

Good DAY!

SUMMER CAMP

Take a trip down memory lane with us as we hear about favorite summer camp memories from Grangers

GIFT IDEAS FOR DAD

With Father's Day right around the corner, check out some perfect and easy gift ideas

VOICES OF RURAL AMERICA HEARD ON HILL

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WHO WE ARE



The National Grange was founded as a fraternal organization for farm families in 1867 – opening its doors to men and women equally from the start.

From rural free delivery of mail to the direct election of U.S. Senators by the people, Grangers have influenced so many aspects of American life and culture.

Today we continue to advocate for rural Americans and those interested in all areas of agriculture – including those who just

like to eat – and our local Granges provide millions of dollars and hours of service to their neighbors annually.

Each Grange operates as a grassroots unit, taking on projects most appropriate for their communities and advocating based on their members' beliefs.

Learn more at www.nationalgrange.org.



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One Camper at a Time

THE TIMELESS BENEFITS OF SUMMER CAMPS

By Bonniejean Alford

When a parent sends their child (or children) off on an adventure without them, they are providing an opportunity for their kids to learn outside of a traditional school environment. Campers are afforded with an open forum for negotiating the social world at a more micro level – essentially, they get to sink or swim with their peers away from the watchful eyes of mom and/or dad. Ideally, this process is accompanied by some measure of control set in place by the camp to offer a safe space for the growth of our young people. Camp life, without question, provides a life-altering experience that may just be one of the most important stepping stones for kids on their path to adulthood. Betsy Huber, President of National Grange, says “When a parent sends their child (or children) off on an adventure without them, they are providing an opportunity for their kids to learn outside of a traditional school environment. Campers are afforded with an open forum for negotiating the social world at a more micro level – essentially, they get to sink or swim with their peers away from the watchful eyes of mom and/or dad. Ideally, this process is

accompanied by some measure of control set in place by the camp to offer a safe space for the growth of our young people. Camp life, without question, provides a life-altering experience that may just be one of the most important stepping stones for kids on their path to adulthood. Betsy Huber, President of National Grange, says “The Grange teaches leadership and independence from the earliest Junior Grange experience at age five. Participation at their own meeting, holding an office with responsibilities for probably the first time in their young lives, instills self-confidence and self-reliance. The next step, attending camp, nurtures that independence in a safe environment. Many Grangers in leadership positions today attribute their initial training to a Junior Grange camping experience.”

PURPOSE.

Summer camps, as well as weekend and day camps, provide a space for learning while having fun. They often remain centered around a key focus, whether religious, sports, community,



Chris Hamp at Cornet Bay Junior Grange Camp in August of 1973 – “This was my first year at camp and I turned six. The cooks baked me a cake!”

disability, or some other aspect meant to help youth prepare for life. For instance, Basketball Camp aims to provide attendees with a greater amount of focused practice time with players who are not on their own team. Kids attending this kind of camp can learn about bettering their basketball skills and make new friends that would not have been part of their circle of connections otherwise.

Participation in camps have both a long term and short term impact on kids. In the short term, it provides an immediate space for learning and growth independent of parental presence. There are opportunities to make new friends, even if not long term friends. Learn about different cultures and groups. And even have that first brush with romance. In the long run, kids internalize new skills that will benefit them in any just about any career choice. Many kids even develop a stronger sense of self that shapes their outlook on the world. Both Angie Jones of San Antonio, Texas and Alejandro Bonito of Long Beach, California point out that camps are especially important in helping a child find themselves.

Not only that, but, as 5th generation Grange member Tom Gwin, of Humptulips, Washington, tells us, “the opportunity for learning is enhanced in a group living situation that assists in creating positive experiences for our young people.” By being away from parental expectation, kids can open-up to finding how they might fit into the world outside their family life.

“Summer camp provides kids a much-needed opportunity to share group living with a sense of chaotic organization.”



