

## KEY MESSAGES:

- ACA is committed to providing children with the opportunity to connect with nature, to participate in human powered activities, and to benefit from personal and primary relationships – **regardless of the economy**
- Camps are doing **everything to assure that every child can attend camp** regardless of economic status.
- Across the country, **ACA is working with local partners to provide more camp experiences.**
- There is a **camp experience for every child and every budget**

## ECONOMY AND ENROLLMENT

- At this point, it's still a little early to tell what the effect is on camp enrollment.
  - Many of those enrolled currently were "early bird" enrollments from last summer.
  - ACA Spring Enrollment information will be available in April/May.
  - According to Gary Forster, camping specialist for YMCA of the USA, "Now that people are more concerned about their future earning power, they are more careful about where they spend their time and money. This can provide us with an opportunity to get back to what we do best: building relationships between people." (<http://www.acacamps.org/economics/>)
- Last year, when other economic concerns were present, we did see steady enrollment numbers on average throughout the nation.
  - In 2008, the ACA Enrollment Survey showed that 70% of responding camps had enrollment numbers that were the same or higher than previous summers.
  - Anecdotally, ACA has spoken to a number of camp directors who feel that although enrollment is down slightly (10-15%), this is comparable to what they saw last year, and enrollment for the summer '08 ended on par with previous years.
- We are seeing more parents attend camp fairs and informational sessions. They are asking a lot of thoughtful questions, and really seem to be engaged in the process of picking the right camp.
  - The dollar a parent spends on their children is the last one cut from their budgets.
  - Parents don't want their child to miss out on opportunities, and they understand that camp provides something special.
  - Parents are viewing the camp experience as more of an investment, and not just an activity. They want to make sure they are making the smart, correct investment for their child.
- We do anticipate increased requests for financial assistance.

- Currently, the ACA camp community mobilizes over \$39 million annually in scholarships (or “camperships”).
- ACA-accredited camps are working hard to cut costs where appropriate and still provide a quality, life-changing camp experience.

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- The most valuable gift you can give your child is the opportunity to develop independence, self-worth, leadership, responsibility, etc.
- To find an affordable camp, parents should research their options. Day camps tend to be less expensive than sleep-away camps. Check with local youth organizations (example YMCA) for camp opportunities.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for financial assistance. **Seventy-five percent of ACA-accredited camps** offer financial assistance. There is a camp experience for every child and for every budget.
- **Discuss any financial assistance programs, special rates, etc. currently being implemented in your section or camp.**

### BENEFITS OF SUMMER CAMP

- Independence
  - Children learn stronger sense of self and others
  - Children learn how to navigate the world successfully
  - Children learn resiliency
- Primary Experiences
  - Children participate in activities that lead to physical growth, wellness, safe risk-taking, first-hand exploration and discovery (fun way to learn)
- For nearly 100 years, ACA-accredited camps have provided children with the **opportunity to play in a safe and nurturing environment**, and allow *kids to just be kids*
  - Play is a powerful form of **learning** that contributes mightily to the child's healthy physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.
  - According to an American Academy of Pediatrics report, creative free play protects a child’s emotional development and **reduces a child’s risk of stress, anxiety, and depression.**
  - The camp experience allows a child to take healthy risks in a safe and nurturing environment

### THE CAMP EXPERIENCE CHANGES CHILDREN

- ACA research has confirmed that camps build skills necessary to prepare campers to assume roles as successful adults.

- Campers Say
  - Camp helped me make new friends. (96%)
  - Camp helped me to get to know kids who are different from me. (93%)
  - The people at camp helped me feel good about myself. (92%)
  - At camp, I did things I was afraid to do at first. (74%)
  
- Parents Say
  - My child gained self-confidence at camp. (70%)
  - My child continues to participate in some of the new activities he or she learned at camp. (63%)
  - My child remains in contact with friends made at camp. (69%)

### **CAMP OFFERS PSYCHOLOGICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL BENEFITS**

Traditional summer camp is an oasis for children who are so focused on preparing for the future and have no time for enjoying the moment.

In today's world of 'helicopter' parents and technology there are several critical benefits

- Independence – stronger sense of self and others (how do we learn to navigate the world successfully), resiliency
- Primary Experiences – physical growth, wellness, safe risk-taking, first-hand exploration and discovery (fun way to learn)