

February 1st, 2009

Dear Y Camp Alumnus,

When my mom moved from a townhouse to a small retirement villa, we wanted her new home to resemble the old one; so we painted it in the same colors. That was easy. The difficulty was deciding what furniture to keep and what to give away. We did well, because the new place is much like the old, albeit very crowded!

Y Camp's struggle has been similar. We have moved from four week sessions down to one week, so we have had to decide what to keep and what to cast away. No longer are there canoe or bus trips, but we still drag our tired 'behinds' out of the Gorge and we still experience overnight at the Cove. League games are a 'flash', but every camper still plays Apple Knocker and faces the biggest kid in the unit! We still have inspection, morning exercise, and we tell the Vandiver Man. Above all, we hear the lessons Jesus taught, three times a day. And yes, we go on the Ice Cream hike. Truly, camp is the same, though it is over in the 'blink of an eye'!

We have kept Y Camp like it was when you were here, but like all traditional camps, we struggle with dwindling numbers. One reason is increased competition from specialty camps. The other reason is today's children are busy '24/7'. In spite of the difficulties, we are Y Camp, and we will find ways to build the numbers back to the 200 level that most of you experienced as campers. So now that you understand the problem; will you help us put in effect what we believe is a viable solution?

We are initiating a scholarship program. We are asking you to give either \$500 or \$1000 each year for three years. \$500 will send one child to camp; \$1000 will send two. There are four great things that will come from this program. First, a full camp is much more fun for campers and staff alike. Second, your gift will help Y Camp balance its budget at year's end. Third, you will introduce a boy or girl to something you hold dear. Fourth, they will write you a letter from camp and as you watch them grow as campers, you will know that you have done a very good thing for a deserving child.

At the end of three years I believe you will sign on for three more... and three more; and one day, you may see your camper send a camper to camp as well. Are you willing to help us grow the Y Camp spirit and spread it around to deserving boys and girls? You can do it for \$1.37 a day, about half a Starbucks Coffee. There is more to tell about this initiative that we would be happy to share if you are interested. How could anyone not be interested in spreading the joy of Y Camp and Camp Chattooga to appreciative young people?

Together with you in building the Y Camp Spirit,

Our Problem

The problem we have experienced at Y Camp and Chattooga is one most traditional camps face: dwindling enrollment. Although our program has remained high quality, over the years we began to experience a drop in enrolment. We are now seeing increases in enrollment, but our increases have not yet gotten us back to attendance levels of the past. One reason for the decline in numbers has been a proliferation of specialty camps the last twenty years. There are now football, basketball, baseball, and tennis camps; but also there are cheerleading camps, chess camps, space camps, camps of every category imaginable. These camps are profitable because they cater to the 'market mindset' of our culture. When parents send children to a specialty camp, they know what product they will receive. Traditional camps have often been less clear as to what we offer children and this has not been helpful. In addition America's children are overbooked, both during school term and in summer vacation. Most traditional camps still offer three or four week sessions and few children, these days, have four weeks to devote to one activity. Their summers are notably shorter and activities are many and diverse. For these reasons traditional camps must either adapt or face the hard reality of closing their gates. We at Y Camp never intend to do that, and so we have begun to adapt. Reluctantly, we have shortened our sessions from four to three to two and now to one week.

The Solution

However, shortening sessions will not completely solve the problem. There also remains the fact that we are in this market driven economy. To cope with that mindset we must be clear to parents what their boys and girls will receive when they attend Y Camp or Camp Chattooga. It is imperative that we know what we are teaching children and for that we need to have a clear and concise **vision** statement.

