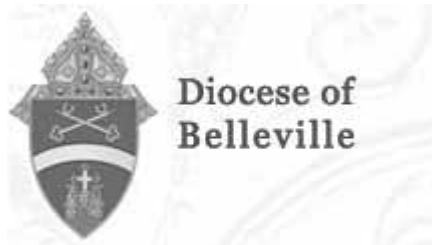




Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Manual

Revised: April 2011



Camp Ondessonk Mission Statement

The Mission of Camp Ondessonk is to provide an environment that inspires physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth for individuals and groups through the appreciation and stewardship of nature.

Camp Ondessonk Vision Statement

The Vision of Camp Ondessonk, a camp founded on the Catholic Faith, is to be the world's best youth camp. Inspired by positive role models, campers will experience the wonders of God's creation through adventurous, challenging activities in a unique, rustic environment.

Camp Ondessonk Stewardship Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
Help me see that
My Camp is composed of people like me.
I will make it what it is.
It will be friendly, if I am.
Its cabins will be filled, if I help fill them.
It will do great work, if I work.
It will make generous gifts that touch people's lives, if I am a generous giver.
It will bring other people into its circle of heritage and tradition, if I invite and bring them.
It will be a camp with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these same things.
Therefore, with your help God,
I shall dedicate myself to the task of being all the things that I want my Camp to be.

Amen.

PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

The information in this manual is intended to help summer staff understand the working conditions at Camp Ondessonk and to encourage all staff to improve their competence in the performance of their duties. It will also serve as a device for helping all staff better understand their privileges and responsibilities as employees of Camp Ondessonk. This is not meant to be a finite list of policy: Camp Ondessonk's Administration and Board of Directors reserves the right to amend these rules and regulations without advance notice, as needed.

Welcome Home.

First of all, congratulations! This world that you've just discovered – the World of Ondessonk – is one that is not always easy to enter. Don't get me wrong, camp people are some of the most welcoming and accepting you'll find. But this is a really freaking cool job, and lots of people want it, and you were not hired just because you didn't have summer plans. Welcome. And now that you're here, you should know that you've just been accepted into one of the most loyal groups I've ever seen. Forget sororities and fraternities, this group is bordering on cult-like. In a good way. In the BEST ways. So in 10 years when you're looking for a job or buying a car or getting married or having kids or switching careers or switching majors or just moving to a new place, know that you have hundreds, nay thousands, of people who will, at the drop of a hat, do everything they can to help you because they answer to the same call of Heepwah. Because it doesn't matter if you worked for a season or a decade, you chose to spend your free time in the blazing heat, in the middle of nowhere, for almost no money, because kids are important. And anyone who is willing to do that is worthy of whatever we, as a community, have to offer them, forever. Period. So welcome.

I want to remind you of what I think is the secret to being a great camp counselor. I think most people typically think our job comes in two parts – being safe and having fun. And while these two tasks are great goals, it's certainly no secret recipe. Anyone could be trained to keep kids safe. Anyone. And it's your job to learn those rules and policies and procedures and to keep them in your head and in your practice. But that's a given, and everyone should do that. As for fun, have you seen this place? It's a fun factory. Kids will have fun because they are on their own or making new friends or riding a horse or shrieking down the Shawnee Screamer. Certainly, not all kids will have maximum fun 100% of the time. But the fun is inherent in this place, this culture, and this community. You are definitely able to enhance it and continue to promote it, but let's not pretend the staff creates all the fun.

The key to being excellent, I think, lies in a third dimension, beyond Band-Aids and boondoggle. The thing that is harder to remember, harder to articulate, and sometimes harder to master, is that all of us should constantly and genuinely be **celebrating** kids. Not just keeping them safe, not just encouraging them to have fun, but in a meaningful and long-lasting way, truly celebrating them. Kids are not there simply to be taken care of, nor are they there just to play (although "just playing" is probably one of the most important and rare things that Ondessonk can provide). In the best world, at the best camp, kids will be honored, held up to be seen, heard and valued. This is a week where they are the STARS of the show. Just by being themselves, just by being there, they are excellent and exactly as they should be. And it's your job to tell them that, show them that, and instill in them that Ondessonk will always be that for them. I know you guys get what I'm talking about because you feel that, and that's probably why you're here. You feel like this is a home away from home, a place where you can be your best self, or at least your favorite self, and that you are not just a number, you're not just allowed to be here, but your presence is celebrated. It's not an easy task to communicate this to pre-teens. But you're already doing it. This is not a brand new concept, just a way of thinking about it and remembering to purposefully incorporate it into your daily routine. Don't throw safety and learning and fun out the window, but remember that even though it's your 30th day in the sun, it's that camper's third, of only six that they get, and their idea for a skit should be celebrated. And their request to dress backwards for Friday inspection should win out over your co-worker's idea to braid hair that might get you more Golden Arrowhead points because she's friends with the inspectors and she knows they love it. And their story about their dog that is a typical 10-year-old boy ramble-fest, complete with some nose-wiping and inability to sit still, should elicit from you questions of interest and reactions that suggest that this is practically being told by James Earl Jones right there at archery. While it may be more fun for you to crank out a trusted skit from your mental archives or braid 40 heads of hair or say that you will listen to the story later, that simply doesn't matter, because it's not about you. It's about that skit-writer and backwards dresser and storyteller who will go home glowing, and raving to their friends and parents, and coming back next year, and the year after that, and they will continue to contribute to one of the most incredible communities in the whole world, because they learned about the magic that is constantly being created here, and they learned it from you.

Ask anyone in the droves of alumni of campers and staff, almost everyone has some specific moment where they felt the power of being a part of something bigger, but not in a tiny, insignificant way. Rather, they felt that their specific, unique combination of skills and experience and curiosity and weird ideas was a part of camp and that Ondessonk was somehow changed by them being there. For me, it was writing a skit in 1997 at Pine Lake on an overnight, and when my friends and I performed it for our staff, one of them cried. And I didn't care if we used it or not (which we did), or if it won or not (which it didn't), because MY ability to think up the phrase "golden girls" to imply winning the GA and remember the tune to Leavin' On A Jet Plane was celebrated. That moment is different for everyone, so try to remember that campers might be getting that sense of validation even if it just means trusting them to hold the unit flag or lead a cheer.

Sometimes we think we need to constantly be performing or providing a good time or coming up with a new, creative way to entertain. And we're SO good at that, and the kids love it to boot. But take some time each day to remember who the stars should be, and make sure you give them the red carpet treatment.

-Anonymous Camp Ondessonk Camper and Staff Alumni.

CAMP ONDESSONK: 101

A brief history and background of Camp Ondessonk, our program, job descriptions, and pertinent information.

WHEN MOST PEOPLE THINK OF SUMMER CAMP, they think of campfires and lightning bugs, hiking and crafts, or s'mores and silly songs. These activities are all part of the camping experience; however, they only scratch the surface of the benefits campers receive from summer camp.

WHILE WE ARE TEACHING CAMPERS TO BUILD FIRES, we are building their self-confidence to create something powerful. We are teaching them the responsibility that comes with such power. While we are hiking, we are showing campers the valuable resources our world has to offer and what they can do to help keep those resources safe. While we are singing the songs that campers at Ondessonk have sung for over 50 years, we are teaching campers about an organization that existed long before them and will continue to exist long after. We are showing them that while one voice is powerful, a room full of voices is unstoppable.

MANY OF OUR CAMPERS SEE SUMMER CAMP as a safe place for them physically and emotionally. It is a chance for them to escape from the pressures and sometimes brutal social environments that plague our schools. It also gives them the opportunity to recognize skills that they may already possess, but have never had the chance to cultivate. While at Ondessonk, campers are given the tools to foster their own courage, confidence and character to make the world outside of Camp a better place.

Offered by Betsy Gladdish

ONDESSONK GENERAL PROGRAM:



Since 1959 Camp Ondessonk has given campers the opportunity to explore the outdoors and be challenged by a wide variety of activities in a natural environment. Ondessonk's programs are designed to be fun, educational, and safe. Our activities invite campers to test their abilities in a forgiving and supportive setting. Ondessonk's programs help campers improve their skills, gain in self-confidence and self-sufficiency and appreciate their own abilities.

Camp Ondessonk's summer program offers 9 weeks of summer camping for young people ages 8-16 with mini, co-ed, girls, and boys sessions. These campers participate in a variety of activities including: nature exploration, hiking, Woodsmanship, archery, riflery, horseback riding, swimming, boating, handicrafts, team building skills, and other special activities.



ONDESSONK COUNSELOR IN TRAINING (CIT)

A CIT is a camper who will go through two weeks of training, to learn activity and counselor skills. The first week includes training in any one activity in which the CIT wishes to specialize. The second week is designed to give CIT's experience in dealing with campers and other unit responsibilities. At the end of the first week's instruction in their "major," the CIT is given an exam on that subject. If the CIT qualifies, she/he is invited to stay for a second week free of charge. During the second week, the CIT stays in a unit with the Unit staff. In terms of camper supervision, CITs must be considered campers at all times. In other words, CITs should never be left in a role of sole supervision of campers.

ONDESSONK MINI CAMP

Mini Camp is designed for 8-9 year olds for a half week session. This program gives these younger campers a chance to experience Ondessonk in a shortened program specialized for their needs.

FOURTH OF JULY FAMILY CAMP

Family Camp is a multi-generational session open to extended families. Participants range in age from 1 to 81. This is a chance for families to experience Ondessonk's traditional program in a unit setting, complete with a Unit Leader and support staff. For many families, this their first introduction to Camp Ondessonk.

ONDESSONK ADVENTURE CAMP:

Adventure Camp offers campers an in-depth experience. Program titles include Horse Camp / Horse Adventure, Horse Expedition, River to River Backpacking Adventure, and Rock Camp / Rock Adventure. As the names suggest, campers are immersed in active and engaging programming and instruction for each of these sessions. Adventure Camp sessions are open to campers age 12 to 16 years old.



THE LODGES OF ONDESSONK AND TEKAKWITHA



The Lodge of Ondessonk and Tekakwitha is an honor society for campers and staff alike who have shown their loyalty and dedication to Camp in an exemplary way. Lodge Members are responsible for putting on the Lodge ceremony every Thursday night. New members are inducted weekly and may then come to Fall or Spring Lodge Reunions, weekends where the Lodge works to maintain the organization with elections and meetings, as well as to give back to camp through service projects. Members are divided geographically into tribes, which act independently to do service in their communities and for Ondessonk. Through fundraisers or service, all members of Lodge strive to give back to the Camp Ondessonk community.

IDENTIFYING NEW LODGE MEMBERS

Every unit, including adventure units, must hold an election each week to nominate new members for induction into the Lodge. If the unit is filled with first year campers or immature campers that are not yet ready for consideration for this recognition, the Unit Leader should inform the Lodge Officials in writing. The Unit Leader is then responsible for speaking with his/her unit about why nobody is being inducted.

The process towards induction into the Lodge:

Every unit must hold a popular election to determine two nominees.

Every Adventure group must hold a popular election to determine one nominee.

Unit leaders are responsible for “signing off” on nominees. They cannot choose to induct their favorite camper if nobody voted for him/her.

A copy must then be given to the Lodge Officials and the Camping Services Director for review. It should then be filed by the Lodge Officials in the Lodge Office to fend off complaints by parents concerned about why their camper may have been passed over for this recognition.

If a Unit Leader chooses not to induct the required number of campers, he/she must share the reasoning with his/her campers.

THE POPULAR VOTE IS NOT AN OPTIONAL METHOD OF INDUCTING LODGE CAMPERS DURING SUMMER CAMP. We must remember that the packet system was created to provide a method of induction for the campers not identified by their peers. Those campers should be coached, encouraged, or otherwise told to complete a packet.

As a staff community, we need to do a better job of being fair, unbiased, and consistent when it comes to Lodge induction. To do so, we need to get rid of the mystery... Every camper should clearly understand the process and it should not be different from unit to unit. Consistency will ensure that each unit of campers understands the process of becoming a member of the Lodge.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF CAMP ONDESSONK

1. To provide enriching experiences during the summer months for the educational and spiritual growth of people of all ages.

- a. Staff participate in pre-camp training and in-service training.
- b. Campers attend activities where instruction is provided for each specific activity.
- c. Campers have the opportunity to attend the Thursday night Lodge ceremony, which works to expand the knowledge of North American history, the Native American culture, and the history associated with the Jesuit North American Martyrs.
- d. Campers participate in a weekly Prayer Service to encourage spiritual growth.
- e. Campers attend the celebration of the Holy Eucharist weekly.

2. To encourage participants to gain an understanding and appreciation of themselves.

- a. Campers are encouraged to try new and different activities in order to expand a sense of self-worth and to advance current levels of knowledge and knowing.
- b. Campers are provided the opportunity to interact with others so to advance social skills.
- c. Campers are provided positive reinforcement and encouragement in all activities participated in.
- d. Campers reside in a communal living situation in order to enhance social skills, cooperation and communication.
- e. Campers are provided the opportunity to work towards completing arrowhead requirements (demonstration of skills development).

3. To encourage participants to gain an understanding and appreciation of their neighbors.

- a. Campers are expected to maintain the rules of safety and courtesy to all things, both living and non-living.
- b. Campers reside in units in a group living environment.
- c. Campers are given the opportunity to participate in activities with the unit in an attempt to find strengths of other individuals. These include: unit campfires, overnight camp-out, developing skits, participating in marathon, etc.

4. To encourage participants to gain an understanding and appreciation of their natural environment.

- a. Campers are exposed to low-impact hiking/camping skills through the Nature Program.
- b. Campers participate in litter removal through Unit Maintenance projects and the Nature Program.

5. To encourage participants to gain an understanding and appreciation of God.

- a. Campers attend Sunday evening Mass as a unit with the whole camp.
- b. Campers participate in prayer services.
- c. Campers participate in giving thanks for each meal to provide a sense of gratitude for what has been provided.
- d. Campers participate in evening prayer/reflection times before going to sleep at each living area (unit).

6. To challenge participants in an environment filled with adventure and fun.

- a. Campers participate in the Tuesday night game.
- b. Campers participate in the Wednesday night overnight.
- c. Campers participate in the Friday afternoon activities.
- d. Campers participate in an exploration hike.

