

**Outdoor Ministries Association Consult XIX
Blowing Rock Conference Center, NC
November 4-7, 2013**

The Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) met for Consult XIX at Blowing Rock Conference Center, NC. Although no formal meeting of the OMA membership was held, the attached notes from Round Table sessions were captured to be shared with the OMA membership.

Keeping Connected with Campers All Year Round Table with Joel Winchip

Last day for campers:

- **Memorable meal**
- **Less structured activities**
- **Award ceremony – touch stone activity such as 10-year, 15-year name on paddle and hung in prominent place**
- **Traditional activities**
- **Sign a book**
- **Closing activities in small or large groups**
- **Praise breakfast – music for 30 min. and sausage biscuits served outside.**
- **Staying up late the night before**
- **Floating cross with candles, Chinese lanterns**
- **Pray it forward board – messages to next camp**

Closing Program

- **Consider inviting parents to closing**
- **Meal with parents**
- **Find a way to allow parents to see their children as campers**
- **Award ceremony**
- **Video or pictures from session playing**
- **Sign up for additional sessions before they leave**
- **Closing activities in large group. Large circle with kids and parents where they sing a couple of songs. Then move to smaller cabin group and the counselor prays for each of their campers. It says “we have taken really good care of your children, now we are handing them back to you.”**
- **Professional check out procedures**
- **Camper led tours encouraged**
- **A special place to take a picture – like a big carved bear**
- **Counselor-parent switch – counselor talks with parent and hands back their child.**
- **Cabins come to closing with a flag**
- **You have changed lives – include the parents in the closing somehow so parents know that something big has happened there.**

Staying connected with families between summers

- **Social networking – Choose something and do it well**
- **Email blasts – what’s happening at camp such as improvements at camp – new programs, offerings, what’s happening with camp pet...**
- **Share video through website/you tube**
- **Provide resources that relate to the summer camp theme – continued Christian educations**
- **Non-summer programs**

- **Birthday cards created and signed by staff before they leave for the summer.**
- **Blogging**
- **Newsletters**
- **Summer camp sneak preview**
- **Summer camp brochure – paper is still good**
- **Articles and blurbs pre-written for your constituency**
- **Cookie box –these are created and handed out a large meeting such as annual meeting...a box is created for every church...clearly have the church's name on it...contains brochures, prewritten newsletter article, bulletin blurb, staff applications and the best cookies ever made from ingredients that dreams are made of – 2 packs with 2 cookies in each. If you promise to take the box back to your church, you get 2 cookies. If you promise to take box to church and give it to the appropriate people to follow through with camp stuff, you get 2 cookies. This is a big deal!**
- **Pilgrim Point does pizza oven in local churches**
- **Winter Blast – Dubois Center – 3 hour program in local churches doing camp stuff**
- **Moon Beach does calendar, bulletin board in a box, it's not too late to sign up...**
- **Slumber Falls make a float for community event. Camp Boo – a free Halloween event**
- **Camp Adams – local churches host a cabin for Halloween**
- **Fall events – Dubois Center**
- **4imprint – banners, table skirts...**

Advertising - what is the nature of our message?

- **Short and sweet**
- **Pictures**
- **Do kids only stand in groups and smile? Think about pics**
- **Are staff present**
- **What message are we conveying? Talk more about changed lives. New Developments, articles that underscore the value of camp**

Opening Check in

- **The camp facility looks wonderful, especially where the parents see**
- **Someone to greet them. Perhaps someone at the end of the road and all the way in**
- **Permanent or temp signage relating to the theme – both coming in and going out of camp**
- **Clear place for luggage**
- **Get to know staff – staff shirt – official nametag**
- **Bio of counselors given to parents**
- **Programming for parents during opening**
- **No cabin time with parents – decreases homesickness**
- **Hand off sheet between parent and counselor**

- Dubois Center has a welcome team come from local churches to help with registration
- Cookies at check in or some type of snack and water
- Ringing the bell at the beginning of camp
- Slides with former camps sprinkled with counselor bio...did you know?