Summer camp provides kids a much-needed opportunity to share group living with a sense of chaotic organization. That is, there is an overarching organizational structure, but strong camps allow their campers to enjoy the world of the camp on their own terms – and what better way than to enjoy nature or a specialized activity with others of your own age. And quite frankly, “the opportunities for learning are endless, while gaining a true appreciation of nature” and life in general, says Tom.

Ann Gibson of Tacoma, Washington reminds us that a fundamental lesson from camp is discipline. She learned how to be self-motivated and feels her own children learned the same lesson through attendance at camp. Upon return, her kids had many stories to tell about their time, were obviously more confident, and couldn’t wait to attend again, even finding ways to be responsible and help me figure out funding for future camp trips. She would encourage anyone to go, including adults.

While there are amazing benefits for most kids, there is a reality that camping programs might simply not work out well for all kids. Beyond standard emotional

and behavioral issues that some kids face, sometimes parents just cannot be away from their child for a week. In the modern era with cell phones, some parents have a need to remain in constant contact with their child, which makes it extremely difficult for kids to fully engage in camp. Despite this reality, most parents thrive from the time away from their children. It serves as a break from parenting just as much as it is a break from being parented for a child. The separation may cause some anxiety on both sides, but this is a normal part of the growth process for children and their parents.

For instance, Tom recalls the story of a 13-year old boy who had never spent more than a night away from his parents. He was shy and scared, but eventually opened-up and became a more confident young man. His mother struggled the entire week, even crying the entire two-hour drive home after dropping her son off. She recognized that her struggle, as well as his facing homesickness, would be good for her son to come out of his shell on his journey to adulthood.

But for Jennie Gentry of Raleigh, North Carolina, this wasn’t an issue at all. As a young attendee, her parents were often serving as counselors. She engulfed herself



Campers participating in water related activities at a Grange Camp

so deeply in her activities, that she often forgot they were there. And later when she attended alone, there never was any time to feel homesick, and she often cried when leaving her camp family. She acknowledges that there wasn't enough time to get homesick. Rather, there remained only enough time to experience every memory in the making.

Camp life doesn't have to remain as an activity for kids alone. Though the focus and purpose for an adult camp may look quite a bit different. Some might argue that any convention or conference has the rough form of a camp, even if the activities of the event are highly focused and often career-related. The mission, however, remains the same – to step away from life and grow in some aspect for the betterment of one's life. A weekend camp retreat is a nice activity that might aim at either offering a teaching program or an escape toward relaxation. The key here, as Tom tells us, is to find an appropriate package and present it to adults. They may just surprise you with their desire to return to a simpler time as a camper.

FORMATION.

Jennie attended many different types of camps as a kid, including Church

Camp, Leadership Camp, and Grange Camp. Summers were looked forward to simply because it would be time to go away to camp and participate in new and exciting activities, which should be planned around the focus of the camp in question. But planners shouldn't be afraid to think beyond the box of tradition. For instance, just because a camp is aimed at Theatre, the practice of sports should not be ignored. Of course, there should be the standard activities available to campers. These include swimming, tennis, basketball, soccer, hiking, acting, writing, arts and crafts, dancing, and so much more. The possibilities are truly endless.

Tualco Grange and Five Mile Prairie Grange member, Chris Hamp of Nine Mile Falls, Washington, speaks to the reality that it doesn't really matter what activities are actually presented at a camp. What matters most is that the activities expose kids to new things or a new way of thinking. She specifically points out that "camp should challenge kids to grow and to learn."

Leah Olsen of Peoria, Illinois especially loved the opportunity to get away from life, to unplug, if you will – despite that meaning something very different in her youth compared to her children's youth. She especially enjoyed singing all the silly songs and skits that remain as long term memories for her. Camp also gives her children more time outside, which is a desperate need in our current times that are so reliant on technology for everything from entertainment to work.