2011 Weekly Schedule

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	R.T.	C.T. / R. T.	C.T. / R. T.	C.T. / R. T.	C.T. / R. T.	C.T. / R. T.	R.T.
Reveille		6:40/7:40	6:40/7:40	6:40/7:40		6:40/7:40	6:55
Breakfast	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>	7:45/8:45	7:45/8:45	7:45/8:45	Breakfast in Bed	7:45/8:45	8:00 <i>Old DH</i>
Activity 1	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>	8:45/9:45	8:45/9:45	8:45/9:45	8:45/9:45	8:45/9:45	Parent Reception 9:00
Activity 2	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>	10:00/11:00	10:00/11:00	10:00/11:00	10:00/11:00	10:00/11:00	Check Out 9:30-10:30
Activity 3	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>	11:15/12:15	11:15/12:15	11:15/12:15	11:15/12:15	Super Opt! 11:15/12:15	Staff Meeting 11:30am
Lunch	Staff Meeting 11:00am	12:30/1:30 to 1:15/2:15	12:30/1:30 to 1:15/2:15	12:30/1:30 to 1:15/2:15	12:30/1:30 to 1:15/2:15	Picnic Lunch 12:30/1:30	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>
Siesta	Lunch 12:15pm	1:15/2:15 to 2:30/3:30	1:15/2:15 to 2:30/3:30	1:15/2:15 to 2:30/3:30	1:15/2:15 to 2:30/3:30	Skit Practice Camper Health Chks	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>
Activity 4	Check in 1:00pm	2:30/3:30	2:30/3:30	2:30/3:30	2:30/3:30	Marathon! 2:00/3:00	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>
Activity 5	Check in	3:45/4:45	3:45/4:45	Over Night!	3:45/4:45	Tug	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>
General Swim	Unit Photos 5:00	5:00/6:00 to 5:30/6:30	5:00/6:00 to 5:30/6:30	Over Night!	5:00/6:00 to 5:30/6:30	Gen Swim	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>
Inspection / Flag	5:45	6:15/7:15	6:15/7:15	Over Night!	6:15/7:15	6:15/7:15	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>
Dinner	6:00	6:35/7:35	6:35/7:35	Over Night!	6:35/7:35	6:35/7:35	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>
Evening Activity	Mass: 7:00/8:00 Opening Campfire: 8:00/9:00	8:00/9:00 Unit Campfire	8:00/9:00 Tuesday Night game! U.L./ A.H. Meeting 8:30	Over Night!	8:00/9:00 Lodge Ceremony	8:00/9:00 Closing Campfire	<i>Enjoy your time off!</i>

Camp Ondessonk DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT

1. Employment on the staff of Camp Ondessonk is made effective by signing the Letter of Hire.
2. Recruiting, hiring, and training for all job classifications is done without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, military status, or gender (with the exception of Unit Leaders and staff assigned to live in the units). Religion or creed must be compatible with Camp Ondessonk's goals.
3. To be on the payroll all employees must complete an application form and submit 2 reference forms. Staff members who are under 18 years of age must submit a parent signed time off policy form. An updated health history/physical form will be included. It is required that a staff member has a health history/ health exam form submitted as well. The cost of the physical is the responsibility of the staff member.
4. At the time of application for summer staff positions, all applicants shall be provided with a pay scale, organization chart, and brief job descriptions for all positions available.
5. Welcome letters and information packets will be issued for formal job offers.
6. Employment is conditional depending upon a satisfactory background and criminal record check.
7. Camp Ondessonk summer remuneration is determined by the summer staff pay scale, which is made available to all applicants, as well as experience and qualifications.
8. Staff with certification in an area deemed beneficial to camp may be compensated at a higher level with the approval of the Executive Director.
9. In addition to other paid compensation, summer staff members receive housing and meals at Camp, unless for some reason they are not required to live on camp property. No Saturday lunch and dinner or Sunday breakfast is provided (except for on duty staff and underage staff who do not have permission to leave Camp).
10. Staff members are prohibited from accepting gratuities (tips) from parents or campers.
11. Staff members are allowed 1 sick day leave per month. Any absence from duties beyond that point will result in a pro-rated reduction in salary. Absence from work due to sickness or injury must be approved by the Camp Nurse.
12. Any staff member who suffers a personal injury arising out of, and in the course of, his/her duties can apply for compensation as provided by State Workers Compensation Laws. Injuries resulting from work-related duties must be reported to the Camping Services Director and Executive Director within 24 hours of the injury. Workers Compensation Insurance does not cover injuries on Camp property during free time or times when the injured staff member is not working.
13. Camp also carries Comprehensive Liability Insurance and participates in Social Security Insurance. The Fire and Theft Insurance carried by Camp does not provide for individual staff losses.
14. All staff members agree to participate in meetings and staff training programs. This requirement includes attendance at Staff Orientation unless an excuse is granted by the Camping Services Director or Executive Director.
15. Before the staff member receives his/her paycheck, all monies owed to camp must be paid in full. There will be a fee for all lost checks.
16. During the period of employment, staff cannot have other employment or perform other services for compensation outside of Camp without the permission of the Executive Director.
17. Employees are officially paid on the 15th and the last day of each month. Employees who do not take advantage of the Camp Ondessonk's direct deposit option will receive their paychecks at the end of the all staff meeting on the Saturday that falls closest to the 15th and last day of each month. This equates to every other Saturday being pay-day. Checks cannot be picked up early.
18. A personnel file is maintained on all current and past employees. This file contains: Application(s) for Employment, Reference Forms, Resumes, Correspondence, Written Performance Reviews, Discipline Forms, Warning Notices, Comments from Supervisors, Commendations and Awards, etc. This file is considered personal and confidential. An employee may request to see his/her file and the contents of it will be shared with him/her in the presence of the Camping Services Director or Executive Director. Nothing may be removed from personnel files, however copies can be made at the employees request. Employees may be asked to complete additional forms to update their files from time to time.
19. Staff assignments may be changed for the benefit of Camp at any time.
20. Performance Reviews (evaluations): Summer staff will be evaluated at least twice each season, for seasons three weeks or longer, by their activity supervisor and their unit supervisor. This confidential review is to take place in person between the employee and his/her supervisor. These evaluations will be in a written format and placed in the employee's personnel file.

2011 Summer Job Description Summaries (ACA*HR-6)

Please note: Nearly all of these positions require unit responsibilities which include living in a unit with campers, supervising campers at meals, and supervising campers at evening activities.

Head Counselor: Supervises Unit Leaders; assists with special programs and activities for campers and some evening activities. Coordinates staff work projects in Boys and Girls season. Helps assure that ACA standards, including camper supervision standards, are being followed. Must be 21 years of age or older.

CIT Director: Coordinates Counselor-in-Training program including supervision and evaluation of participants. Responsible for following ACA standards. Must be 21 years of age or older.

Lead Health Care Provider: Provides day-to-day health care needs for campers and staff members. Oversight of the distribution of medications. Regardless of training, the person filling this position must have a current Illinois license and be able to legally administer oral and I.V. medications. This position must be filled with an RN, Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistant, and MD. Responsible for following ACA standards.

Wellness Coordinator: Provides organizational and procedural support to the Lead Health Care Provider. Works with Health Center Clerk to manage all camper health form filing and documentation. Provides overnight coverage of Health Center. Leads weekly camper health check in and out process. Conducts daily walking / check-in tours to offer basic preventative Health Center support to Unit leaders. Must be a highly organized and efficient team player. Must be 18 years of age or older.

Health Center Clerk: Responsible for maintaining accurate records, organizing post-meal health calls, and performing other clerical tasks. Supervises weekly rotational Health Center Assistant.

Adventure Lead: Supervises 4 – 12 campers and 1 or 2 staff members. Supervises horse camp / horse adventure or rock-climbing / backpacking specialty programs (Rock/Backpack lead may also apply to assist with the 1 week Lodge Camp program scheduled for the last week of the summer). Lead Adventure positions require extensive backcountry and overnight camping leadership. Applicants with Certifications in Wilderness First Responder, Wilderness First Aid, Life guarding, and CPR for the PR are preferred. Responsible for following ACA standards. Must be 21 years of age or older.

Adventure Staff: Assists Adventure Lead in the duties listed above. (Rock/Backpack second may also apply to work with the 1 week Lodge Camp program scheduled for the last week of the summer). Applicants with Certifications in Wilderness First Aid, Life guarding, and CPR for the PR are preferred. Responsible for following ACA standards. Must be 18 years of age or older.

Unit Leader: Lives in unit and leads the supervision and activities of as many as 30 – 40 campers. Unit Leaders are responsible for the discipline, health, and safety of campers in her/his unit. Supervises all staff members assigned to Unit. Responsible for following ACA standards. Must be 21 years of age or older. Male Unit Leaders who are hired to work all summer will receive 2 weeks of unpaid leave during Girls sessions I and II. Female Unit Leaders who are hired to work all summer will receive 1 week of unpaid leave during Boys Season.

Activity Directors: Responsible for physical and programmatic aspects of individual activities. Must possess a working knowledge of ACA standards. Supervises and evaluates activity staff. Assists with C.I.T.'s. Works with Program Director in developing and improving activity area. Develops in-service trainings and orders supplies as necessary. Must be 18 years of age or older.

- **Handicrafts Director** – Plans craft projects; maintains inventory and equipment.
- **Nature Director** – Assigns hike schedules; creates and plans all nature activities including Woodsmanship.
- **Range Director** – NRA certification and National Archery Association certification required; maintains equipment and inventory.
- **Aquatics Director** – Directs a staff of lifeguards and boating/canoeing instructors in the swimming and small-crafts areas. Current Lifeguard certification is required. Current LGI or WSI certifications heavily preferred or the completion of an Aquatics Supervision course.
- **Boating Coordinator** – Current lifeguard certification required. Is responsible for teaching basic skills. Also must develop and offer engaging and educational row-boating and canoeing activities.
- **Barn Manager** – Assists Equestrian Director in day to day horsemanship / trail-riding operation; develops riding schedule; supervises barn staff (CHA certification is required).
- **Council Coordinator** – Provides spiritual programming and services. Coordinates Sunday evening Mass and daily prayer services. Leads hour long Council classes.

2011 Summer Job Description Summaries (cont.) (ACA*HR-6)

Activity Instructors: Assist activity director in the facilitating activities and supervising campers in the given program area. Follows ACA standards and participates in in-service trainings.

- **Handicrafts Instructor** – Teaches a variety of crafts to campers on a daily basis
- **Nature Instructor** – Leads exploration hikes and teaches ecology concepts and outdoor skills to participants.
- **Range Instructor** – Teaches participants about the responsible and safe use of firearms archery equipment and provides additional supervision at the rifle and archery range.
- **Aquatics Staff (AKA Lifeguard)** – Supervises campers in swimming lake; assists and provides supervision in watercrafts area.
- **Horsemanship Instructor (AKA Wrangler)** – Teaches participants basic riding skills. Leads and supervises trail-rides and performs daily barn chores.

Service Area Directors: Responsible for physical aspects of area. Must possess knowledge of and follow ACA standards

- **Trading Post Manager** – Ensures that Camp's Trading Post is stocked and staffed. Keeps records, sells products, orders necessary supplies, secures inventory, and re-stocks as necessary. Insures the cleanliness and sanitation of the Trading Post and surrounding areas. Must be 18 years of age or older.
- **Kitchen Manager-** Directly supports the Food Service Director in providing supervision and guidance to Kitchen Staff pertaining to the preparation and on-time delivery of hot, nutritious meals.
- **Dining Hall Manager** – Coordinates meals in the Dining Hall. Maintains proper stocks of supplies necessary for meals and ensures cleanliness of Dining Hall. Leads the organization of meals, including announcements. Responsible for clean-up of Dining Hall after each meal. Provides assistance to Kitchen staff in preparing meals when possible.
- **Health and Sanitation Coordinator** – Responsible for making sure bathhouses are clean and that trash and recyclables are collected and properly disposed of. Provides leadership in Camp's composting and recycling efforts. Oversees daily cabin inspections. This position must be filled by someone with a good driving record who is at least 21 years of age and has strong supervisory ability.

Service Area Positions:

- **Maintenance Technician** – Assists in areas needed as determined by Camp Ranger. Skills in basic carpentry and general maintenance preferred. Willingness to learn and work hard is required. Some logistical support for adventure Activities. Due to the need to drive camp vehicles, maintenance Techs must be 18 years of age or older.
- **Office Assistant** – Assists the Office Manager and Camp Registrar with clerical tasks including, but not limited to, filing, copying, and data processing. Provides on-phone and in-person customer service to the families of campers, visitors, and service providers. Must have excellent telephone etiquette.
- **Kitchen Staff** – Assists Food Service Director and Kitchen Manager in preparing and serving camp meals, rotates through weekly dish-washing duties.
- **Bunk One Liaison-** Works under the direction of the Camp Ondessonk Marketing Director to maintain Camp Ondessonk's Bunk One photo and email site. Serves as Camp Photographer. Assists Marketing Director as needed.
- **Rotational Staff** – Rotate through a different activity or service area each week, providing direct support of the campers, staff, and mission of Camp Ondessonk while gaining hands-on learning about the many details inherent to the successful operation of a large-scale residential summer youth camp.

Kelsey Philippi: Camp Ondessonk Seasonal & Summer Staff Member 2008-2011



"It is so vitally important to be who *you* are. Trying to impress other staff will only distance you from one another. Be yourself and others will gather what they want about you, and then decide whether or not to like you-not the person you're desperately trying to be. *Just be you*. It can be scary and make you feel vulnerable, but by allowing yourself to enter that place of vulnerability true friendships can be created. More important than friendship though, the respect from other staff that you actually want will come. How can we teach kids that camp is a place to feel comfortable in his/her own skin when we aren't?"



Camp Ondessonk Staff Code of Ethics

Camp Ondessonk is committed to providing a safe, fun, educational and inclusive experience for all of our campers, staff, parents and alumni. With this in mind, we ask all staff members to act appropriately at all times while they are at Camp Ondessonk, participating in camp sponsored activities, or representing Camp Ondessonk in any way. Furthermore, it is expected that staff members behave in a mature and responsible way and respect the rights and dignity of others.

If you are hired and accept a position at Camp Ondessonk, you will begin a journey that will have a permanent and positive effect on your life. In doing this, you will commit to being a positive role model and mentor to our campers. It will be a lot of hard work, BUT the path you will have chosen will provide you with a better sense of community, self-value, work ethics, and commitment to others.

All staff member are expected to read, understand, and adhere to the following “Code of Ethics”.

1. I will be a positive role model for youth. In doing so I will maintain an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact and maturity.
2. I will never abuse campers or fellow staff members, including:
 - Physical Abuse** – Strike, Spank, Shake, Slap
 - Verbal Abuse** – Humiliate, Degrade, Threaten, use Profanity
 - Sexual Abuse** – including inappropriate touch, displays, acts
 - Mental Abuse** – Hazing, Neglect, Manipulation, Teasing, Bullying

My job is to protect children at all times
3. I will conduct myself in a way that is congruent with the Catholic Church and the Catholic Diocese of Belleville.
4. I will never leave a camper unsupervised. Further, I will follow the “Rule of Three” at all times.
5. I understand that using, possessing, being under the influence, or distributing alcohol or illegal drugs at camp is prohibited. Any actions within the “Sphere of Camp” must be legal and appropriate.
6. I will treat campers of all races, religions, cultures, and backgrounds with respect, dignity, and consideration.
7. I will use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, anticipation, and elimination of potential problems. I will use positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, or criticism. I will make expectations clear and avoid power struggles with campers
8. I understand that smoking has no place at Ondessonk while I am in the role of a mentor. Smoking or use of any tobacco products in the presence of campers and parents is prohibited. Smoking and use of tobacco products is prohibited during check-in and check-out.
9. I must maintain a clean, neat, and attired appearance at all times. Extreme hair colors and cut are discouraged.
10. I understand that many parents don’t understand, appreciate or accept unusual piercings. Piercings must be appropriate and tasteful. Wearing jewelry that is “pierced” into the brow, lip, tongue, or navel is prohibited during work hours.
11. Inappropriate or offensive tattoos are prohibited.
12. I will not glorify or promote piercings and tattoos with campers.

13. I will refrain from the use of profane or abusive language and adult topics in the presence of campers.
14. I understand that romantic relationships are not the purpose of camp. I will refrain from intimate displays of affection, especially in the presence of campers and parents.
15. I will treat with confidence and respect the personal information I learn from or about campers and staff, subject to the policies on reporting abuse and neglect.
16. I will immediately report any incident or accident to the appropriate administrator.
17. I will not bring or fashion any weapons at camp.
18. I understand that the experience a camper receives is dependent on many people at camp. Keeping this in mind, I will refuse any offers of gratuities or gifts from campers or their families.
19. I will comply and fully participate with the outlined activities and expectations of my defined jobs at camp.
20. I will respect the possessions and belongings of staff and campers. I will respect the facilities and equipment of Camp Ondessonk. I understand that theft and destruction of property is prohibited.
21. I promise to obey all computer and internet policies.
22. I promise to understand and strive to meet the mission and objective of Camp Ondessonk.
23. I will show initiative, be responsible, and do things without being asked.
24. I will be innovative, try new activities, participate with enthusiasm, and sing as loud as I can.
25. I promise to support and aid staff when the time and need arises.
26. I promise to learn from my mistakes and do better the next time.
27. I promise to express dissent quietly, thoughtfully, respectfully, and never with campers.
28. I promise to make each camper feel special and to treat each camper with equal attention and care.
29. I will display humor and a positive attitude in response to stress and change.
30. I understand that I will get hot and uncomfortable, but I will continue to be positive, enthusiastic, and energetic when I am tired, sweaty and dirty.

Definition of a Counselor, Hole in the Wall Camps:

Somewhere between adolescence and adulthood there occurs in human development, an age which is physically and psychologically impossible. It is that unfathomable stage known as a Camp Counselor; a creature undefined by psychologists, supported by camp directors, worshiped by campers, either admired or doubted by parents, and unheard of by the rest of society.

