

An Opportunity to Expand Your Christian Education Ministry Through Day Camping

There is a belief among some spouses of day camp directors, that if you are a faithful resident camp director, God will reward you by calling you to direct a day camp! The theory goes that as a day camp director you get to send the campers home at the end of each day, if a child gets sick you call the parents to come get them, and there are no unexpected emergencies concerning buildings, cooks, or night time raids! Well, maybe there is some truth in this, but lets look at some better reasons to at least consider adding day camping to your ministry of Christian education.

We will first talk about some of the advantages of day camping and then present four working models.

Some advantages of a day camping ministry: (And please keep in mind that we are not discussing “child care”)

- Children have more time during the summer. However, day camping can also be a year-round ministry by making it a part of an after school program and/or weekend events.
- The ever-growing need for alternatives to childcare means a large pool of campers.
 - It is economically feasible because:
 - The program doesn't require a large start-up cost.
 - The program doesn't cost a lot to operate.
 - The program generates enough revenue to more than cover the cost.
- Brings young people to your church or camp who are potential members or resident campers.
- Does not take much space, leadership, or resources.
- A resident camp needs no special training and many churches have a denominational resident camp that could offer training in the necessary skills such as:
 - Camp skills & activities
 - Staff training
 - Financial management
 - Health & safety regulations
- It is the fastest growing segment of the camping industry.

There are many ways to utilize day camping in a ministry of Christian education. Here are just four common examples. There are others, or combinations of these.

For resident camps:

- Make it a part of your existing camp program
- Have a “traveling” program that goes from location to location for a set period of time and then moves to another location. This can also be done in conjunction with a local church or group of churches

For local churches:

- Develop a joint venture in day camping between your denominational camp and educators in your church
- Have your program operated solely by your church or group of churches

In the **first** of these proposals the program is planned and carried out by and at an existing site. It is run as a part of the camp program. Children are brought to the site in the morning and picked up each evening. Transportation may or may not be furnished by the camp.

The **second** plan is a joint venture that is operated in cooperation/conjunction with an existing camp and one or more churches. Some activities would take place in town either at church(s), parks, schools, wooded or open areas. Other programs would be at camp.

Some possible church program components:

- Arts & crafts
- Games (indoor & outdoor)
- Bible study
- Worship
- Drama
- Music &/or creative movement

For swimming either use camp facilities or contact local motels, country clubs, even private pools, and rent if necessary.

Look into local field trips

- Airports
- Manufacturing
- Survey the resources of your particular church membership
 - Farms
 - Offices
 - Labs
 - Farrier (someone who shoes horses)
 - Libraries
 - Ect.

Have an occasional over-night

Have family gatherings with plays, art exhibits, pot-luck suppers.

The camp could assist with:

- Staff recruitment and training. Remember that in day camp the staff goes home at night so parents, teachers, and others can be available as staff members
- Budget building and financial management
- Health and safety regulations, i.e.: risk management plan, health history forms, etc.

On weekends or scheduled days, the campers could go to camp for such activities as:

- Swimming
- Nature hikes
- Rope courses
- Out-door skills
- Cook-outs
- Waterfront activities
 - Swimming
 - Boating
 - Fishing
 - Etc.

Almost any activity that is presently done at a resident camp can be included in these week-end experiences with campers and parents.

Transportation could be handled in one or a variety of ways, such as:

- Parents responsibility
- Church(s) vehicles
- Rental vehicles
- Camp vehicles

The cost and fees for this type of program would be worked out cooperatively and shared.

The **third** possibility is a traveling program (similar to the old time “floating crap game”!) In this model the camp provides program (staff, schedule, supplies, curriculum resources, etc.) and the particular church provides support services, i.e.: P.R. and involvement in the program as arranged between the camp program director and the church’s coordinator. These programs are usually contracted for a one-week period each year because the camp travels from church to church throughout the region.

Typically the camp provides:

- Key leadership staff
- Curriculum and supplies
- Insurance
- Planning and training
- Transportation for camp staff

The church provides:

- A facility - preferably near a park, or woods and open spaces, or a recreation area with a building available to use in case of inclement weather.
- Immediate access to a storm shelter, telephone, toilets, and running water.
- Housing and meals for the camp staff during this period
- Transportation to and from the program site.
- Local leadership:
 - Coordinator
 - Planning committee
 - Daily volunteer leaders - 19 years old or older.

The **fourth** model is having the entire program carried out by a single church or group of churches, such as Oak Hill Day Camp and others.

The above possibilities apply here as to program components, site and leadership.

For more information on this model contact:

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These are just a few suggested successful models for consideration. The primary goal is to have you give serious consideration to including day camping in your ministry of Christian education.

I am always ready to assist you in this and any other areas of your operation. Just contact me.

Bill Key

March 2007