Shelley Chambers of Boston, Massachusetts finds that summer camps that have a focus on activities such as golf or science are more beneficial, as they are centered on learning for career or education. Her own experiences with camps as a kid were limited being from the city. In fact, she only ever participated in day camps due to the financial constraints of her family which offered her mother a lower cost alternative for childcare. Although not as extensive as a sleep-away



camp, the day camp provided some crafts and educational opportunities, but with a more loosely structured format. The biggest drawback here had to do with the counselors. Some were more experienced, while some were high school students looking for a steady pay stream over the summer.

Ultimately, it left Shelly feeling as though she was missing out on something, especially since many of the activities were not of interest to her. Day camps do have their place though, and when managed with a structure and activities that interest participants, they can offer an alternative to parents who simply cannot afford to send their child away for week. It is also great for those kids that have some emotional or behavioral issue that would preclude them from participating in traditional summer camp.

As to the campers themselves, they come from many varieties of people. Some kids arrive alone, knowing no one, while others arrive with friends already in place. A key strength to campers having no contacts at arrival remains in that they now must meet new people to experience all the camp has to offer. In contrast, attending camp together as a group with a known chaperone can help make the process move more smoothly – especially for first time camp-goers who may already be feeling apprehensiveness about leaving home for the first time. The downside to this is that it doesn't allow for campers to have a true separation of independence from parental units, as often it is one of the parents that serves as chaperone. But this isn't too much of a worry, as campers note that even with the watchful eye of a trusted adult on them, they could go out and participate in camp with those in the group.

There are multiple ways that leadership is built at a camp. For some, like Tom and Jennie, they attend for many years as a camper, then move up to counselor and even eventually become a Camp Director.



Other leaders come from people who never attended that particular camp. Many camps have exchange programs to provide diversity in camp leadership. This author remembers distinctly the camp counselor from England. His accent alone may have served as a guide for interest in England.

Often, it is through the memories built through participation that can help to guide a young person's future actions. And camp life certainly provides an array of memories to choose from. One such memory involves the variety of stories, which is usually a huge part of the evening camp fire activities. While the specific stories told aren't part of the memories, campers recall the objective of scaring each other. These memories linger on as people shift their focus of life.

Chris points out that the memories of being a camper helped immensely as she transitioned into being a counselor. As a

former camper, she knew the tricks kids would play to avoid following the camp rules. Pushing the limits was one of the most important aspects of camp life. It helped kids learn what aspects of societal norms were most important to ensure success in life. They also helped to create more of those memories that serve as glue between friends – “tons of memories that always live right below the surface until you get together with a group from camp and the stories begin.”

FAMILY.

Camps can be a family affair for certain. Real-life sisters Tia White of Snohomish, Washington and Megan Chen of Rio Grande, New Mexico, attended church camp as kids with a focus on sisterhood. This, of course, didn't stop Megan as the older sibling from pulling pranks on her little sister. While it seemed in the moment

to separate them, in the long run it helped to strengthen their bond as sisters. And while they have moved farther away, they both look forward to the times they can get together and reminisce about being kids, getting dirty at camp.

Chris, who continues a legacy of being a Grange member and camp goer, attended camp the first time at age 6, when she celebrated her birthday while at camp. She continued attendance well into her 20s. It was just a part of her life – a part that she is more than just proud of. She fondly remembers many family members, including her mom and brother, attending camp with her. In fact, there were always family of some level at events. Beyond her family, she has created many friendships that remain as part of her life, especially thanks to social media. For her, she found that the positive impact of the camp on her life had continued into present life thanks to the exposure to so many different types of routines and adult influence.

Long time Grange member Tricia J. Taylor of Danbury, New Hampshire

“I loved that I could go to a place and completely be myself, which is how our camp still is to this day.”

always wanted to attend summer camp. For whatever reason, she didn't get the opportunity as a child – she suspects her mom kept them too busy with Grange activities. When her children wanted to attend a camp of some kind, she found a way to make sure they could. Her son attended Boy Scout Camp and both her kids attended the day camp at Bristol Community Center. The mental and physical challenges of camp prepared them for life. And now, Tricia's grandchildren are attending camp. So, while she didn't attend, the value of camp life lives on

through the legacy of her family.