A Camp Counselor is a rare combination of doctor, lawyer, actor, and plumber. He is a competent child psychologist with his sophomore textbook as proof. He is an underpaid baby-sitter without a television. He is a strict disciplinarian with a twinkle in his eye, a minister to all faiths with questions about his own. He is a referee, coach, teacher, and advisor. He is a Role Model in worn out Crocs, and a smelly, wet staff T-shirt, still smiling through the marshmallow fluff. He is a comedian in a crisis, a doctor in an emergency, a song leader, entertainer, ManBearPig Hunter, and dance professional. He is an idol with his head in a cloud of wood smoke and his feet in the mud. He is a comforter in a leaky tent on a cold night, and a pal who has just loaned someone his last dry sweatshirt. He is a teacher of the outdoors knee deep in poison ivy; without the comfort of a hot shower.

A counselor dislikes reveille, waiting in line to get salad, toast, bagels, and pouring Paul Newman's Mango Tango. She is fond of lying in the sun, exploring the wonders beyond camp, teaching new games, thinking up cheers, days off and the quiet chaos of intersession breaks. She is handy for patching up broken friendships, bloody noses, and torn jeans. Good at locating lost bathing suits, the perfect Wishboat building sticks, and catching fish. She is poor at crawling out of bed for early morning swim on raining mornings...or any morning for that matter, getting to bed early and signing camper birthday cards on time.

A counselor is a friendly guide in the middle of a cold, dark, wet night on a long hike to the campsite from the Chapel. He is a dynamo on his day off, exhausted the next day, but recuperated in time to cheer loudly for the arriving buses. Who but he can cure homesickness, air out bedwetting, play 16 straight games of Stare Tag, walk on his hands, get a little teary eyed each time he hears Lean On Me and eat four helpings of "chickenish" fingers, tacos, and Mac N Cheese. Who knew he would leave camp with a new found love for vegan cuisine?

A counselor is expected to repair 10 years of damage to James in 9 days, make Jamal into a man, rehabilitate Michaela, allow Anna to be an individual, and help Alex adjust to the group. She is expected to care for the most prized possessions of parents much older than she is. She is expected to lead them in fun and adventure, even when her head aches; to teach them to embrace the outdoors, even though she spends nine months of the year indoors in New York, Boston, or Los Angeles; to teach indigenous activities even when she can't even spell the word; to guide youngsters in social adjustment, when she hasn't even reached the legal age; to ensure safe fun with a sunburned nose, a Band-Aid on her thumb and a blister on her heel. To get inspired, and go inspire, making dreams a reality-one child at a time is her ultimate goal.

For all this he is paid enough to buy a second text in psychology, some new socks and sneakers. Plus he earns his new HH shirt, a faded memory of those little moments spent basking in the hot summer sun. You wonder how he can stand the pace and can never pay him enough for the lives he has touched and when he leaves at the end of summer.

Camp Ondessonk Full Time Staff Summaries

Executive Director: This full time position is appointed by the Bishop and the Board of Directors. The position requires over all responsibility for the management of all Camp operations. The Executive Director is responsible for recruiting and selecting all full and part-time time staff members. The Executive Director is responsible for communication and contact with the Board of Directors, budget development, and coordination and communication with all Diocesan entities. The Executive Director is the final authority in all matters for staff and programs.



Camping Services Director: This position assists and supports the Executive Director in the overall management of Camp Ondessonk. It includes supervisory responsibility for Camp services including food and beverage services, equestrian operations, and programming. The Camping Services Director recruits, selects, trains, develops and supervises summer staff. When necessary, the Camping Services Director assists the Executive Director in the implementation of camper and staff disciplinary procedures. The CSD is also responsible for coordinating some school year events.

Business Manager: Manages Accounts Payable and Accounts Received. Coordinates purchasing for the Camp. Develops regular budget reports. Organizes and generates payroll. Direct responsibility for the proper accounting and deposit of all funds received.



Program Director: Directs activity areas of the summer camp program. Supervises and evaluates activity directors. Directs the safe and fun implementation of all summer camp program areas. Responsibility for the promotion, development, and implementation of off-season outdoor education programs including the scheduling and organizing. Responsible for some off-season outdoor recreation programs. Assists the Camping Services Director in the recruitment and selection of appropriate summer staff. Advises the Lodges of Ondessonk and Tekakwitha (Honor camping societies).



Marketing Director: This position is responsible for marketing Camp Ondessonk's programs, services, and facilities. Plays a role in recruiting summer volunteers and provides leadership in coordinating summer volunteer efforts.

Development Director: This position is responsible for creating a community of stewardship surrounding Camp Ondessonk's programs, services, and facilities.





Camp Ranger: Directly responsible for property maintenance, construction, and inventory, vehicle maintenance, security, safety procedures, traffic control, construction, emergency rescues, and sanitation.



Registrar: Processes all summer camper applications. Prepares statistical reports concerning enrollment. Manages all Camp computer systems

Office Manager: General reception in the Camp Office. Responsible for scheduling off season lodging and/or meal groups and maintaining the reservation book. Summer bus transportation coordinator. Summer staff support. Phone and typing responsibilities. Files all Camp paperwork. Coordinates in-coming and out-going mail services.



Equestrian Director: Overall responsibility for Equestrian programs and the Stable facility. Horse training, care, and first aid. Supervision of summer riding programs. Assists the Program Director with Outdoor Education programs when needed.

Food Service Director: Responsible for all food service operations, both at Camp and at St. Noel. Responsible for menu preparation, food bids and purchases, food service staff supervision, kitchen sanitation, and Dining hall operations. Must have valid Illinois Food Service Sanitation License.



STAFF POLICIES

The following is a summary of policies and procedures that all Ondessonk staff need to be aware of and are expected to adhere to.

Emma O'Brien: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 2001-2006



“You are a camp counselor. First, foremost, and throughout your career at Ondessonk, you are a camp counselor. While some may try to confuse you with terms like "Wrangler, Unit Leader, Office Staff, or Head Cook," remember that you were hired, most importantly, to be a camp counselor. This means that you are there to serve the campers of Ondessonk, day and night. This means that you are there to facilitate personal growth and ensure safety among hundreds of kids. This means that, although you may have a "day job" in an activity or service area, you are simply a cog in the wheel of a giant machine that cranks out kilowatts of fun every

second of every day. You are there to be a camp counselor. You are there to serve kids. You must remember this in the face of personal stress and fatigue, in the face of awkward group dynamics, in the face of a less-than-desirable dinner, and in the face of a torrential downpour. You are there to stop, step outside of the insane situation that you are in, assess the needs of the kids around you, and deliver outstanding service. Whether that be leading a group of 300 in song or just telling one kid that his incredible crappy square boondoggle is the bee's knees, this is your job. You can do this, because you wouldn't be hired if you weren't capable, so go forth and be a camp counselor.

Be yourself. This is as cheesy as it gets but the kids can and will realize if you're being fake. No camp is successful with 100 Susy Sunshines. There's a time and place to be fun, creative, loud and vomitously perky. There is also a time and place to be calm or pensive, to be frustrated or anxious, or to just be zoning out. The kids will trust you more and relate to you more if you are a real person that allows yourself to connect, rather than a puppet that puts on a happy face throughout anything. Just be with them. You don't always have to have an activity or song and dance routine. Most kids are happy to sit on a bench next to you, looking at a bug. They'll see right through you trying to make looking at a bug be a profound experience. You'll be much less tired and better-received by the kiddos if you simply go with your gut than if you are constantly trying to keep up a ruse and create splendor in every moment.

Evaluations can be obnoxious paperwork. They are also an integral part of the success of any organization. If you blow them off or treat them like they don't matter, they will be hard and annoying. If you take 5 minutes to analyze your performance or your supervisor's or your staff's, you can make a tremendous impact on your performance, their performance, group dynamics, and, ultimately, the experience the kids get. Evaluations can make or break a re-hiring and can completely change your summer. Stopping bad habits early and re-enforcing positive behavior can, for some, make a difficult staff position bearable or a burnt-out staff member renewed. Feedback and evaluation are not just bureaucratic nonsense, but can truly make an impact and should be treated as such.

That's all for now folks! Like I said, feel free to ask me questions if you wanted feedback in a specific area!”

Uniforms

1. Staff members are to appear presentable at all times. Particular attention is to be paid to the evening inspection in regard to proper dress and cleanliness.
2. Staff members are to be in Class "A" uniform on Sundays (camper arrival), Monday inspection (Unit photos), and Saturdays (camper departure). Class "B" uniforms must be worn on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for evening inspection and dinner. The collared staff shirt is considered Class "A", and the staff t-shirt is Class "B". Independent parts of the uniform should not be worn alone.
3. The uniform consists of the following:
 - a. tan khaki pants, walking shorts (no shorter than 6 inches above the knee), or skirts (no shorter than four inches above the knee). Pants, shorts, or skirt should be free of excessive stains and/or rips. Pants, shorts and skirts must be hemmed, no cut-offs.
 - b. Staff shirts are provided. Additional staff shirts can be purchased from Camp.
 - c. Footwear should be relatively clean and free of excessive dirt. Clean socks should be worn with all footwear with the exception of sandals.
 - d. When provided, name tags should be worn over the right breast opposite the Ondessonk staff emblem. Any commendation pins should also be worn on the right side. Insignias of rank should be worn on the collars of the Class A staff shirt (insignias of rank should not be worn on the Class "B" t-shirt).

Dress Code

As a member of the Ondessonk staff, you are expected to be a positive role model for children. The following are specific standards related to dress code:

- a. Caps, T-shirts, decals, insignias, etc. which promote tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, drugs, profane words, gestures, or symbols are not permitted.
- b. All clothing must be laundered weekly and free of excessive holes, rips, and stains. Clothing must also fit appropriately.
- c. Extreme hair styles are inappropriate in this setting. For example, extremes in dyeing, bleaching, or cutting are not appropriate.
- d. The use of deodorant is required due to the heat and close contact with campers, staff and parents.
- e. Hats, visors and sunglasses are not to be worn in the dining hall, the Chapel or during Mass.
- f. Appropriate under garments (bra, underwear) is mandatory.
- g. Bikinis (two piece swimsuits) are not permitted.

Alcohol and Controlled Substances

1. Alcohol is not allowed at Camp Ondessonk at any time during the course of the summer program for staff or volunteers with the exception of full time staff in their residences.
2. No personnel involved with Camp Ondessonk should be under the influence or impaired by alcohol in the conduct of their work duties (this is grounds for immediate dismissal).
3. Staff members above the legal drinking age are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and mature manner on their time off with regards to alcoholic beverages within the sphere of influence of Camp (surrounding communities, in town, etc.)
4. Camp has implemented a "zero-tolerance" policy regarding alcohol and drugs. "Zero Tolerance" means that possession and/or use of alcohol* and illegal drugs is strictly prohibited at Camp Ondessonk. Staff violating this policy will be subject to immediate dismissal. Underage drinking is also prohibited away from Camp.

* alcohol is permitted in full-time residences

Firearms and Weapons

1. Staff and campers are not allowed to have firearms or weapons anywhere on Camp Ondessonk property. This restriction includes in vehicles at Camp.
2. Firearms used for Camp's Riflery program must be stored under lock and key when not in use. Furthermore, ammunition and weapons should be locked separate from one another when stored. The Range Director is directly responsible for the security of these firearms.
3. Staff members are not allowed to bring their own bows to Camp without obtaining written consent from the Executive Director.
4. Hunting on Camp property is not allowed unless permission is granted by the Executive Director.



Building and Facility Restrictions

1. The staff lounge (located in the old administration building) is a place for staff only. Campers are not permitted, with the exception of CITs on Saturday nights.
2. The private residences of full-time live-in staff are off-limits to summer staff without an invitation. Volunteer residences are off-limits to summer staff at all times.
3. Only staff members on official Camp business are allowed in the Central supply building (maintenance area). This restriction does not apply to appropriate staff having access to the Program Room. Staff needing access to the Program Room will have a key that will give them entry into that room from the outside. NO CAMPERS or CIT's will be allowed to enter Central at any time.
4. The Camp Office is limited to staff members with official Camp business there. Camp Office equipment (copiers, computer, etc.) are off-limits to all staff unless they have the permission of a full-time Office staff member.
5. The Stables and Pastures are off-limits to all campers and staff without the permission of the Equestrian Director, Program Director, Camping Services Director or Executive Director.
6. St. Noel Center's laundry rooms, kitchen and administration offices are restricted to authorized personnel only. Staff are prohibited from using the St. Noel laundry services for personal laundry unless officially on weekend duty. Staff are allowed to use the internet services in the St. Noel basement on scheduled time off, however, this is NOT a secondary staff lounge. Once your business on line is concluded, please return to the main area of Camp.
7. Residences, bathrooms, and shower houses designated for a specific gender at specific times (different seasons) are off-limits to those of the opposite gender during these times, *including the weekends*.
8. Sheds and storage buildings at the various activity sites are off-limits to all campers and staff without the permission of staff instructing at the respective activities.
9. Cabins in the unit are inspected daily, *including staff cabins*. All cabins, the outhouse, and surrounding areas in the unit are the responsibility of each unit leader. The staff cabin is to set an example for the campers. In all cabins, open flame is strictly prohibited (including candles). **ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING** in cabins.
10. The inside of the Trading Post is off-limits to all campers and staff except staff members working there. The Trading Post Manager is directly responsible for maintaining the security of the Trading Post.
11. Smoking is restricted to the approved smoking area located behind Central Supply.
12. Equipment, facilities, or structures that are in need of repair should be reported in writing by completing a "physical" form in the Office. All staff have a responsibility to report facility and maintenance concerns to the Camp Ranger whenever they become aware of them. Items that need immediate attention can be directly reported to the Office and do not require a written physical form.

Activity Area Restrictions

1. Staff and campers must have permission to enter all activity areas.

2. Use of canoes, boats, rifles, and other activity equipment is to be cleared through the activity director. Use of all activity areas and equipment must follow all of the safety rules and guidelines that campers are expected to follow. Staff are responsible for camp equipment assigned to their care or checked out for their job. Reimbursement to Camp is to be made for loss or damages other than deterioration from normal use. If staff damage equipment out of negligence they will be financially responsible for the cost of repairing that equipment.



3. Swimming and boating is to only be done during assigned times when a lifeguard is on duty. A lifeguard is only considered on-duty if they are out of the water and monitoring the activity of the swimmers. Staff members are not allowed to swim at night or on weekends without the permission of the Program Director or Camping Services Director. (no diving/flips/pushing off or swimming under docks, feet first and no jumping off slides, no dunking, no food/drinks in swimming area, you must pass a swim test before you swim).

4. In general, horseback riding outside of the confines of the Equestrian Program will be strictly limited. All requests to do so must be brought to the Equestrian Director.

Keys and Security

1. All staff needing keys must check them out from the Camping Services Director. Key check-outs are documented on Key Check-out forms maintained by the CSD.

2. Staff members should never loan their keys to an unauthorized person. (REALLY? Does this even need to be in here? *C'mon!*)

3. Keys and access to secure areas should not be used for unofficial purposes (i.e. pranks, practical jokes, etc.).

4. Staff members who lose or damage keys may be held financially responsible for the replacement of keys and/or the changing of locks.

5. All staff members share in the responsibility of keeping Camp secure. If you notice an undone padlock or door, bring it to the attention of the person responsible for that area or a member of the administrative team.

6. Staff members should report the presence of unusual or suspicious persons or vehicles to the Office who will then contact the Executive Director or Camp Ranger immediately.

Visitors

Summer Staff Members are not allowed to have visitors during the programming week without the express approval of the Executive Director. Anyone not authorized to be at Camp will be asked to leave.

Full time staff members residing at Camp Ondessonk are permitted to have visitors at their residence. However, visitors at a full time residence are not permitted to be in places other than the residence where they are visiting without the full time staff of that residence first obtaining permission from the Executive Director.

Staff Transportation- Pick up and Drop off

Staff needing a ride to or from camp must have the driver check in at the Camp Office upon arrival at Camp. Pick-ups should be arranged after 12:00 NOON on Saturday. Drop-offs should be before 10:00am on Sunday. For any unusual circumstances beyond these times, special permission must be arranged with the Executive Director.