Our Vision

WT Forbes, founder of both Y Camp and Camp Chattooga had a **vision** for children who attended Y Camp and Camp Chattooga:

***Away from the flea bitten, sin cursed cities of man;
Into the valley of the paradise of youth,
Where God and a good time are friends.***

This seemingly enigmatic bit of poetry may not be quite so difficult to understand as it first appears. From your time at AYC surely you remember the absence of phones, televisions, newspapers, between meal snacks, and all such trappings of city life. Apparently, even at the turn of the Twentieth Century, Forbes recognized the value of getting children out of the city context and back to a more natural way of living. Remember your own discovery that there was life at camp even without TV, or in our current context, we might say without:

computers, video games, cell phones. And then there were all the military styled activities: OD, KP, morning calisthenics, inspection, and lights out. Forbes believed that self discipline and self reliance were important traits for children to learn, and so he wanted the time a child spent at camp to instill self discipline and self reliance. And then there is God in the third line of the poem. WT did not need to say much about Christian values, because those values were the only ones extant in his cultural context. But clearly, the instilling of Christian values was a goal of Y Camp and Chattooga.

Through the years, when HC 'Pop' Pearson was director, and later in the time of John A Simpson, and still today under the leadership of Edward Schaefer, those basic Y Camp values and goals have never changed. We still focus on teaching children discipline, self reliance, and solid Christian values. Our consciously chosen program of activities is designed to teach children how to take care of themselves, how to compete and strive to achieve within the rules of the game, how to achieve more than they believe they can, and how to help and support one another in this process. All of this happens away from cluttered context of 'X-Box', 'I-Pod', 'Face-book', and 'the Wireless network'!

Program

Even though we only have a week to work with children, we are instilling the values WT Forbes taught one hundred years ago. Today's children are experiencing the same Y Camp you did as a camper. Typically, their day begins with a 7:30 wake up bell, followed by morning calisthenics. After exercise and before breakfast, campers clean their area of the cabin by making their bed, sorting their clothes, and then assist in sweeping the cabin for inspection. At breakfast, as at all meals, campers sample some of every food offered, clean their plates, and then KP their tables after the meal. After the cabins are inspected campers attend Morning Assembly with songs and a message from the Bible led by one of our counselors. League Games are still a featured activity and, believe it or not, Apple-Knocker is still played with the same intensity as ever. Some of the sports are different than in your day, but the competition is fierce and sportsmanship is demanded. Afterwards there is free time, but unlike in your day, campers are not allowed to 'hang out' in the cabins; they must engage in various activities of their choosing throughout the camp. Rest hour remains an obligatory post-lunch activity and classes are the afternoon event. There the fundamentals of various sports and recreational activities are taught, probably with more diligence than when you were a camper! After dinner we hold our traditional Vespers/Evening Program. Devotions and Lights Out are still strictly enforced, ensuring adequate rest for the next fun filled day.

While we have had to limit the number of off campus activities, we still hike in and out of the gorge and slide down 'slippery rock'. The cove remains a much anticipated over night campout. The difference is that we have our own boats and offer recreational water activities such as tubing. And we could not forsake the Ice Cream hike which still reminds

the 'new guys' that you simply cannot believe everything you hear; for if it seems 'to good to be true', it probably is!

Today, there is probably more of a conscious effort to stress Christian values than in past days. As stated in WT's era; even in Pop's and John A's, those values were, more or less 'the air we breathed'; today those values may be less evident to children. We design our own devotion book for 'cabin devotions' and we even have a leader devotional. This year our staff will be working through the Gospel of Mark each morning. While the program is not overbearing, Christian values are central to Y Camp's identity.

Marketing

We see the marketing of our vision as a twofold process. First, parents and children need to understand what good things are going to happen in a week at Athens Y Camp and Camp Chattooga. We cannot assume that parents will 'get it' just because we have been in operation for 110 years. We cannot rely on alumni alone to be our spokes persons. And so we have Y Camp/Chattooga 'House Parties', where we come to your town and present the vision, if you will host the party. Hosts provide a space, invite as many friends as possible and supply some basic refreshments. We will come equipped with videos, brochures, and souvenirs; and we will answer any questions you have. We also attend 'Camp Fairs' where any number of camps gather to present parents with information and promote their camp. Like we said; it is a very competitive market for camper hours these days. That is the first way we promote our vision, but the second is equally important. The second target for our vision is our own staff. You may recall that 'back in the day', your day, you came to work camp, listened to Pop or John A, for about an hour on the last day, and then we opened the gate. Today we have a week of orientation which includes obligatory first aid and life saving courses that all staff must take and pass. We spend two hours with our insurance agent in a 'risk management' course, and we engage in numerous team building activities. Truly, it is a different world for camp staffs today. And yet the value is we are able to share the vision of what we hope to accomplish in each of the eight weeks of camp.