Camp attendance, especially over time, can create familial type ties through bonds of friendship. For Jennie, attending with her sister and cousins helped to strengthen those family connections, as well as opened the doors for new connections as well. In fact, her parents remained in high support of sending their kids to camp because they met at Grange Summer Camp. They wanted to ensure their own kids had the opportunity for the same kind of experience.

Tom reiterates this: “We all made new friends at summer camp. It was the sharing of experiences and the bonds created while participating in camp that assisted in developing friendships. I stayed friends with some of the other campers for 20 years or more. Eventually, we grew apart. When I see one of those fellow campers, even now, the memories of our camp activities bring a smile to my face.” Jennie also made long term friends at camp. One who became her roommate in college and the other two who have remained close, almost like family. They still spend time together as adults. Her friends' kids attend the same Grange Camp in which they met that Jennie now serves as Camp Director. It is a heart-warming joy for her to watch as former campers are now sending their own children to the very camp they once attended. Legacy building helps to ensure the continued existence of camp life.

Jennie remains in awe of her time at camp. The relationships were only a part of the process. Ultimately, while she loved the friends she made and stayed in contact with, this truth lingers: “I loved that I could go to a place and completely be myself, which is how our camp still is to this day.” Fundamentally, this point is key

SAILING AWAY

Campers at a Grange camp participate in sailing activities.



as kids learn who they are in the world. They are their own most important family member.

FUNDING.

The reality is that summer camps can cost a lot of money to manage. Between food, staff, and activities, this means a potential high price tag for potential campers. Some families can easily afford this, while for others this can serve as a hindrance to attendance. Finding creative ways to fund a camp can help lower costs to campers and ensure camp legacy lives on.

One way to fund camps is through grants from national and state agencies. Specialized grant writers are trained to put together a packet and receive these funds set aside for special interests, such as camps. Unfortunately, less money of this kind seems to be available across the board, thanks to budget cuts at those governmental levels. This means a greater reliance on camper fees to cover costs.

Offering options for financial assistance to campers becomes essential to ensure camps can even happen. Making full scholarships available to kids can be a good idea, especially for those at the most financially-strapped levels. But a free trip to camp may result in complacency by scholarship attendees. Tom instead suggests a partial assistance program, which makes participants an actual stakeholder in the experience. And if money cannot be the contribution then volunteer options should be available, as was the case when this author attended the Salvation Army Camp in the Malibu Mountains during the 1980s.

Many groups find ways to have the kids be part of the fundraising process. Tia reminds us of how the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts hold fundraisers and raise money all year to pay for various activities, including camps and weekend excursions. Through the fundraising efforts, the kids are meant to learn valuable life skills



while taking ownership of their ability to pay for and attend camp. It also helps their parents out by defraying some of the cost from them. It really is a win-win for everyone when kids become a part of the funding process.

Camps have a reputation to maintain. They should be providing a wholesome and safe space for children to participate in activities. Attaching the name of a celebrity to a camp can be both a good and a bad thing. From a funding perspective, the celebrity name can bring in more money for the camp, either from the celebrity themselves or other donors thanks to the name recognition. Ann suggests that there shouldn't be an issue with celebrity endorsement if it encourages kids to attend, thus increasing revenue. But the name recognition can

also serve as a distraction from the true purpose of the camp, says Tom and Jennie. That said, when managed correctly, the use of the most appropriate celebrity can only help with the popularity of a camp and its funding.

GOING FORWARD.

When a camp has done its job, attendees have a lifelong connection built on something amazing that benefits more than just an individual. As Jennie tells us there exists a greater benefit to society since "these camps are designed to be positive for each child that attends, intending to inspire and impact them in positive ways. When children are impacted in such strong ways, they make a positive mark on society."