Intruders

Camp Ondessonk takes the safety of campers, volunteers and staff very seriously. The intrusion of unauthorized person(s) into camp constitutes a serious breach of security. If you believe a vehicle or individual is an intruder, contact the office (extension 100) immediately. When calling please provide a description of the vehicle or individual(s) and their location. The office manager or office staff will contact the Camp Ranger, Assistant Ranger or on-duty administrative staff member to investigate.

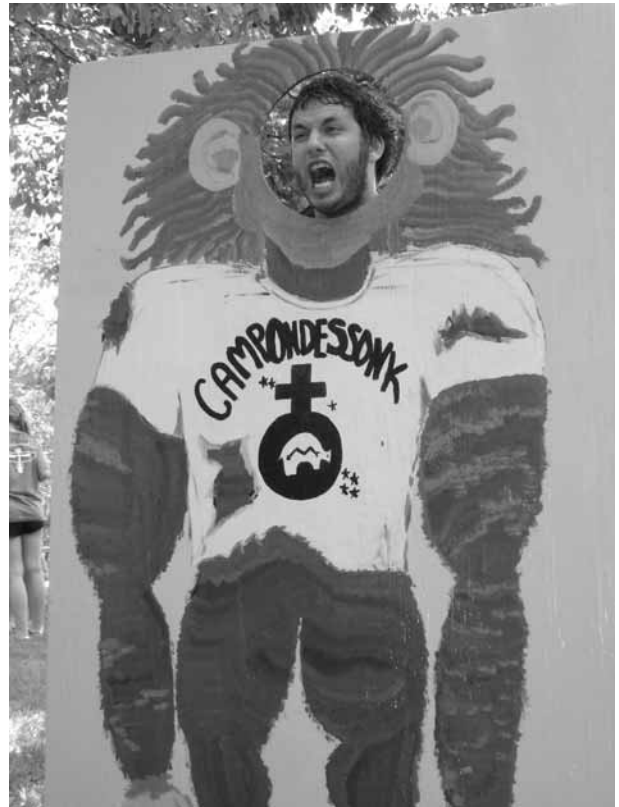
APPROPRIATE STAFF/CAMPER CONTACT

***STAFF ARE EXPRESSLY INSTRUCTED NEVER TO
BE ALONE WITH A CAMPER.***

The Rule of Three:

Always have a third person, preferably a staff member, within the line of sight and earshot if you ever have a need to pull a camper aside to talk to them. This third person, or witness, does not have to be a part of the conversation. Make sure this witness can see you and the camper at all times.

All Staff are required to complete the Belleville Diocesan Child Protection Policy and attend annual refreshers courses when applicable.



Transportation

1. Staff who are required to drive a camp vehicle in their line of work must complete a special Camp Driver Form, pass a basic driving skills test monitored by the Camp Ranger, and possess a valid driver's license.

2. The use of Camp vehicles is to be arranged through the Camp Ranger. No staff member is free to drive any Camp vehicle without the Camp Ranger's permission.

3. Staff members are not allowed to transport campers or staff in their personal vehicles while Camp is in session.

4. Staff vehicles must be parked in designated areas only: Male staff may park by the Dorms and Female staff may park by the Health Center and Bath House E during the week.

5. Camp vehicles should only be used by authorized staff for Camp business, or business as deemed appropriate and assigned by the Executive Director.

6. All drivers of Camp vehicles are expected obey posted speed limits. Vehicle speeds should not exceed 20 mph anywhere on Camp property. Vehicles should not exceed 10 mph when driving around the lake. It is the responsibility of all employees to assist in the enforcement of posted speed limits with our guests.

7. Persons transporting campers must be at least 21 years old.

8. Accidents involving Camp vehicles should be immediately reported to the Camp Ranger and the Executive Director. Accidents involving personal vehicles that occur on Camp property should be immediately reported to the Executive Director.

11. Vehicle keys should be returned to the Camp Ranger or Central immediately after use. Staff may not keep Camp vehicle keys in their possession on a regular basis.

12. All passengers must remain seated while the vehicle is moving.

13. Seat belts must be worn whenever Camp vehicles are used, and vehicles may be loaded only within the passenger seating limits established by the manufacturer.

14. Camp vehicles should be inspected on a regular basis for any safety hazards. The Camp Ranger makes the final decision in all cases where the safety of a Camp vehicle is in question.

15. Riding in the back of pick-up trucks or other vehicles not designed for passenger transport is strictly prohibited.



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Spiritual and Religious Services

1. Staff members are expected to attend all spiritual and religious services that the campers are expected to attend. Staff members should accompany campers and supervise their conduct during these services.
2. Servers, lectors, musicians, and Eucharistic Ministers for Mass are selected, scheduled, and instructed in their proper roles by the Council Coordinator.
3. Private prayers and meditation should be encouraged by all staff members.
4. It is encouraged that each Unit Leader or a designated staff member lead a common prayer or reflection session for the unit before going to bed. A short talk, prayer, poem, song or other reflection led by the Unit Leader or one of the unit staff is appropriate.
5. All staff members are encouraged to seize opportunities to make use of spontaneous spiritual reflections: a starlit night, a pause on the all day exploration, etc.
6. Staff members are to use proper language when dealing with campers or each other. General rules of morality and religion as taught by the Catholic Church are to be observed by members of the staff. Private lives of staff should never be discussed in front of campers.



Miscellaneous

1. The official clock of Camp is the Office clock. All bugles will correspond with the Office clock.
2. As recognition of outstanding service, Staff may receive a citation. Staff are also recognized through a military style promotion system. By a written agreement of three officers and the Executive Director, a staff member can be "promoted." This does not mean that a staff member moves up into a different job, it simply means that they are recognized at a higher level in Camp's ranking system. The rank system is as follows: Sr. CIT, Deputy Ranger, Ranger, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Colonel, General.
3. Staff members are not allowed to have any pets at Camp.

HARASSMENT POLICY

The harassment of any person who is an employee, camper, guest, or volunteer based upon that person's race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other factor prohibited by applicable law, is not acceptable and is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy shall subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

Harassment may take many forms, including slurs, jokes, cartoons, comments or other graphic or physical conduct concerning a person's race, color, sex, national origin, age or disability. Conduct is considered sexual harassment when it involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, uninvited touching, sexually-related comments or other comments or physical conduct of a sexual nature, if (a) such conduct interferes with a person's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, (b) submitting to or tolerating any such conduct is an express and implied condition of employment or (c) a person's employment, evaluation, pay or other condition of employment is affected because he or she submits to or tolerates, or refuses to submit or to tolerate, any such conduct. Sexual harassment may include unwelcome sexually-oriented kidding or teasing, sexual innuendo, sexually-oriented jokes, jokes about gender-specific traits or which are gender-based, or the display of obscene material.

Any person who feels that he or she has witnessed any harassment prohibited by this policy, or is being harassed by an employee or non-employee in violation of this policy, should submit a signed, written complaint, or otherwise complain, to the employee's supervisor. Remember, do not assume Camp Ondessonk is aware of the harassment. We believe the interests of all will be best served by written, signed complaints, as opposed to anonymous complaints. Anonymous complaints are not encouraged because of the serious implication of harassment charges, the difficulties associated with their investigation, and the question of credibility involved.

The complaint will be investigated and the merits of the complaint will be evaluated based upon the results of the investigation and the particular circumstances. Appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective action will be taken if necessary.

If, after investigating any complaint of harassment or unlawful discrimination, Camp Ondessonk determines that the complaint is not bona fide or that an employee has provided false information regarding the complaint, disciplinary action may be taken against the individual who filed the complaint or who gave the false information.

The Diocese of Belleville and Camp Ondessonk treats complaints of harassment seriously and expects its employees to act responsibly in raising these issues, recognizing the sensitivity of such matters for all concerned, and the possible consequences. The Diocese and Camp Ondessonk forbids retaliation against anyone for reporting harassment.

Katie Birge: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 2002-2008



Increasingly, we are living more of our lives in a digital online environment. Even though you spend your summers in the woods with limited electricity, no cell phone reception, and virtually no technology, most Camp Ondessonk staff members still have online accounts with Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and other social media.

In 2006, Time Magazine named “YOU” the person of the year, claiming that the way we use the Internet and create our own content (through video sites like YouTube, but also through the creation of social networking profiles) will revolutionize the way we communicate. And indeed it has.

It may seem out of place to talk about the many online versions of ourselves as you embark upon a summer relatively free of technology, but it’s important to remember that even if you’re not plugged in to these social networking sites for the summer, they’re still up and running on their own and won’t be turned off just because you aren’t there to check and update your profile.

More importantly, be aware that because of these sites, the line between our public lives and our private lives is becoming blurrier than ever. In fact, there isn’t really a difference between them anymore, and this is where we need to be increasingly more cautious as ambassadors for Camp Ondessonk.

- The default setting for most social networking profiles is PUBLIC.
- Unless you change these settings, ALL PHOTOS OF YOU are visible to ANYONE.
- Many of your campers will have Facebook and MySpace profiles.
- Many of your campers PARENTS will have Facebook and MySpace profiles.
- Many of your campers (and their parents) will likely want to look for you on Facebook when they get back from the best week of their lives.
- Everything that you do in your photos and everything that you write in your profile can be associated with you, and thus with Camp Ondessonk because you are an employee.

Keeping all of this in mind, here are some practices that all Camp Ondessonk staff should follow to ensure the best possible image of Camp (and of you as a Camp ambassador) in an online environment:

- Change all of your privacy settings to make your profile is viewable only to your friends.
- DO NOT accept friend requests from campers or C.I.T.s, as they are still considered campers. This is still true in cases where you are, for example, 16 and may have 15-year-old campers from your town/school.
- Change your search settings (ideally forever, but realistically for the summer) so that you are either unsearchable or so that your photo is not visible to those who aren’t friends with you.
- Understand that any tagged photos of you by friends may be visible publicly. At least for the summer, avoid being tagged in any photos that may portray Camp in a negative way, especially if you are photographed doing something illegal (smoking/drinking underage).

*It’s also a good idea to occasionally do a Google search of your name every now and then, just so you’re aware of what’s publicly available about you. None of this is about changing who you are—it’s about creating a responsible online consciousness that you can live with.

STAFF DISCIPLINE

A staff member who significantly violates a Camp rule, policy, or regulation can expect that it will be documented in writing within the staff file. All violations will be dealt with at the discretion of the Head Counselor, Camping Services Director, and Executive Director. Documentation of violations should be forwarded to the Camping Services Director as soon as possible. Rule violations will be documented on an Incident Report. The following is a list of violations that are significant enough to warrant formal documentation.

- -Absenteeism
- -Tardiness
- -Under-age smoking
- -Smoking in a non-authorized area
- -Leaving Camp without permission/or without signing in/out
- -Unauthorized use of Camp vehicle
- -Inappropriate behavior within the sphere of influence of Camp
- -Staff in an inappropriate residence
- -Insubordination
- -Theft
- -Alcohol or Drugs (presence or consumption)
- -Intimidation with a camper or staff
- -Sexual harassment
- -Reckless endangerment of staff or campers
- -Physical assault/violence with camper or staff
- -Inappropriate contact (sexual or otherwise)



ZERO Tolerance Policy

Staff members should note that Camp Ondessonk has a zero-tolerance policy with regards to alcohol and illegal drugs. Staff members who have or use alcohol/illegal drugs at Camp Ondessonk will face immediate dismissal. In addition, staff members who tolerate the use of alcohol/illegal drugs will face the same or similar consequences. Camp Ondessonk has been designated a Drug Free Workplace. This list of rules also applies to time off. Alcohol is permitted in full-time residences.

STAFF GRIEVANCES

Staff members are encouraged to follow the chain of command when dealing with grievances. Problems or conflicts with another staff member should be taken up with that staff member first. Honest and open attempts should be made to resolve the conflict. The next step should be to the immediate supervisor of the staff member you are in conflict with. The Head Counselor is always available for support and can be a valuable mediator in resolving inter-staff conflict. The Program Director, Camping Services Director, and Executive Director are also available to help mediate conflicts.

Diversity of ideas, opinions, and personal styles are an asset in a large working community. While this diversity is, on the whole, a positive aspect of the working environment, at times conflict will arise. Conflict can be a positive force in the staff community if addressed openly and sincere attempts for resolution are pursued.

Staff members should remain open to the idea that at times not all conflicts can be resolved, and that not all complaints can be dealt with exactly as expected. The entire Ondessonk community has a responsibility to maintain an open-minded and team-oriented atmosphere. Staff are not expected to agree with all policies and procedures, but we ask that staff remain supportive of the Camp Ondessonk Administration when decisions are made. The Camp Administration will remain open to all questions, concerns, and feedback from staff. In fact, the staff voice is a valuable agent of change within the Ondessonk community and will always be respected as such.

Betsy Gladish: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 1998-2001



“Working at Camp O was my first experience working with younger kids in a role model position. I transitioned directly from camper to staff, without going through the CIT program, so it was a bit of a challenge making the switch. The most important thing that I kept in mind was how I felt about the counselors I had when I was a camper. I pretty much idolized them. My entire college and professional career was based on my camp counselors. So basically, I owe all my success to Camp O.

I know that this is not really a typical way for kids to see their counselors, but there are a good number of kids out there who are desperate for a role model, and Camp O gives those kids a safe place to find someone to emulate.

So, that’s rule #1: Some of those kids will be idolizing you, so you have to watch every step you take, every word you say and every action you make.

Understand that being a role model is part of the job description. You can’t get away from it. So embrace it. You have the power to shape these kids

into productive, respectful adolescents. They are at the point in their lives when pretty much everything their parents say is wrong, so by default, everything YOU say will be what they cling to.

So be a good person. Be kind to your fellow staff. Be respectful of your elders and supervisors (muy importante!!!) Be sympathetic to kids having a rough time. Show them that this camping stuff is COOL. Show them that it’s OK TO BE SILLY. Show them there is a right time and place for silliness, and a time for respect, reverence and prayer. Show them that it’s ok to love God, and it’s ok to thank him, and it’s ok to credit him for all the amazing things they will see in one week.

Important Rule #2: Kids will pay a lot more attention to you and show you a lot more respect if you talk to them like grownups.

Kids are a lot smarter and more capable than we give them credit for sometimes. They can sense when you’re being phony, and they will pick up on it if your attitude towards them is disrespectful.

You MUST respect younger people when you are in a position of authority. Just because you’re “their boss” for a week, doesn’t mean that you can treat them condescendingly.

Listen to them when they talk.

Pay attention to how they are interacting with each other, and if there’s something inappropriate going on, put a stop to it NOW. Don’t wait until it gets worse. Because it IS your job to take care of these kids. Ask them how they’re doing. Ask how their day was. Ask what their favorite activity is. Do something special for your group of kids that no one else gets to do. Give them some one-on-one time when possible. Tell them about yourself. Ask their opinion. Give them some input on activities. Be democratic, but obviously follow camp rules and guidelines first.”

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The following Procedures are offered as guidelines for best practices in serving the campers of Camp Ondessonk.

Brynn Freed: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 2001-2010



“The counselors that I remember most from my camper days all had one thing in common: They were nice. Some of these people still serve as great role models to me, and they are the reason that I worked at camp. My own style as a counselor can be drawn from all of my favorite counselors.....Liz, who took my friends and I on a little hike during the overnight and sang Grease songs at the top of her lungs with us.....Becky, who taught me about Queen Anne's Lace and let us have a marshmallow fight which

quickly turned around the homesickness at our Monday night campfire.....Chelley, who treated my friends and I like her equal, laughing at all the funny things we did and even visiting us on her college breaks.....Cara, who saw my potential and encouraged me to become a counselor. I try my best to be what these people were to me.....fun, intelligent, goofy, thoughtful, motivating, and kind. Counselors have the unique opportunity to have a big influence on young adolescents, a group that needs, but often rejects, guidance. We are the lucky ones that can help improve the lives of hundreds of kids every summer simply by having tons of fun in the woods. Enjoy it and be proud of it. It will be one of the most important jobs of your life.”

Health Center Regulations, Policies, and Procedures

Lisa Augustine, RN: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 2003-2010



Regular non-emergency visits to the Health Center should be made during health call. During health call, campers may visit the Health Center for medicine or to see the Nurse without a staff member along. Campers should be accompanied by a staff member if they are visiting the nurse for illness or injuries during all other times. That staff member should plan on accompanying the camper back to normal activities. If the camper is going to stay at the health center for an extended period of time the unit staff needs to arrange pick up of that camper with the nurse.

