that all-important outsiders' perspective. Their comments were superb. Some of the best responses were from people who had never beta tested before—didn't even know what the word *beta* meant—but loved the idea and jumped in.

**Part 2:** User testing. UserTesting.com has a freemium feature called Peek. Peek gives three, free user tests per month, and we used those.

**Part 3:** We used Feedback Army. We told the company what we were looking for, and then a bunch of "randoms" provided feedback. It was worth the \$40.

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### Conclusions

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I have three of them:

**1** The whole process took nine months. I projected six months. I generally feel confident about my projections. I got this one wrong and felt naïve about it.

**2** I was surprised that the second half of the process—from the completion of the design phase through to the launch—was such a chore. I guess I expected the creative process to be more rewarding.

**3** There's still a lot to do. Series 8, thankfully, has agreed to stay on at an hourly rate. My guess is we'll continue to make modifications until we decide to build our next site. **CB**

\*Source: eMarketer 4/15

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**Matthew Smith** co-owns Longacre Leadership Camp, in Pennsylvania, and he is co-leader of Raise the Bar, a community of practice for camps measuring outcomes. Reach him at matt@longacre.com.

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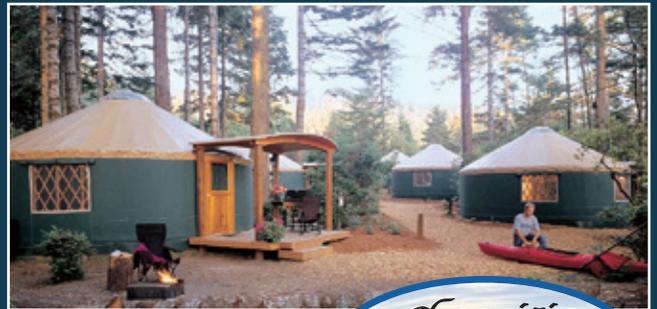
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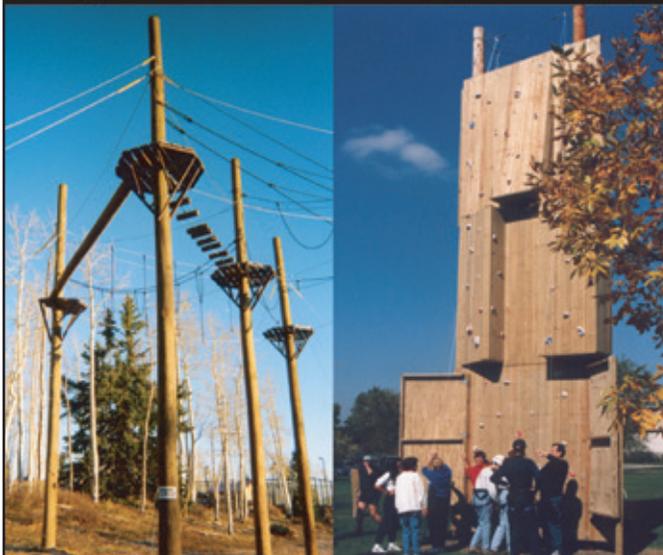
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