First day for campers

- Welcoming atmosphere
- Group building
- Talk about the present – not past camps
- Explain or teach everything – don't assume they know
- Perhaps the swim test can wait – don't do it the first day.
- Scavenger hunt/tour
- Staff introduction
- Graffiti tables – paint over them every year – helps eliminate graffiti other places in camp
- Call the swim test something else like swim demo
- Covenants
- Cabin groups eat together and mix staff in
- Camp store
- Camp appropriate jokes during group dismissal
- Not a big deal if you spill at meals – have rags available
- Free Gatorade day

More info at www.tinyurl.com/closingprogramP

Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Volunteers

Round Table with Mollie Landers and Kaila Russell

How do we use volunteers at our camps?

- Weekly Directors/Deans
- Counselors in a cabin – weekly
- Programs
- Handy people and work groups
- Activity vs. programs
- Participate in activities/programs
- CITs
- Chaplain
- Board/advisory
- Trainings
- Nurse

How do we recruit volunteers?

- People who have volunteered before
- Former campers
- Deans/directors recruit their staff
- Find a pulse person in local churches to help recruit
- Have board members call churches to find volunteers
- Don't miss an opportunity!
- Get specific – notice certain gifts in people and ask them to help
- Who know who?
- CE directors/youth directors as contacts

How do we vet volunteers?

- CIT programs
- Layout expectations
- Applications and 2 references
- Evaluations

Are all volunteers a good fit for camp? No...What do you do with that?

- Honest conversation
- Re-defining roles
- Clear expectations

How do we train and empower our volunteers?

- Allow counselors to have camp experience prior to camp
- Questions in a jar – opportunity for random questions to be asked in a safe way
- Written expectations that are clear
- ACA test

- Deans retreat – they then train their counselors
- 1 day prior training
- slide show with expectations
- Camp Game
- Presidium or something like it. (Darkness to light – Stewards of children www.d2l.org (Bruce at Hartman Center spoke of this program))
- Written expectations – this was mentioned again...important
- Covenant
- Send info prior to camp
- Find their passions and include them
- Interest groups

What do we do with the Faith Piece?

- Modeling at the dean's retreat
- Combine boundaries, community building, trust games and faith stories in a 1-3 hour session on Sunday morning prior to camp start
- How we frame it – we don't have all the answers, rather, "This is my interpretation."

How do we appreciate and retain volunteers?

- Thanks for the little things
- Find a place for everyone
- Write letters and send in the mail
- Sit at the table and give them a break
- Secret santa
- Gifts to the deans
- Feed and give them rest
- Show appreciation
- Paid staff cover field games so volunteers can have a break
- Party, reunion, new year's eve (Camp Adams)
- Affirmations
- Have counselors write a letter to themselves and mail it later
- Christmas cards with camp picture
- Happy birthday card made by directors/counselors

Work Weekends

- Extreme Make Over – Work Camp
- Very organized, coded work list
- Organization
- Specific projects
- People who lead work mission trips
- Site manager list (database of work people)
- Find people who are looking for projects – groups in local churches
- Call churches who are remodeling and ask questions such as who did you use to do specific work?
- Don't micromanage
- Church adopt a cabin

**Apply what you learned at Consult 1 hour weekly
Put it on your calendar – seriously!!!**

Safe Conduct Round Table

What is your policy?

This varies widely by site. Policy and procedure lands with Conferences, Boards, Advisory Committees, Directors, and/or all of the above.

The policy is MORE than sexual misconduct ... it is about liability of all ways shapes and forms.

We had a long conversation about how we deal with transgender issues and how they apply to Safe Conduct. Here too the opinions vary WIDELY and there are no clear standards.

Guardian #1 and Guardian #2 vs. Parent #1 and Parent #2 we recommended ways of suggesting that you are open and affirming.

The question was raised around who should be setting policy? The Director or the Governing Board? The group sees it as collaborative and made a distinction between policies and practices. A new question was raised around criminal background checks. Who does it? How often is it done?

The gold standard right now is Presidium's \$7 version on anyone age 18 and over once a year.

Most background checks need follow-up ... phone calls, a little digging

Doing background checks is a deterrence and should be done.

All volunteers and staff

The online training is recommended

The next question revolved around how do you make a manageable functional system?

After MUCH conversation we asked the next question about drinking policies. We had numerous examples that seemed to light on no drinking during the weeks of employment. I will not drink on site, under the age of 21, or if gathered with anyone under 21 outside of camp, Many apply this to sex as well.

Young adults (Under age 30) living on site as a residence non-summer. DO the same rules apply? We decided that this is site specific.

What about FT year round employees drinking offsite inviting an underage person in the off-season?

This was seen as breaking the law so wouldn't be supported.