Regularly scheduled medications will be distributed during med call. Med call will be during hopper call for breakfast and during announcements for dinner. Any lunch meds will be passed out by the nurse, as there are usually few or no lunch meds. Bedtime meds need to be picked up by the unit leader at dinner and distributed after evening activities. If campers are away from the dining hall at meal time, such as all day hikes or over night, meds will be packed out and given to the unit leader. These medications will be marked with what the medication is and when it is to be given.

The Health Center is available 24 hours a day for problems big and small. Please use good judgment in determining what should be brought to the Health Center. In case of needed treatment during off-hours, please come into the Health Center. If no one is present there will be instructions posted on how to contact one of the nurses or on-duty personnel. At night there will be an on duty health care person. This person will be sleeping in the health center. If you have HEALTH related problems please wake them up. If a child has an accident during the night, bedding will be made available to the staff. Please wait till morning to bring up soiled bedding.

Staff members, this is your health center too. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to stop by and talk with us. The health center is stocked with a variety of over the counter medications which we will supply to you as needed. However, a nurse must see you and distribute these medications. We will have information and teaching tools available on a variety of health topics. We also have the ability to obtain more information if needed. We are here to make sure the staff has a safe and healthy camp experience as well as the campers.

If a staff member is sick for an extended period of time or is having a recurring problem that is affecting their ability to work it may be necessary to send that staff member home for a period of time. This is to ensure that the staff member recovers fully and does not get any of the other staff members sick. This is not a termination; it is a temporary situation to ensure that our staff is operating at their fullest potential.

An Accident/Incident Report Form **must** be completed for every personal injury/accident that occurs. Staff members who have dealt directly with an incident should complete or help to complete an Accident/Incident Report Form. Other documentation for accidents and injuries will be completed by Health Center and Office staff and filed with appropriate agencies (Diocese, Illinois Department of Public Health, etc.). Additionally, a Worker's Compensation Form must be completed within 24 hours for all staff work-related injuries.

Permission for campers or staff to go to the doctor or hospital for medical treatment must be given by the Camp Nurse. Worker's Compensation insurance may not cover staff members who neglect this requirement.

The health center will NOT be giving rides to campers this year unless deemed medically necessary (one day at most) or if approved by administration. If a camper is struggling to get to meal or other activities it is important that you talk with Head Councilor about the situation. The health center may get involved but will not be a taxi service.

Fanny packs are stocked and supplied to each Unit Leader. Fanny packs should be utilized for minor ailments and First Aid. Fanny packs should accompany the Unit (the campers) at all times. Often, this may mean that the Unit Leader will give the pack to their unit staff for unit supervision duty. Fanny packs are NOT to be carried by CIT or other non-staff members. Fanny packs need to accompany the campers everywhere. This includes the dining hall. Please do not leave fanny packs in the main area when heading to meals.

Fanny packs should be treated with care and taken seriously. They are the first line of First Aid assistance for the campers. Fanny packs can be restocked at any time in the health center. The health center staff asks that you come during off times and not in the middle of health call. This is our busiest time and we will not always be able to get to you.

Unit Leaders will receive written notices by Sunday dinner of all campers requiring medicine; have severe allergies, or any other medical problem that may need to be dealt with in a special way. This confidential list should be kept with the fanny pack.

During check-in, all campers will receive temperature and lice checks. At this time campers will turn in health forms (if not already done), medications, and any other missing information. If campers miss this step before heading out to their unit please make sure you send them back to the main area before the end of check in.

Any behavioral problems related to health should be brought to the attention of the Nurse (SEVERE homesickness, bedwetting, etc.). If you are have trouble dealing with a homesick camper or other issues please come ask for help. We at the health center value your input into what is going with these types of campers. A collaborative effort is sometimes the best defense against homesickness and can help the camper over come this problem and have a great week.

We have staff members that are first responders and are capable of handling many emergency situations. If these staff members are present at the scene of an injury or fall please let them assess the situation and provide appropriate care. They are well aware of what is in the scope of their practice. So, let them do their jobs, please.

There will be a van in front of the health center that is back-board ready. This van will be used for emergency runs only. If you are in need of a van please do not take this van unless it is a medical emergency.

Dining Hall I Procedures

1. Only authorized personnel are allowed in the kitchen (Food Service Director, Head Cook, kitchen crew, dining hall manager, dishwashers and volunteers assigned to that area), as well as full time employees.
2. The dining hall is more than just a place to eat and can easily be seen as a program area. The tone that is set in the dining hall helps set the tone elsewhere in camp. The dining hall should be orderly yet spirited and fun.
3. Staff members are to sit at the table and are to set the tone of good manners and consideration. They are to be served first so that they set the portion of the food for the table. Campers should not start serving themselves until the staff member at their table has been served.
4. Food should not be criticized by the staff in the presence of the campers. Any complaints or suggestions should be directed to the Food Service Director (in private). Feedback is a way for us to all continuously improve!
5. The staff member at each table is responsible to help make sure the hopper is aware of his/her responsibilities and stays after the meal.
6. All Staff members must be on-time for meals and must be at every meal. Staff members are expected to set the example, remain seated and supervise campers throughout the entire meal. Staff announcements are to be made at the end of the meal. Staff must remain in the dining hall through the duration of the meal. Out-of-season staff (men during Girls, women during Boys) may leave a meal early if given permission by the Camping Services Director or Executive Director. All announcements made at meals are considered to have been heard by all of the staff. Permission to be excused from a meal can only be approved by the Camping Services Director or Executive Director.



Danno Friedrich: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 1999-2004



"I think some of the potential "chaos" that could occur in the new dining hall (NDH) vs. how we ran things in the old dining hall (ODH) may stem from a few different things:

1. Hopper position confusion.
2. Change in the role of the dining hall manager.
3. Kitchen not being able to see the eating area.
4. Lots of extra space for people to move around (especially staff!)

From what I've seen over the past 5 years in the NDH, and comparing them to my time as dining hall manager in the ODH, these are some suggestions I would like to offer:

1. The Dining Hall Manager (DHM) during my time, and the many years before, had been one of the most popular staff members in camp. Why? They controlled the food, and literally everything that the campers saw that happened in the dining hall. This is historically a loud, charismatic, and efficient person (not trying to toot my own horn here).

On Sundays, the DHM would explain how the meals work, the lights, the bells, etc. Also, they would explain the hopper situation; this is one area I think where we can fall behind. We should always give very specific instructions as to how the hopper system works. i.e. The table you are sitting at now is the table you will sit at for every meal in the dining hall. Take a look at the person to your left, and the person to your right. You will be sitting next to these people all week long. If you don't know them, here's opportunity #1 to make new friends! Each meal you will move 1 person to the left. The person to the far left, facing the kitchen, would be the hopper.

Encourage the staff members at the table to explain this process to the kids again during the first meal to make sure they understand.

2. Cooks, and kitchen staff: since the NDH kitchen cannot see the dining area, it's the DHM's duty to be in communication with the kitchen staff. All food should be tray-ed and in appropriate warmer or cooler when the meal is to begin. The DHM should know how many tables are on each light and as soon as that many trays hit the counter, the light gets pulled. As soon as all the trays for that light are gone, we move on to the next one.... don't stop this process until all the food for the main courses of the meal are out from the kitchen. At this point, the DHM should be constantly strolling through the tables, keeping an eye on how fast the kids are eating. When it looks like the majority are almost done, it's time to ring the bell for seconds, or move on to desert, or prepare for clean up (depending on the meal, this could be as short as a 5 minute transition).

Depending on the desert, (cookies vs. pudding that needs to be put on your plate) clean up can begin almost immediately.

3. Clean up: While the hopper is bringing up the cups and plates, the rest of the table should be stacking all the serving dishes on the table. (Make sure the kids understand that white light means to stack up dishes on the table!) Then, the stacked dishes will stay on the table until after the meal. Once dishes are stacked, and cups and plates are up, it's time for announcements

In the ODH, when the window to the kitchen is closed, Camp knew that unit cheers were no longer allowed in the dining hall. You may want to consider some visual clue in the NDH.

As for announcements, I'm sure you know, the shorter, the better; don't have multiple people repeating the same thing. But it would be good to always move in the same order, lost and found, staff announcements, unattached staff may quietly depart, snog, out.

Once the Camp Song is being sung, and campers are on the way out, hoppers should stay in their seats awaiting instructions from the DHM. The kitchen crew should have a pile of rags and spray bottles full and waiting for the campers and the dish return tubs ready.

The DHM should work in conjunction with the kitchen staff, they should be able to ask the staff for help, as well as the kitchen staff asking DHM for help, especially if it's tray-ing up food, or anything that may need to be prepared for a meal. I wasn't a cook as DHM, but I did spend a lot of time in the kitchen just making sure the meal would be ready. Meals are the DHM's babies, and they should do whatever it takes to make them go off without a hitch.

Encourage staff to stay with their kids for the entirety of the meal, when the kids see the staff get up and walk around, they will do it too. Staff needs to understand, they will survive a meal without 5 cups of coffee

I know this is a lot of information, and I'm sure I over explained some, and forgot other parts, but I'm always happy to bounce ideas off of if you have any questions.

Have fun this summer!"

Camper Discipline Procedures

All campers must abide by all Camp Ondessonk rules and behavior expectations. These rules are similar to those in schools, and fall under the general categories of Courtesy and Respect. All campers are introduced to Camp Ondessonk rules and expectations during the Sunday Unit Meeting, and refreshed during the official welcome presentation after Sunday dinner. When a camper breaks a rule it is considered an infraction. Each infraction results in an action by a staff member.

(Camp Ondessonk forbids corporal punishment and will result in immediate termination of a staff member. An example of corporal punishment is physically striking an offender.)

First Infraction

1. Educational opportunity- The staff member who witnesses the inappropriate behavior takes the opportunity to explain why the behavior is not appropriate for Camp. This should take place away from other campers to avoid embarrassing the camper (but with the rule of 3 in mind) and always in a calm and supportive manner.

Second Infraction

2. Verbal warning- If the same or similar behavior happens again, the camper is then warned that their behavior is unacceptable and that they will be sent to the Head Counselor if the behavior persists.

Third Infraction

3. Intervention- The intervening staff member will set up a time to meet with the camper and Head Counselor. Do not wait to have this intervention. When necessary, the Head Counselor will bring the issue to the Camping Services Director for immediate corrective action, up to and including dismissal from Camp.

Note: All infractions and all actions taken by a staff member must be reported to the Unit Leader.

When to take step 1:

1. Cursing/talking back
2. Throwing rocks or sticks
3. Making unnecessary noise
4. Bothering/bullying other campers
5. Any other behavior of reasonable concern

When to initiate step 2:

1. Persistence of above behaviors.
2. Threatening to fight
3. Climbing high on rocks
4. Wearing/using other camper's possessions without permission
5. Any other behavior of more severe concern.

When to take step 3 immediately:

1. Continued persistence of above behaviors.
2. Stealing
3. Smoking/possessing tobacco products
4. Drinking/possessing alcohol*
5. Using/possessing illegal drugs*
6. Using/possessing weapons, firearms*
7. Fighting, violence, or threatening to kill*
8. Refusing to eat/extreme homesickness
9. Missing camper
10. Suspicion of abuse
11. Being on the wrong side of the lake
12. Any other behavior of the above severity

*Zero tolerance- sent home



GENERAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Evaluate Every Situation - Be certain that your situation really is an emergency before you move into immediate action.

Avoid hysteria; it only leads to impairment of judgment and frantic haste, which can cause further accidents. Unless the emergency involves life-threatening injury (stopped breathing or profuse bleeding), speed is not essential.

Stay Calm - Remember, as a leader, campers and potentially other staff are looking to your example. Think through your plan of action calmly. Make sure that all staff and campers fully understand what is to be done. Of particular note is to inform all of the EXACT time and/or place of reorganizing or meeting, if any.

Need for Help - If runners are needed to go for help, never send just one person. Send two or more counselors if possible, or a counselor and several reliable campers with exact instructions (written if possible) on the nature of the emergency: what is needed, where exactly aid should be sent. A good place to write this is on the note pad in the first-aid fanny packs.

Out-of Camp Emergency - If the emergency is out of Camp, call the Camp Ondessonk Office at (618) 695-2489 and state that this is an emergency. Ask for the Camping Services Director, Ranger, or Program Director, or any other available administrative personnel. Be prepared to answer these questions:

- Who is calling?
- Where are you calling from?
- What is the number of the phone you are calling from?
- What is the nature of the emergency? (illness, injury, etc.)
- What is the injured person's name and unit?
- Where is the person?
- What aid (equipment, personnel) do you need?
- Where can we meet you or someone to guide us to the emergency?
- Don't hang up the phone until you are told to do so. If the phone lines are busy, call the operator and ask the operator to break in for emergency. Return to the emergency or agreed-upon meeting place.

FIRST AID

First-Aid Kits (fanny packs) - These are the first line of treatment for most persons in Camp. Make sure that your assigned first-aid kit is fully stocked and always with you. Keep your fanny pack in good repair. If your pack rips, the seams fail, or you lose buckles, return it to the Camp Wellness Coordinator to be replaced or repair it yourself whenever possible. The Fanny Pack should ALWAYS be with the Unit. It does no good if it is with the Unit Leader in the Staff Lounge while the campers are back at the unit with the evening duty staff... First-aid kits are fully restocked by Health Center personnel every weekend.

EMERGENCY SITUATION RESPONSE

In case of illness or injury in Camp, in places away from the Health Center, counselors should administer first-aid from the supplies in their Unit or Activity Area First-Aid Kits. For serious injury, emergency rescue, or emergency transport, counselors should stabilize the injured person, follow the emergency procedures listed under General Emergency Procedures (see above), arrange for notification of the Camp Health Center / Camp Office, and see to the safety and care of the other campers in the unit. If Rescue is needed, the Camp Ranger will respond. If Emergency Transport is needed it will be arranged by Camp Ondessonk Health Center staff in the form of EMS for serious emergency situations or Camp Van for less than urgent situations.

AMBULANCE RUN

Camp Ambulance - The Camp Ambulance is one of the camp vans with the seats removed. Alternate ambulances are designated by the Camp administration. Only persons approved by the Executive Director are allowed to transport patients in the Camp ambulance. The ambulance must always be driven safely and at or below the speed limit. The Camp Nurse may designate another staff member to travel with an injured person. Ambulance drivers will stay at the hospital or doctor's office with the injured (or ill) person, and will not make side trips unless approved in advance by the Camp administration. Ambulance drivers will call Camp before starting their return trip to give their estimated time of arrival back at Camp to the Nurse.

E.M.S. - The Johnson County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is available to be called in via #911 calls. Remember, because of Camp's internal/external phone system, you must dial 9 - 911 ("9" to get out, "911" to reach EMS) in an emergency. They can and will provide emergency medical transport whenever needed.

Helicopter Transport - Only the Camp Nurse or the Executive Director may call for helicopter transport of an injured person. These procedures are arranged for in advance of the summer season. The designated landing site for helicopters is the lawn in front of St. Noel.

PARENT CONTACTS

Parents are trusting Camp Ondessonk with their most precious possession, their children. It is Camp Ondessonk's responsibility to keep them informed of the well being of their children and provide them as much information as possible.

In the case of severe accidents or injuries to campers, the parents will be contacted by phone by the Camp Nurse in as timely a manner as possible. Parents are instructed to call the hospital to approve medical treatment. If a parent cannot be reached, the alternate guardian listed on the camper's medical form will be called.

In case of serious accident or death, the Executive Director or a person designated by the Executive Director will make calls to the parents. The person's local priest or minister should also be contacted. Care should be taken when contacting parents to give them no undue alarm; however, all facts pertaining to the situation should be given.

MISSING PERSONS

Head counts of campers should be taken on a regular basis to discover missing campers as soon as possible.