Scholarships

In addition to **vision statements** and **marketing**, traditional camps have also begun to offer **scholarships**. In reality, informal scholarships have been a mainstay of camps including Athens Y Camp for many years. Long ago camp directors realized that adding a few boys to the summer rolls did not appreciably affect the 'bottom line' since staff was already in place at fixed cost and food was thrown away every day. Filling any empty beds was of benefit to boys who could not afford camp otherwise. In fact, I was one of those boys, because at Y Camp, assistant directors' children attended free. It was a perk of the job. Since my father was a school teacher, it is highly unlikely that I or my sisters could have been sent to camp by any other means. Thus, I have always appreciated what scholarships do... both for the camper and the camp.

This prospectus is a proposal to formalize what was once only an informal process. It is hoped that in this way even more boys and girls who deserve the joy of camp will be able to attend. At some point we hope to have a 'sliding scale' of need based payment in which some would pay part, some would pay less, and some would not have to pay; based on family income and number of children. At this time however, we are simply paying camp tuition for boys and girls who would not be able to attend otherwise. Even so each family will be expected to pay the cost of their child's physical and their 'camp store' fee. All told this will amount to somewhere around \$100. We feel this has merit, because things that come with no cost at all are often under appreciated. What we hope is that our alumni who are able will be willing to scholarship a child to camp. A gift of \$500 will send a boy or girl to camp for one week. The actual cost of camp this summer is \$620, but Y Camp will underwrite the additional cost, so that your gift will more than adequately cover one child. I know this is a far cry from the \$150 your parents paid for four weeks of camp, but we live in a different world from that. If you are able, we would like to ask you to contribute \$1000 for three years. Of course this represents two scholarships per summer.

You may designate your scholarship for Camp Chattooga or Athens Y Camp, but bear in mind that Chattooga is more fully enrolled than Y Camp these days. Also, if you have a child that you would like to send with your scholarship, submit their name and we send them an application for review by our scholarship board. In all probability we will be able to honor their request. We will depend on you to keep in mind that need is a primary factor, but merit matters as well.

In appreciation for your contribution you will receive a commemorative gift from us each year and we promise it will not be a rock from the Ice Cream Hike pile (well, we don't promise for sure it won't). In addition you will receive correspondence from your camper so that you will know how much he or she is enjoying camp. It goes without saying that old Y Campers will get a new Y Camp shirt, although we don't have xxx-large, yet.

Endowment

Our goal is to one day have a permanent endowment for scholarships. Although the present economic climate is not the best of times in which to begin such a program, we believe that there are former Y Campers currently positioned to help us begin. For information, in case you know of someone who might be 'ready, willing, and able, a gift of \$10,000 will establish a scholarship in perpetuity which may be named in memory of whomever the donor chooses. Our goal is to one day have \$1,000,000 endowed for scholarships. While we know that this will not happen over night, we are committed to seeing that Y Camp and Chattooga will be able to offer scholarships for as long as we are in operation.

Nuts & Bolts

Should you decide to sponsor a child or two for this summer, you may make your contribution at any time during 2009. While it would be best if we received your 2009 gift before or during the camp season (June and July); you may submit your gift at any time during the current year. You may give the gift in one payment or spread it out over the weeks and months of 2009. We will keep an accurate account of your status and will keep you informed with quarterly statements. Please send your gifts to **Athens Y Camp, PO Box 8, Tallulah Falls, GA, 30573**. Mark your check for Y Camp Scholarships.