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DIRECTORS' MESSAGE

God Bless the Belknep Leaders



Directors' we can confidently and accurately attribute this to one thing - *the Leaders of Belknep*. The talented and hard working Belknep staff took what was a difficult situation and turned it into a positive one, making this past summer one of the best in our 21 years of Directorship of Belknep. The rain became "liquid sunshine" in the eyes of the Belknep Leaders and they all stepped it up a notch with smiles on their faces and acts of creative programming to make this an unforgettable season for the 1,100 different campers who attended Belknep this past summer. It is amazing to watch such a talented staff give and give of themselves day in and day out no matter what the weather or how difficult the circumstances presented to them might be. The end result was an extremely happy group of campers heading home each session with tears in their eyes and memories for a lifetime.

The questionnaires and comments via letters and e-mails bear witness to the fact that 2008 was indeed a stand out summer at Belknep. As has been the case for the past many years we like to take a large portion of our Director's message to share with you some of the comments we received from parents and campers relative to the past summer. We think you'll agree these comments tell a far better story than we could as Directors for they all come unsolicited and from the heart.

Here is a sampling of those comments:

"You and your excellent staff have done it again. Our son arrived home after camp thoroughly in love with life...and Camp Belknep. Thank you for making such a wonderful experience come alive for our son. What great memories he is making now and will tell his children and grandchildren."

"Belknep is a boy heaven! It is the perfect mix of friendship, fun, role models, values, and beautiful New Hampshire."

"The Belknep Leaders amaze me. Do whatever can be done to perpetuate the Leadership Development Program - it is excellent. It is what separates Belknep from the rest."

There is no denying the fact that the 105th summer of Belknep 2008 was indeed stormy and rainy. Under any other circumstances it would be expected that this type of summer would create problems and difficulties for campers and staff. However, this was not the case for the summer of 2008, and as

"Camp Belknep is a place that I hold close to my heart and will always remember. Every year I return to this place and even after a full year away I still remember every path and trail, every tree and every stone. I remember every ceremony and every tradition and every veteran Leader. I will remember this all for my entire life with my body, mind and soul."

"We really admire that you keep the whole camp experience authentic. Things that our son remarked on that in turn impressed me were:

No P.A system (don't give in)

No junk food/soda

Seeing the Camp Director every day

Cleaning up camp with all the campers after

A storm

Taps and the cannon

Our son really really enjoys the true camp experience! So please don't change anything! My gum chewing, soda drinking, X-Box playing, son can't wait to arrive at camp next summer."

"Your camp builds self esteem, independence and a sense of brotherhood. It is such a special and beautiful location with exceptional staff that are great role models. The traditions make campers feel part of a long history and part of something bigger than themselves."

"My son adores everything about Camp Belknep - no exaggeration. And having no technology is great! These boys thrive in the outdoors and they are reminded of this on the beautiful banks of Belknep on a beautiful lake. Could there be a better environment for teenage boys in the summer? How fortunate we are."

"I have gone to three different camps in New England and without question Belknep is far above any others. While the facilities are top of the line (Belknep has 16 sailboats that can be used daily by campers, 3 basketball courts and so many tennis courts I can't even remember how many, and several large fields including a large one). The main reason Belknep is so great is the outstanding Leadership. Belknep does not accept applications for counselors (called Leaders at Belknep). Instead prospective Leaders are selected from the oldest division at camp, the seniors. This method is next to flawless. At another camp I had a crazy French counselor who in fact was fired midway through my stay. Although you don't know who I am, you can sue me if this happens at Belknep. This camp has honestly changed my life and I will never, ever forget any of my Leaders and friends I made there."

(continued on back panel)

(Annual Fund Letter continued)

with a record annual fund. Please join me in celebrating the excellence of camp, meeting the challenge of increasing our annual fund again, and investing in the future of all Belknappers.

Sincerely,

Mark Vaughan

Chairman Fundraising/Development Committee

P.S. - Regarding Farm Island, there is little change to report. The results of the planning study conducted last spring were presented to the Board in April and the Board has been in touch with representatives of the sellers, but at this point no agreement has been reached and the property remains on the market. Based on advice from our fundraising council, the Board has chosen not to pursue a capital campaign for the island until we have an agreement with the sellers. The Board wants you to know that with regard to Farm Island, we remain committed to do what is necessary to protect the interests of camp.

(Directors Message, continued)

And finally this simple and direct comment:

“Keep doing what you are doing. The camps success is based on years of good old-fashioned fun for boys of all ages. If it ain't broke don't fix it. Keep up the good work.”

As Directors we want to close this Director's message with a big thank you to our beloved staff, the Board of Directors who guide Belknap and us and for all our many blessings. Take Belknap with you wherever you go in life. Treat all you meet with respect and kindness..."Seek the joy of being alive", and always remember the camp motto - "God First, the other person second, and myself last!

Gene & Caryn Clark
Directors

Some people call it a summer camp
But there's something about the scent of
Crushed pine needles in the air
Smiling young men and children
And the crisp, refreshing breeze that made me wonder;
What is this place?

For me it was and still is a lifestyle
Each year I became more and more aware
Of how I change when I enter Belknap.
It's as if there is a protective bubble around
It's perimeter, preventing all thoughts
Of school, sports teams, or even outside friends
From entering

Now I realize
That if the entire world had that
Bubble,
How different things would be
Not needing a reason to help;
Not requiring a friend to accompany you
Not caring why, how, or for whom,
But because it's the right thing to do.

I cannot imagine my life without
That special place
That sanctuary
That alcove.
It would be different,
I would not be me but some other alien person,
Missing the point of life.

I have been changed forever by
The 10 weeks of my life I have spent there;
Possibly the best 10 weeks of my life.
Just me, the earth, and all of the wonderful
People that make up "camp" Belknap

~anonymous 13 year old camper 2008



YMCA
CAMP  **BELKNAP**
on Lake Winnepesaukee since 1903

Fall 2008

Dear Belknappers,

While I have lived through a number of economic ups and downs, the economic uncertainty we face today seems unprecedented in my experience. Each day seems to bring news of another financial company in trouble and market volatility and downturns. Friends and colleagues share dismay at the reduced value of their 401K's. While we take comfort in the thought that things will inevitably get better, no one is quite sure how long that will take.

In light of this uncertain economic environment, the constancy of Camp Belknap shines in stark contrast. There is a certainty that Belknappers have when we return to see camp exactly as we remembered it. There is a certainty that Belknappers feel when we experience the warmth and fun of a reunion with old camp friends. There is a certainty that all of us know that when a young boy is going through a Belknap summer, he will have one of the best summer camp experiences possible. The positive impact that Belknap has on each camper's life may be the most important certainty of all.

A poem Gene Clark received recently from a thirteen year old camper speaks to the impact that Belknap can have. The poem, printed in this issue, was sent by the camper's father, who was a camper and leader in the 1970's. The father was speaking for many when he wrote in the e-mail accompanying the poem, "It's so nice to know that the Belknap I've so loved, and that had such a big influence on my life, continues to embody and instill the same wonderful values in its campers and leaders a generation later." What a wonderful testimony from both father and son as to the continuous excellence that is Camp Belknap.

In closing, I ask you once again for your support for our annual fund. Your contributions will continue to support the maintenance of a top notch facility, the scholarship program, and keeping tuition lower so that Belknap is accessible to more boys. With energy and food costs rising, Belknap will need our annual fund to keep pace. Last year, your generosity reached new heights

(Annual Fund letter continued on back panel)