If you do lose track of a camper, use the following procedure:

- Immediately check unit, last activity area, next activity area, or other possible spots frequented by the camper. (Trading Post, etc.)
- Find out last time camper was seen by others, when and where.
- Ask about camper's mood. (depressed? angry? excited about something?)
- If at night, turn on all of the lights in the main area of Camp.
- If initial search proves fruitless, contact the Office or administrative staff. Relay known information and preliminary search findings to them.
- Use the Camp paging system to call for the missing person and to communicate information to searchers.
- See to safety and entertainment of other campers.

The Camp Ranger coordinates all searches for missing persons. Vehicles and staff members with hand-held radios (administration) are to be utilized in the search as well as available and necessary staff. The search will continue until the lost camper is found. The Executive Director or Camping Services Director will contact parents within a reasonable amount of time to keep them informed of the situation. When the camper is found, the office should be contacted immediately to call off the search. Only the Executive Director or Camping Services Director will contact Law enforcement officials and parents.

In the event of a person missing in the swimming area, the Aquatics Director or Program Director will lead the water search.

In the event a camper who has signed up for the current week of Camp does not arrive by Dinner on Sunday night, the Administrative Assistant and/or Office Staff will contact parents to inquire as to their whereabouts.

In the event of a missing counselor(s), the sign-out log will be checked first to see if they left Camp for any reason. After a prudent amount of time, a missing persons search will start following the same procedure as a missing camper search.



EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

Earthquakes:

In the event of an earthquake, the following procedures should be implemented:

Duty:

1. Remain calm,
Organize campers,
Evacuate buildings.
Move to a place of safety.
As soon as practical, move
campers to the command post,
located in the parking lot.
2. Establish a command post in
parking lot, to coordinate:
turn-off, sweep and rescue,
first-aid, and communication
efforts.
3. Turn off all gas lines at tanks
and inside buildings. Turn off
electricity at main shut-off boxes.
Turn off water at storage tanks.
Begin filling water containers
for emergency use.
4. Evacuate Health Center, retrieve
medical forms for all campers, staff,
and volunteers. Set up emergency
first-aid area in parking lot away
from power lines to care for injured.
5. Organize sweep-and-rescue teams.
Make a systematic search of
building and camping area until
all people are accounted for and
in a place of safety. Check people
against registration and staff lists.
6. Contact civil and church authorities
and give situation assessment. Once
all persons have been accounted for,
contact parents through radio or other
means of communication.
7. Supervise campers, comfort fears and
reactions from earthquake.
8. Make an assessment of building, road,
lake, and utilities damage. Condemn
and close unsafe areas.
9. Care for Camp animals
horses, check pasture gates and fences

Person Responsible:

- Any counselor, supervisor,
or camper.
- Executive Director, Camping Services
Director.
- Camp Ranger, Asst. Ranger, &
Maintenance Crew.
- Camp Nurse, EMT.
- Office Manager or office
staff, Ranger, Asst. Ranger, Program
Director, available staff
- Executive Director, Marketing
Director.
- Unit Leaders/General Staff.
- Camp Ranger, Asst. Ranger,
Maintenance Crew.
- Equestrian Director, Stable Crew.

Forest Fires:

In the event of a forest fire in our area, Camp personnel should follow the recommendation of attending firefighting units and the U.S. Forest Service. Common safety procedures include:

- Notify the Camp Office immediately if you suspect the presence of fire. The Office can then alert the proper authorities.
- Move across any possible natural or man-made fire breaks. Put the fire break between you and the fire. Fire breaks around Camp include paved and rock roads, lakes and large streams, and clear-cuts in the forest.
- When possible and appropriate (due to the intensity of a given fire), lead all campers and staff to the Camp parking lot and await further instructions there.

Severe Storms and Tornadoes:

The Southern Illinois region is prone to a variety of severe weather, including severe thunderstorms, large hail, and possibly even tornadoes. At times, the intensity of these weather events creates the need for campers and staff to seek shelter. Camp has developed a system whereby staff can be warned of threatening weather through the use of an Emergency Storm Warning Signal, a siren housed at the roof of the Dining Hall. At this signal, staff and campers should seek shelter. Each Unit, Overnight spot and Activity Area has designated Emergency Storm procedures.

A brief note should be made about the difference between storm watches and storm warnings.

Watch: A *watch* means that conditions in our immediate area (Johnson Co.) could cause severe weather to develop quickly and can turn into a warning at any time. During a watch, weather conditions should be monitored carefully to determine the necessity of seeking shelter.

Warning: A *warning* means that storms containing high winds, large quantities of rainfall, heavy lightning, possible hail or tornadoes are present in the warning area, and all persons should seek shelter **immediately**. Warnings for Johnson County will result in the Emergency Signal being given.

Floods:

Floods are a potential hazard in our area due to the several steep-sided valleys that course through the area. Ozark Creek and Cedar Creek can both rise relatively quickly in a short period of time. Staff are advised that in the event of heavy rainfall, they should keep campers away from lower portions of any streambeds. Lake Echon is fed by Ozark Creek, and it can rise several feet over the course of a heavy rain. Aquatics staff must be vigilant in securing all watercraft at the Boating/Canoeing area. A little common sense will avoid any unnecessary mishaps due to flooding.

The current physical plan of the Camp is sufficient to withstand nearly any conceivable amount of flooding while sustaining minimal damage to the units or other buildings.

INCLEMENT WEATHER SPOTS FOR *UNITS*

If severe weather is upon you and it's too dangerous to travel to your assigned shelter spot, take shelter under the bottom bunks in your cabins. Use good judgment in deciding when to travel!

LALANDE- Take shelter in the Beach Bath House or go to the Grotto.

GOUPIL- Go to the Council Ring and take shelter to the left side under overhanging rock shelter.

CHABANEL- Take shelter under the rock shelter behind unit.

LAMEMANT- Take shelter in Shower House D.

GARNIER- Go to Lakeside Adventure Cabin and get under the bottom bunks in the cabin.

AMANTACHA- Get under the lower bunks in your cabins.

RAGANEAU- Go to Tekakwitha's Cave/Sandstone shelter.

TEKAKWITHA- Take Shelter under the 'Cave' behind your unit.

DANIEL- Go to the Grotto. **DO NOT CROSS THE DAM ROAD IN SEVERE LIGHTENING.** If this is the case, take shelter under the lower bunks in your cabins.

BREBEUF- Take shelter in Shower House B.

BOQ- Go to the Grotto via the Fournie Lodge's yard.

LAKESIDE- Take shelter under the bottom bunks in your cabin.

DORMS- Take shelter under the bottom bunks in your cabin.

INCLEMENT WEATHER SPOTS FOR *ACTIVITY AREAS*

Boating – Grotto

Swimming – Grotto

Riflery – Take shelter in your area

Archery – New dining hall (away from windows) or take shelter in your area

Barn – Take shelter in barn

Woodsmanship – Chabanel cave or Council ring – left side under rock overhang

Handicrafts – Grotto

Council – Grotto

Hikes – Take shelter where you can – along bluffs, lower edge, or under rock overhangs at lowest point.

DISASTER COMMUNICATIONS

Parents and guardians of campers should be notified of campers' welfare in case of a whole camp disaster. These notifications should be made by phone in case of an accident. They may be made by radio public announcements in case of disaster when injuries have not occurred.

EMERGENCY MEDIA PLAN

In the event of an emergency where representatives of the media arrive on site or call by phone, only the Executive Director is authorized to give official statements. The Executive Director may authorize the Marketing Director to give official statements.

Other staff questioned by the media must refer them to the Executive Director.

All information given to the media includes a commitment to accuracy. Staff members involved in an accident may be given permission by the Executive Director to give a brief, factual statement to the press. This statement could include location, type of incident, when it occurred, and whether it involved children or adults. Specific names should not be used until families have been notified.



DIOCESAN CONTACTS

In the case of any serious accident, the Executive Director or chosen substitute will be responsible for communication with Diocesan personnel, including, but not limited to: the Vicar General, the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, and the Insurance Representative for the Diocese.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Any staff member who witnesses a fire, natural disaster, danger from intruders, an incident regarding campers or staff (fighting, serious emotional outbursts, threatening others) or other situations posing serious safety threats are required to complete an Incident Report. Incident Report Forms can be found in the Business Office in the Staff Lounge, and should be submitted to your direct supervisor. Supervisors will submit form to the Head Counselor, who after reviewing the report will submit to the Camping Services Director. All staff are asked to take their time when filling out an Incident Report, including all reasonable details surrounding the event.

STAFF DUTIES

Outside of the general responsibilities associated with their specific day job, **all Camp Ondessonk staff members will have collateral and weekend duties assigned to them.** The following is a list of duties that Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff members may find themselves serving throughout their summer employment.

Becky Brendel: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 1994-1998



“Serving as a camp counselor is one of the best things you will ever do in life. You can help to create a life-changing experience for a camper, just as your counselors did for you. Remember, camp is for the campers! Your job is to provide a safe, meaningful and memorable experience for these children. The fun for staff comes in creating that "magical" camp experience. Spending the summer at the place you love, hanging out with your friends, making some money....that is the bonus, not the focus!”

SATURDAY/SUNDAY JOBS

All staff members will have specific duties assigned to them during Camper Check-in on Sunday afternoons and Camper Check-out on Saturday mornings. Sunday Jobs are part of how we welcome Campers to Camp Ondessonk and include Tommy's Café, Camper Health Screening, Luggage Haul, Luggage Tags, Swim Tests, Camper Registration, Camper Check-in at the Units, Guest Service Greeters, etc. Saturday Jobs allow for a smooth and enjoyable transition from Camp life back to home for our campers and include Luggage Haul, Camper Check-out, Unit Clean up, Bath House Clean-up, Main Area Clean-up, Activity Area Clean-up, Litter Clean-up, etc. The Saturday Staff Meeting will directly follow the completion of Saturday Jobs, followed by hard-earned time off. Typically, Saturday/Sunday jobs are posted in the Staff Lounge by Friday after dinner. Staff members are expected to know the responsibilities of their job and to be on time.



UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

All Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Members serve as mentors to the Campers of Camp Ondessonk. One of the main functions of general staff counselors is to assist the unit leader in every possible way when not engaged in the assigned activity or service area, or on time-off given by the activity/service director. General Staff who do not live in a unit (attached staff) have the same responsibilities as the staff living in the unit. The times that unit staff are to give assistance when they are available are, but not limited to:

- check-in times
- inspection
- all-day explorations
- all meals
- Wednesday night overnight
- Friday picnic lunch
- Marathon preparation
- Marathon and Tug-o-War
- assigned unit supervision
- assigned night duty including evening reflection
- camper evaluations
- camp fires: unit and all camp



A note about Camper evaluations: For each camper that a unit staff member is assigned, a Camper Evaluation Form must be completed. The unit leader bears the overall responsibility for the camper of his or her unit.



UNIT STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

General Staff members, as unit staff assigned or attached to a unit, are expected to assist the Unit Leader in camper supervision at all times except when enjoying scheduled time off, or when specifically assigned to other duties. Any camper concerns should be brought to the UL's attention. The unit staff member will be responsible for the health, safety and direction of campers placed under his/her supervision.

Specific areas of general supervisory concerns for unit staff include:

- Physical and Emotional Safety of all campers at all times. This includes a keen awareness of any bullying or intimidating behavior in the Unit.
- Creating a community atmosphere within the Unit that encourages social connections.
- An awareness of any health hazards in the cabins or around the Unit.
- Combat Trash Accumulation with help of Campers.
- Maintaining Clean Cabins.
- Informing Campers of, and enforcing, Camp Ondessonk Rules: Safety & Courtesy.

Specific DUTIES for Unit Staff include:

All Unit and Attached Staff will be assigned various camper supervision duties by the Unit Leader. It is imperative that all staff are aware of what each duty entails before accepting the duty. If you are unclear, never hesitate to ask for clarification from your Unit Leader!

Before your duty, arrange a time/place with the Unit Leader to pick up and return the fanny pack. (The First Aid Kit/Fanny Pack MUST be with the unit staff member supervising the campers AT ALL TIMES. This will be strictly enforced) If there is an emergency, send a runner to the administration duty person or the camp nurse, depending on the situation.

All Unit and Attached Staff are expected to be on time for every assigned duty.

Morning Duty:

- Go to each cabin and wake campers at appropriate time.
- Check with the Unit Leader to learn the Unit's activity schedule for the day. Let Campers know what they will need for the day so they don't need to go back to the unit after breakfast.
- Clean outhouse using broom, toilet brush, spray cleaner and a bucket of water, empty trash and stock toilet paper.
- Ensure meal hoppers get to dining hall 15 minutes before meal, make sure rest of campers get to dining hall in time for breakfast!
- Inspect all camper cabins before campers leave unit: Do they have their water bottles? Are they dressed appropriate for the first activity? Do they have the items they will need for the rest of the day's activity? Are they in general good health and spirits? (Keep a mindful eye out for any campers who may be walking funny –could be blisters, wet feet, or jock-itch/rash) (Is a camper keeping to themselves more than usual? –could be homesick, or a target of bullying in the cabin. Get to the bottom of it and inform the UL!)
- Bring fanny pack to dining hall to return to your UL.

Specific DUTIES for Unit Staff Continued:

Lunch / Siesta Duty:

- Get fanny pack and go straight to unit; do not let campers beat you to the unit.
- Supervise campers who go back to unit. This is not a siesta for you when on duty! Ensure campers are adhering to the general Camp Ondessonk rules of Safety and Courtesy. Keep a mindful eye out for inappropriate camper interactions such as intimidation or bullying. Siesta is a time where most campers report this type of experience!
- Utilize your dynamic counseling skills to facilitate group building and social bonding experiences. This is a perfect time to create those powerful social connections that bring campers back to Ondessonk year after year!
- Ensure campers get to meeting spot on time, return fanny pack to Unit Leader and get to your job on time. (*This is where the General Staff member blows me away every time... You guys are superhuman.*)
- Return Fanny Pack to your UL.

4:30 Duty:

- Get fanny pack from U.L.
- Ensure campers are adhering to the general Camp Ondessonk rules of Safety and Courtesy. Keep a mindful eye out for inappropriate camper interactions such as intimidation or bullying.
- Make sure all campers shower and have unit shirt on before leaving unit.
- Ensure sure hoppers get to dining hall 15 minutes before inspection.
- Inform campers know when to meet at the unit meeting spot for inspection!
- You are the last one to leave the unit to ensure all campers are where they need to be for inspection!
- Return Fanny Pack to your UL.

Shower house duty:

- Be ON TIME and DO NOT LEAVE until the last camper is done.
- ACTIVELY supervise campers by providing a presence at the shower house you are assigned. Regardless of gender, you must be a presence for each side of the shower house. You are encouraged to poke your head in the side of your gender to check in on campers periodically letting them know that you are 'there'. Do the same from the door of the side opposite your gender. You can also ask older campers heading into each side to 'check on everything' for you. This accomplishes two things: 1) they know you are an active presence and will be more apt to behave accordingly, 2) you empower them to be good stewards.
- Keep a mindful eye out for inappropriate camper interactions such as intimidation or bullying.
- You are the time keeper here to ensure that campers get to inspection on time!

Evening Duty (after dinner):

- Get fanny pack from your UL.
- Ensure campers are adhering to the general Camp Ondessonk rules of Safety and Courtesy. Keep a mindful eye out for inappropriate camper interactions such as intimidation or bullying.
- Make sure campers change into appropriate attire for evening activity.
- Conjure up your camp counselor enthusiasm for the evening activity about to begin. Get your campers PUMPED UP! You can set the tone for the fun they are going to have at Camp Ondessonk. *USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD!*
- Ensure campers are where they need to be for the particular evening activity prepared and on time.
- Return Fanny Pack to your UL.

Night Duty:

- Get fanny pack from your UL.
- Let campers know about the next day's activities and what they will need to take with them or wear to breakfast.
- Let campers know when lights out will be, and ensure campers are adhering to the general Camp Ondessonk rules of Safety and Courtesy. Keep a mindful eye out for inappropriate camper interactions such as intimidation or bullying.
- Visit each cabin: you are invited to consider leading a bedtime prayer, read a poem, tell a story, and/or begin a discussion about the campers' experiences so far during their week of Camp. This is a fantastic opportunity to facilitate reflection of the day's experience to allow your campers to begin processing their experience and making a stronger, life-long connection with Camp Ondessonk.
- At light's out: hold your campers accountable in meeting the expectation that everyone quiets down and gets to sleep. Patrol cabins after lights out to ensure they are meeting this expectation. Keep a watchful eye out for campers slipping out of the unit once they think everyone is asleep.
- Return Fanny Pack to your UL at the end of this duty (12:00am/staff curfew).

WEEKEND DUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Outside of the general responsibilities associated with the day job, **all** Camp Ondessonk staff members will have weekend duties assigned to them. Weekend Duties are generally assigned during Staff Orientation, and are expected of all staff regardless of position. These duties are described below.

Weekend duties include:

Office Duty

On Saturday evenings, two staff members are also designated to be on duty. The responsibilities are the same as Wednesdays, except on duty staff also check-in staff who are under 18 years of age at midnight.

If you are scheduled for duty, you need to pick up an on-duty file and keys from the Office Manager. This file will include phone instructions, a Camp Roster, a Staff Roster (which also lists minors who need to check in), a list of emergency numbers, and other important information. On weekends it also will include bus information.

Bus Duty

Some staff members may be assigned to bus duty. Bus duty consists of supervising a bus route in its entirety. At least two staff members are assigned to bus duty and they depart Camp around 9:30 a.m. on Saturday. Staff members on bus duty are required to attend an informational meeting after the campfire on Friday night. Bus duty for staff members begins right after breakfast on Saturday. Staff members on bus duty wear Class A uniforms for this trip.

Staff members are expected to demonstrate their best behavior, role-modeling, and leadership possible on these trips. For many campers who ride the bus (and their parents), the Ondessonk bus counselor is their first and only living contact with the Camp. Please make that first impression an excellent one.

Staff members supervise and entertain the campers and respond to emergency situations and accidents. Counselors lodge for the night in a hotel at Camp's expense, and are reimbursed for up to \$15 in meals as long as the staff member secures receipts. Bus counselors then return to Camp on Sunday with new campers.

Kitchen Duty

One member of the Kitchen Crew will be assigned to this duty each weekend to prepare and serve 1) a pack-out lunch for CIT's and CIT Duty Staff, Layover Campers and Layover Duty Staff, and Office Duty Staff, 2) dinner for the Saturday Special Program and Office Duty staff, CIT's and Staff, Layover Campers and Staff, as well as 3) breakfast in the Dining Hall for Saturday Special and Office Duty Staff. This duty person will also prepare and distribute 1) a continental breakfast for CIT's and Staff, Layover Campers and Staff, and under 18 summer staff to be served in the Pavilion Sunday morning.



Barn Duty

Two Wranglers will be assigned to this duty each weekend to maintain proper care and maintenance of Camp Ondessonk's horse herd. Wrangler Weekend Duty, or Barn Duty, is very important for the health and safety of the Camp Ondessonk Herd. Expectations and requirements for the duty are listed below. Wranglers and former Barn staff are eligible to sign up for this duty. Due to the specific feeding procedures required for this duty, two experienced staff will be needed to fulfill the responsibilities involved.



Saturday

- After the staff meeting – Run horses out of the yard and fill Hay Pen trough. Complete daily barn chores, like cleaning troughs and cleaning the yard.
- 3pm – Open gate for horses to be released onto designated Pasture. Fill Hay Pen trough and check automatic waterer.
- By 12midnight – Return to Camp Ondessonk. Walk past Barn to check for anything out of the ordinary or anything that needs attention.

Sunday

- 9am – Feed horses and do daily morning chores. Fill and clean water troughs, look over all horses for signs of health, and close pasture gates to secure horses in yard for the day.
- Bust out barn chores, like cleaning troughs and cleaning the yard, until 10:30am.

CIT Duty

On the Saturday in between the first and second weeks of each CIT session, three staff members will be responsible for facilitating programming for CITs and supervising them throughout the weekend layover. During Coed sessions, one 18+ male and one 18+ female are required for this supervision, along with a third staff member of any age. During Girls session, two 18+ females are required for this duty, with a third female staff member of any age to accompany. Responsibilities for this duty include the following: after Saturday breakfast until about 3:30 p.m., CIT Duty staff will lead CITs on an all-day exploration. Pack out lunch for this exploration will be provided by the kitchen crew. Upon returning from the exploration, CITs and staff will be given time to shower and gather belongings for an overnight campout, which will take place at an overnight spot decided upon by duty staff and approved by the CIT director earlier in the week. CITs and staff will eat dinner Saturday evening with the Saturday Special folks in the Dining Hall before leaving on their overnight campout. On the overnight, it is imperative that CITs are well supervised, and that males and females sleep in separate parts of the overnight location. During the overnight campout, fire building and storytelling skills should be emphasized, but otherwise this is intended to be a good bonding time for CITs and staff, and it usually proves to be a good opportunity for CITs to ask questions of the staff and for the staff to offer advice for strong performance in the second week. On Sunday morning, CITs and staff must return in time to eat a continental breakfast in the Old Dining Hall with layover campers and staff, after which CITs are responsible for moving all of their belongings from their first-week residence into their unit for the second week. It is important that CIT Duty staff supervise the moving-out process and only allow CITs to leave the first-week residence once it is properly cleaned out and ready for the next session of CITs to move in. After CITs have been checked out of their first-week residence and have moved into their respective units, they should gather at the Trading Post to check-in with the CIT Director prior to the Sunday morning staff meeting, after which they will eat lunch with the staff and accompany their Unit Leaders back to the units to aid in the check-in process.

Layover Weekend Duty

Each Saturday, three staff members will be responsible for facilitating programming for Layover Campers (campers who are participating in two or more weeks of summer camp at Ondessonk and who opt to remain at Camp rather than going home for the day) and supervising them throughout the weekend layover.



During Coed sessions, one 18+ male and one 18+ female are required for this supervision, along with a third staff member of any age. During Girls session, two 18+ females are required for this duty, with a third female staff member of any age to accompany.

Responsibilities for this duty include the following: after Saturday breakfast until about 3:30 p.m., Layover Duty staff will lead campers on an all-day exploration. Pack out lunch for this exploration will be provided by the kitchen crew. Upon returning from the exploration, campers and staff will be given time to shower and gather belongings for an overnight campout, which will take place at an overnight spot separate from CITs, and decided upon by duty staff and approved by the Head Counselor earlier in the week. Layover Campers and Duty Staff will eat dinner Saturday evening with the Saturday Special folks in the Dining Hall before leaving on their overnight campout. On the overnight, it is imperative that campers are well supervised, and that males and females sleep in separate parts of the overnight location. On Sunday morning, campers and staff must return in time to eat a continental breakfast in the Old Dining

Hall with CITs and staff, after which campers are encouraged to remain in the Pavilion during the Sunday morning staff meeting, after which they will eat lunch with the staff and accompany their new Unit Leaders back to the units to participate in the check-in process.

STAFF TIME OFF

Camp Ondessonk Staff should have two hours off each day and a cumulative of 24 hours off every two weeks in blocks of not less than 12 hours.

Evening Time Off

Staff members are given two late evenings off a week. These are two-hour periods during which no specific duties are assigned. **Staff may not leave Camp property during these times.** Also, no stacking please.

A minimum of two staff members, one of which needs to be at least 18 years of age, are to remain with the unit for assigned Night Duty during these times. (At no time should one person be left alone with the unit while everyone else takes their night off.) The Unit Leader designates nights off for the unit staff during the week. The time off periods for unit staff are designated below:

Monday: 10:00 PM or end of Unit Campfire to Midnight.

Tuesday: 10:00 PM or end of Game to Midnight.

Wednesday: *Overnight!*- no scheduled evening time off, every unit staff is on duty with their unit.

Thursday: 10:00 PM or end of Lodge Ceremony to Midnight

Friday: 10:00 PM or end of Closing Campfire to Midnight.



Curfew during the week for all staff members is Midnight, or two hours after the end of an evening staff meeting. **ALL STAFF MEMBERS ARE TO BE IN THEIR ASSIGNED SLEEPING AREAS AT THIS TIME.** If you do not do this, Rat Patrol will get you, and you will be dealt with accordingly.

Weekend Time Off

Staff who are 18 and over are permitted to leave Camp on Saturday afternoon directly following the Staff Meeting.

Staff who are under 18 are permitted to leave Camp only during weekend time off if their parent waiver is signed and on file.

Opposite Gender Season Time Off

During Girls or Boys' Season, Opposite Season Staff 18 and over are welcome to leave Camp on Monday after inspection, as well as Wednesday afternoon following a special work project. Curfew is midnight on Monday evening. Staff must be back at work and ready for their day at 8:00am Thursday morning. Check it will be in the Old Dining Hall at the continental breakfast.

Opposite Season Staff under 18 are not permitted to leave Camp on Monday evening and will be provided a foil burger pack out dinner to enjoy away from the Dining Hall. Opposite Season Staff who are under 18 may leave site on Wednesday evening after the work project if they provide a signed note from a parent or guardian. Staff who do not leave site will be provided a delicious foil burger dinner pack out. Curfew is midnight. A continental breakfast will be served for all Opposite Season Staff in the Old Dining Hall on Thursday morning.

All staff must sign in/out before leaving Camp and upon returning to Camp in the log book located at the exit to the parking lot. This applies to all time off.

All staff (including opposite season staff) are required to attend evening inspection, Campfires, the Game, and Lodge Ceremony with the exception of staff having responsibilities that conflict.

Requesting Formal Time Off

Staff needing to leave Camp during the regularly scheduled work week (Sunday afternoon through Saturday Afternoon) must arrange for special time off. To request time off (other than regularly scheduled time off), staff members should complete a (creatively named) Time Off Request Form (located in the Business Office in the Staff Lounge). The staff member must get the approval / signature of their Unit Leader and their Program / Service Area supervisor before submitting the form to the Camping Services Director. Time Off Request Forms must be submitted at least one week in advance of the anticipated time off for approval.

Peggy Hausmann: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 1967-1971



“Camp is fun and weekends are fun, but you can't burn the candle at both ends forever. Be sure to take some time for yourself to rest and then you and the campers will enjoy each other and camp even more!”

STAFF RESOURCES

Campers: 101

Information to help you be an effective, caring, and transformation camp counselor.

Fr. Steven Beatty: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 2002-2003



“A few things have come to mind that might be worth passing on:

1) Older campers have the greatest potential to give you headaches or to make your unit amazing. Get them on your side. Sometime early in the week I would invite them up to the staff cabin and tell them they would make the difference, and I needed their help as leaders in the unit. My goal was to make them feel important and powerful, almost like junior staff. This is

especially effective if you've got a bully. Take him/her aside and say "hey, I've got some deep concerns about bullying in this unit and by other units. I could be wrong, but I have a feeling you can handle yourself... I can't be everywhere to stop it, so it's up to you to watch out for the smaller ones. They're your unit mates, don't let anyone mess with them. Can I count on you?" Sometimes that alone will turn a bully into a guardian.

2) Unit leaders have very different styles and personalities, but what they actually do during the week doesn't vary so much from one individual to another. Unit staff, on the other hand, make the biggest difference in how well things go. If the unit staff are always leaning forward, not just doing what they're asked but taking initiative and catching problems before they arise, the week is amazing for everyone. The UL will be happy and relaxed and the staff will have great morale. However, if the unit staff are more interested in having their own fun, rarely taking initiative, rarely asking themselves "what can I contribute right now?", then the unit leader has to be jerk just to make things happen. Staff morale is poor, and the kids pick that up big-time. The end result is everyone has less fun.

3) This same factor applies to Unit Leaders: staff morale is a critical part of your job. Keep the peace, smooth out the rougher edges, motivate the unmotivated. Give people a break when they really need one, and don't let them be lazy if they don't. Make it clear that you have high expectations because you respect and esteem your staff and have confidence in them. The number one difference-maker here is your own behavior. Lead the way and set the tone. You're first up in the morning and last to turn in at night. You're the last to get fed, the first to sacrifice. You can ask your staff to rise above fatigue and frustration because they see you do it all the time. The somewhat paradoxical result: way less fatigue and frustration for everyone!”

RULES FOR CAMPERS



Camp Ondessonk has two major rules. The first is **SAFETY**. The second is **COURTESY**. Ondessonk Campers are to avoid situations in which their safety or the safety of others is at risk. Ondessonk Campers must also be courteous to all of God's creatures; this includes people, plants, and animals. Specific rules and policies are similar to those used in schools. Some (this list is not exhaustive, and common sense and prudent judgment should be used at all times when providing for the supervision and mentoring of campers) of the major rules are outlined below.

LITTER: Camp Ondessonk is a place of natural beauty. Do not litter! Anyone who drops a piece of litter and is caught by another camper must buy the observant campers what was contained in the wrapper that was tossed down.

LOST AND FOUND: Found articles are to be turned in at the Dining Hall. These items are then displayed at meals so that they may be returned. Please take everyday use type items, such as towels, clothing, toiletries, or soiled articles to the Old Dining Hall.

VISITING OTHER UNITS: Do not go into another unit of camp at any time. You may visit other cabins in your own unit if the campers from that cabin are present.

CHAPEL: The Chapel is there for your use. It should be used for Mass, Communion Services, or private prayer. It is not a place to hang out and soak up the air conditioning. Hats are not to be worn in the Chapel. Food and drinks are not allowed in the Chapel.

FOREST and ANIMALS: Do not harm or catch any animals including lizards and snakes. Trees are not to be carved or cut. Treat the environment as if you are a guest. In fact, we are all guests who enjoy visiting this beautiful place but do not remain and should always treat all living things that do live here with respect.

CABINS: You should not write in or vandalize your cabin in any way. Campers who vandalize may be held liable for damages they cause.

ROCKS: Never climb the large rocks without a leader. Do not throw rocks at anytime at anything.

WANDERING OFF: Don't do it! Never leave the unit without the knowledge of the Unit Leader. When allowed, please always explore in groups of at least three (or more).

WATER: Important! –Only drink out of approved faucets and spigots with signs that indicate suitability for consumption, not from other people's water bottles (how germs are spread!), from the foot washing station at the Beach Fire Pit, or from the creeks or lakes. If you do, you will poo. A lot.

SWIMMING: Swimming is only allowed under supervision at appointed times. Never swim in Lake Echon (the boating lake), there are dangerous drop offs only a few feet from shore.

BRIDGES: All of Camp's bridges are safe, however they are not made for running or pushing or horseplay.

FENCES: Fences are erected for a purpose. Do not cross them; there may be a cliff, drop off, or other danger.

BULLYING: Camp Ondessonk is a place of acceptance for people of all kinds. In fact, most people say they feel safe to be who they are here more than any other place in their life. Treat all people with respect, forgiveness, and kindness. Cruel, malicious, or any other bullying type behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Ever. Be good to one another. You are all part of the Camp Ondessonk family, and should take care of each other!

THEFT: Stealing is never ok, and offenders will be removed from the Camp program immediately.

POISON IVY: Poison ivy is common at Camp Ondessonk, so learn to identify it so it can be avoided. If you believe you have been exposed, wash the area with soap and water immediately. Inform your Unit Leader, and monitor the area!

A Youth Development Primer



The Growing Camper

Understanding the typical developmental traits of children
by Sandy Cameron

Each camper will be different. They will come from different backgrounds, different family structures, and different socio-economic classes. However, just as they are different, they are the same. All children develop in basically the same way and share certain developmental traits with other children their age. If you understand the typical behavior for an age group, you may be able to determine what appropriate behavior is and then chart your best course of interaction with them.

The Elementary Years

Five-to-seven-year-old campers are curious and excited. They are learning to share and play cooperatively in small groups. They see the world as a place to be explored. Other typical behavioral traits include:

- * A strong attachment to their home and family
- * A short interest span
- * An awareness mainly of themselves and their own desires
- * A preference for imaginative, make-believe play
- * Curiosity, a desire to explore their expanding world
- * A desire for repetition of enjoyable experiences
- * Being easily upset by changes in routine or environment
- * Boys and girls playing together readily
- * Depending on adults to meeting physical and emotional needs
- * A need for patient understanding and close supervision

Beginning Independence

Seven-to-ten-year-old campers are beginning to socialize with children their own age. They want friendships and enjoy playing together. They also:

- * Are ready for a live-away experience
- * Have a longer attention span
- * Are aware of others and are willing to share
- * Desire acceptance from their peers
- * Need close friendship with playmate
- * Are able to express themselves freely in art forms and play
- * Desire better skills performance are interested in group games and activities
- * Want everyone to obey stated rules and regulations
- * Strongly identify with own sex and age group

The “Tween” Years

Not quite children and not quite teenagers, **campers ages ten to twelve** are beginning to gain more awareness of themselves and their skills. Making friends and being accepted by their peers is a growing concern. Campers in this age group also:

- * Have a strong desire for a live-away experience
- * Want to be together in groups and teams
- * Have the patience to work toward short-term goals
- * Form cliques and friendship with own sex and age group
- * Seek status through excellence in skills and knowledge of grown-up things
- * Are fairly competitive in team and individual activities
- * Have a growing concern with their physical size and appearance
- * Boys and girls can work and socialize in programs where they share planning responsibilities
- * Like to make, do, and collect things
- * Enjoy being mischievous and daring

Seeking Independence

Campers ages **twelve to fifteen** are becoming more independent, growing away from family ties and influences. However, they still want adult supervision and adult attention to their daily needs. Other traits include:

- * A strong drive for conformity with own age group
- * Intense feelings and emotions
- * Being greatly influenced by popular adults and teenage idols
- * Rapidly changing interests and ambitions
- * A long interest span and increasing capacity for self-discipline
- * A preference for competition with outside groups over competition with friends
- * Idealism about the world at large
- * Concern with their personal appearance, self-consciousness and inhibition
- * The start of puberty; girls begin to menstruate, boys' sex glands begin to function actively
- * Boys and girls can work together on projects better than they can socialize

Impatient to Grow Up

Campers ages **fifteen to seventeen** are eager to grow up. They want independence and responsibility. At the same time, they are beginning to think about their future and possible career plans. Campers in this age group also:

- * Want to earn money for independence and freedom
- * Desire increased responsibility
- * Need to be treated as young adults
- * Occasionally revert to childish behavior
- * Are very critical of self
- * Seek prestige and belonging to the power group
- * Are able to concentrate and specialize in selected skills and interests
- * Expansive and changing ambitions
- * Are encountering a conflict between idealism and materialism
- * Develop crushes with depth of feeling
- * Tend to cover own weaknesses with similar weaknesses of the group

In addition to these characteristics, all children and teens want to know that they are respected, loved, and valued for who they are. Show campers that you care, and they will show you respect.

Information in this article is from *Camper Guidance: A Basic Handbook* by J.W. Bloom and A.C. Ballentine, et al. A related book is *Camp is for the Camper*.

Originally published in the 1999 May/June issue of *Camping Magazine*.

Nancy Harness: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 1995-1998



“Boys are worse at being homesick than the girls. Don't tell them to toughen up. Give them a bit of TLC and redirect their attention to something fun. An older, seasoned camper would make a great buddy for a new camper. You have the opportunity to make their week memorable or something they want to forget. Your care and understanding of their homesickness will forever be what they remember. Heepwah!”

HOMESICKNESS MANAGEMENT – OUR ROLE AT CAMP

From the Camp Ondessonk Parent Camper Handbook- Parenting to Minimize and Manage Homesickness:

Almost all first-time campers and many returning campers experience some level of homesickness. Symptoms include: being withdrawn, complaints of other ailments, and feelings of missing home. These feelings are natural, extremely common, and very real. Most cases of homesickness are mild. Some cases are challenging. Our staff members are trained to help campers work through these feelings and as a result, homesick feelings usually subside within 24 hours of arriving at camp.

When preparing your child for camp, you will minimize the likelihood of a serious case of homesickness by using the following parenting strategies:

- Don't tell your child that you will pick them up if he/she doesn't like camp right away. Regrettably, we encounter this fairly often. Though parents who give this message have good intentions, their children have an extremely hard time getting better when homesick. The result is that fun and independence are rarely gained. Be very honest with your child about what it means to sign up for something and follow through with it. Leaving camp early should never be introduced as an option.
- Have your child spend a night away from home with a friend.
- Involve your child in planning for camp. While doing this, focus on the fun that will be had.
- If you sense that your child is nervous about going to camp and missing home, talk about it. Use an encouraging approach and supply your child with ideas that will help him/her work through it. Suggest writing a letter or taking along a favorite keepsake from home. You know your child better than anyone. What has helped her/him handle stressful situations in the past? Any and all conversation about this subject will help as long as encouragement is at the forefront.
- If possible, send your child with a friend. Be sure that they are truly friends, not just acquaintances from school. If your child is going to camp alone, emphasize the opportunities that he/she will have to meet new people. Many of our staff, including Ondessonk's Executive Director, came to Camp Ondessonk alone as campers. Being alone should be seen as an opportunity.
- Discuss what camp will be like. Read this booklet with your child and let him/her know what to expect. Focus on the positive aspects of camp. Talk about the fun activities, the idea of "growing up," and the independence and adventure of it all. Visit our website with your child. Look at the photos and read about Ondessonk together (www.ondessonk.com).
- Establish realistic expectations. Camp, like life, has high points and low ones. Not every moment will be filled with wonder and excitement. Encouraging your child to try new things and make new friends will help the experience be a positive one.
- Think of camp as a learning experience for both the child and the parent. This is a wonderful opportunity for you and your child to practice "letting go" in a safe environment. Though it might not feel as such, this will enhance your relationship with your child.
- Write to your child. Kids love to receive letters at camp and getting one from home on the first or second day does wonders. Send a letter a couple of days before your child goes to camp. Be careful what you write because homesickness may be brought on by a letter that tells a child how much she/he is missed, or how much fun everyone else at home is having. Letters of an encouraging tone help promote a positive camp experience. Please note that



Campers are not allowed to receive faxes or phone calls due to the high number of campers and our limited resources. Also, check out our website to learn more about how to email your camper with our Bunk 1 service!

In the event that your child does have a bout with homesickness, please be assured that he/she will receive individual counseling directly from staff members trained for that purpose. As mentioned above, the vast majority of homesick children feel better within 24 hours of arriving. Finally, please be aware that a camp representative may contact you directly for support if your child is having a particularly hard time with homesickness. Otherwise, no news is good news.

A comprehensive 1997 study conducted by Christopher Thurber, PhD and Edward Walton, MD found that “90 percent of children attending summer camp experience some level of homesickness and that 20 percent face a serious level of distress that – if untreated – worsens over time and interferes with their ability to benefit from the camp experience.” Their research, which has since become widely accepted in the camp community at large, revealed that the most effective strategy to prevent and manage homesickness is careful preparation at home prior to the camp experience. Therefore, Camp Ondessonk provides the following information in the Parent and Camper Handbook, which is distributed to the parents of all summer campers.

The Thurber / Walton study cited above found that when pre-camp homesickness prevention strategies like ours are employed at home, camp homesickness is reduced by 50%, on average. Great news, but you will still encounter your share of homesick campers and you need the tools to help manage this unfortunate reality of camp. Your skills as an Ondessonk counselor will likely be tested more when it comes to homesick management than any other area of your job. The following information is key to your success in this important area. Read it at least three times.

From experience, this is what we know:

- Most homesickness occurs within the first 1 to 3 days of camp.
- It is much more common among first year campers. However, we’ve seen it surface in older campers that have successfully completed Camp Ondessonk sessions in previous summers.
- Keeping in mind that 90% of campers encounter some level of homesickness (most often in their first or second year), campers often keep the feelings to themselves and work through it quietly. This tells us that a positive unit environment, new friends, and a satisfying experience seem to be enough for most children to overcome their homesickness.
- Campers with persistent cases of homesickness often encounter the feelings throughout their entire session.
- Successfully managing homesickness involves effort from all counselors, with leadership from the affected campers’ unit leader.
- Boys and girls experience feelings of homesickness at about the same rate. Girls tend to be more outward in showing it while boys often try to keep it to themselves.
- Homesickness can, in a sense, spread from camper to camper.



The Camp Ondessonk Homesickness Management Strategy:

Bring the subject of homesickness up at the unit meeting on Sunday. Don't brush over it without letting campers know five very important facts about being homesick:

- It is perfectly normal and very common.
- Campers should look out for each other to help those that might be homesick by including them and being a friend.
- The counselors will need the help of older, more experienced campers if someone in the unit gets homesick.
- The Health Center is not where you go when you miss home.
- The quickest way to feel better is to talk about it with a counselor or Unit Leader.

Create an environment that fosters friendship. This is deliberate. It doesn't just happen.

Listen... try to let the camper get it all out. Don't try to counteract every statement with a response.

Listen!

Don't overwhelm the homesick camper with a bunch of well-intentioned counselors that want to talk. Unit leaders should assign one or two staff members in addition to themselves to help with each individual homesick camper. This will provide consistency and prevent the counselors and unit leader from giving an inordinate amount of attention to the homesick camper. In other words, too much attention can be as damaging as too little attention.

If at all possible, engage the homesick camper in the activities like every other camper. Tell him/her that you will check in on them "at dinner" or "after archery" then follow through with your promise. After checking in, pick another time in the future to check in. Again, follow through with the promise.

Use your normal, adult voice when speaking with homesick campers. Speaking to an eleven year old like he or she is a two year old is confusing, counterproductive to the goal, and, quite frankly, annoying. Don't do it.

Some severe cases require the child to completely break down to "clear the air". Don't do this deliberately. However, it is something you may have to let happen.

Never, ever, ever present going home as a solution or agree to think about it if the camper "makes it until Wednesday". Doing so can completely undermine any possibility of progress. Never offer the possibility of calling home.

If you are counseling a camper in a public place where others are present or just outside of the dining hall in plain sight of everyone, the rule of three has been satisfied.

When the subject of home, mom, dad, or the dog that is missed so much comes up, let the child talk. Your job is to listen.

Stick to the facts... A consistent response like "your mom and dad are going to be so proud when you get home on Saturday" is the best. Stand alone comments like "I'll bet they miss you too" can be damaging if not followed up by "lets make sure they know how much you love them and write a letter". Most kids come to camp with letter writing supplies, including addressed, stamped envelopes. If not, camp can supply a stamp and everything else. Follow through by helping the child write the letter and dropping it in the trading post mailbox together.

FIND A WAY TO MAKE A CONNECTION WITH THE CAMPER. Be creative. We've had several severe cases where a game of catch between camper and counselor has done the trick. Or... take the camper (and someone else – rule of three) to your favorite spot in camp. Or...Deal with homesickness where and when it surfaces, but try to avoid skipping meals or activities. Missing stuff will make it worse.

Homesickness can become worse if you allow it to dominate the camper's experience by talking about it too much. This is tricky but we all must understand that homesickness will spiral downward into more homesickness if we don't follow our management strategy. One effective line is "I know you aren't feeling so well right now so lets talk for five minutes before we go to archery (or eat, or play the game, or whatever)". Look at your watch, give the camper your undivided attention for five minutes, then walk with him / her to what is next. Don't forget to say "I'll check in on you at _____ to see how your doing". Walk away, and follow through later. Remember, you are trying to make friends with the camper, not cure homesickness.

When you sense a severe homesickness case, don't wait until all else has failed to tell the Head Counselor. Discreetly tell the Head Counselor about the child and let her introduce her/himself, nothing more. Then...

When All Else Fails: The Unit Leader makes the decision to set up an intervention with the Head Counselor. The Head Counselor may use the CIT Director, Camping Services Director, or other administrative staff member as a resource.

Colleen Shaughnessy: Camp Ondessonk Summer Staff Member 1994-1996



“Here's what comes to mind:

Gene Canavan used to say, "Many hands make light work." I can't count how many times I've made that reference later in life and always it sticks with me that it was a Gene thing.

I always remembered that Camp was where I finally found a place to fit in - and that many of my campers could (and often did) have the same experience. Keeping that in mind I think made me a better counselor.

Lastly, show, don't tell. Show campers how to behave, act, do things...they are always watching you. Your actions will speak louder than any words you can ever say.”

A letter to my child's staff person...

Michael Brandwein

How strange it is that I've never met you and in a few days you will become the most important person in my life.

I suppose you've been told that already: "These are other people's children - their most cherished loved ones; they'd actually give up their own lives before they would let anything terrible happen to them..." But I hope you don't think it's strange if I take

a few moments to write down a few things I want you to know. Oh, sure, there are those official camp forms where I can tell you that my son or daughter is allergic to a rare kind of wallpaper paste, loves volleyball but not when it's cloudy (please keep an eye out for that), or has promised the parole officer not to set any more of the big fires. I want to tell you some things that don't really belong on a form.

I've been thinking a lot the last few days about babysitters. Whenever I've hired them to look after my child, I've interviewed them. I've had the chance to meet them, ask them questions. I watched how they interacted and played with my child and how my child responded to them. I personally talked to people for whom they'd worked before. And I've thought about school: I get to meet the teacher before it starts. But when parents send their child to camp, odds are they've never met the people who will stand in their place. If I understand right, at some camps you don't even know the counselor's name until camp actually begins. All of this is scary.

Please don't be insulted. I trust the director who hired you and would never think of sending my child unless I did. If the director trusts you, then I trust you. But I know that the director is not going to be taking care of my child personally. You are. I want you to know what an extraordinary act of faith it is for me to put my child into your arms. Please hold my child carefully.

I'm sending my child with all of the things that the camp letter said to include. I feel absolutely certain that I've forgotten something, and I have this fear that my child will be the only one without it, whatever it is.

I can still remember when my little brother and I went to sleep-over camp in Wisconsin. Our second summer we showed up for only the second four-week session. We didn't know that no one did that, and that we'd be walking into a place where everyone already knew everyone else. We showed up proudly wearing our official camp T-shirts, the only kind we'd brought. Unfortunately, no one had told us that these shirts, which were considered the height of coolness our first summer, had been declared the depths of dorkiness for the second summer. When we arrived it was dark. I remember being very grateful for that. Everyone was in the dining hall watching a movie, so we snuck into a corner, away from the stares. I don't think I've ever felt so alone.

And then I remember the first counselor who smiled at me. Who asked me lots of questions about what I liked to do. Who really listened without interrupting or correcting. I must have talked for three or four minutes with him just smiling and nodding at me. I kept waiting for him to interrupt or something. Four minutes! That was a personal record. It had never happened at home. I liked it. I liked it a lot. And then the box of regular, ordinary, no dorky-logo shirts arrived in an emergency package from mom and dad. Things got much better after that...

There are a few more things: I don't expect you to be perfect. Heaven knows I'm not. (With any luck, maybe heaven doesn't know...) I've brought my child up the best way I know how and I know I've made mistakes. I keep trying to learn how to do it better, and just when I think I've got this parenting thing down, my child grows older, changes considerably, and sends me back to the drawing board to figure it all out again. But I have learned one thing: if you don't know, ASK. Read. Watch others.

Invite help. I have good friends I talk to all the time about raising my child. I'd hate to think you were suddenly trying to do this on your own when I can't do that myself.

Please know that my child is not perfect either. I'm hoping that you will forgive just as you would like to be forgiven yourself, and that when my child does something that isn't right, that you will focus on helping to show what should be done better the next time. In other words, just treat my child exactly as you want to be treated if you mess up.

I know you've got a lot of children to take care of. They are all important.

I hope very much you find something special about mine. I don't mean better. I just mean something unique that sets my child apart as a valuable individual.

You see, I love my child very much. And I tell my child that every day. But the problem is that I've raised a reasonably smart child who figures that it's my job to say "you're smart" and "you look great" and "people really think you're terrific." From time to time my child must wonder if I say these things because they're really true or because I'm supposed to say them.

Wouldn't it be great if my child met you, a complete stranger, and you discovered valuable things in my child all on your own? See, if YOU find and talk about these positive things, my child can say, "Hey, people notice that I've got good things inside of me. I guess maybe I do..."

So I've sort of ended where I began: talking about strangers. Ironically, the very fact that you are a stranger to my child gives you, in some ways, even more power than I have.

And one final thing. It just occurred to me: If you care for my child with love and patience and skill, then you're no stranger. You've suddenly become my most important friend in the world.

Thank you, friend. Have a most wonderful summer!

- A Child's Grateful Parent

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