

TO: Pocantico Hills Board of Education
FROM: David Levine, Director PHDC
DATE: October 8, 2008
SUBJECT: Final Camp Report- 2008

The camp season officially began on July 1 as over 300 children arrived on the beautiful grounds of PHDC. They were immediately greeted by over 100 staff members including Head Counselors, Junior Counselors, Specialists, Swim Staff and CIT's. Hugs and "high fives" that began in earnest on the first day of camp continued throughout the season that ended on August 8th. The closeness that exists between campers and staff is a fantastic phenomena and only adds to the excitement and fun of being in this camp environment.

In my report last year, I stressed how important it was to continue the traditions that have made PHDC such a successful camp for over 50 years. I realized that parents and community members (some of whom are former campers) cherish these customs and traditions. Therefore, in 2008 with the help of Laura Hansen, the Assistant Director we carried on many of the old traditions but also introduced new programs that I hope will continue to enrich the children. The new programs that were made part of the 2008 program included:

1. **Guitar Instruction**- We provided FREE guitar instruction on a voluntary basis to approximately 15 campers. The children were only required to rent a guitar for a few weeks and Conor Lyons a member of the Studio staff conducted the class. It was extremely rewarding to see that campers who never before had touched a guitar actually performed a song in the camp show at the end of the season. What a thrill that was for the kids and the parents!
2. **Reading in Nature**- We introduced a Reading in Nature Program for Grades PreK- Grade 1. Our nature instructor read stories and books to the children while preparing them for the daily nature activity. This served a dual purpose. The campers were introduced to reading and also learned some facts related to the topic of the day.
3. **Jazz Band**- We expanded the jazz band and focused on their participation at the camp show which was a rousing success.
4. **Las Vegas Day**- Each grade and each specialty area were responsible for setting up a booth for games of chance. Children earned tickets at each

booth which were cashed in for prizes at the end of the event. Everyone went home happy.

5. **Parental Involvement-** I thought it would be a nice touch to include parents and community members to assist at Las Vegas Day. I held a meeting with a number of parents describing what my goals were for the day and we worked together to organize it. I want to thank Pat and Peter Kringas, Mrs. De Frutos, Marsha Finsmith and all the other parents that participated and made this day so much fun for the campers.
6. **Home Economics-** We offered Home Economics to the 2nd grade for the first time. In previous years no primary grades received this instruction. Our Home Eco instructors Jean Hiltz and Donna Vitelli were very receptive to the idea and provided excellent instruction in cooking. As always the campers were rewarded with eating everything that they cooked. If the program permits, we may be able to expand it to include 1st grade in 2009.
7. **Hat and Tie Day-** Funny hats and ties were everywhere as children dressed up to reflect the newest and oldest trends in clothing.
8. **Epi- Training-** We introduced a course in epi-training for staff members to insure the safety of our campers. Since insect bites are prevalent during the summer, it is important to make sure that the staff is properly trained in the event this occurs. We will include this training again in 2009.
9. **Sweatshirts-** For the first time PHDC offered campers the opportunity to purchase inexpensive PHDC sweatshirts. The results were even more than we anticipated. Next year, we would like to offer hats and shorts with a PHDC emblem.
10. **Counselor/Camper Choice-** In the many years I have spent in camping, it has become quite common for campers as a group to want an opportunity to select an activity. This past year we added counselor/camper choice as a period during the week. The campers and counselors jointly decided on the activity for that period as long as it did not conflict with swim or other ongoing activities.
11. **2x2 Basketball Tournament-** The teens participated in a basketball tournament during "Crazytime". If possible, we will extend this activity to other grades.
12. **Old Bus Circle Dropoff and Pickup-** After a few weeks of camp it became apparent to me that we could safely go back to using the old bus circle for dropoff and pickup of campers. It is easier for the campers and safer

especially on rainy days. If Dr. Smith agrees, we will continue to use this location in 2009.

13. **3 Weeks Sessions-** Throughout the previous summer, there were numerous inquiries regarding half summer sessions. A number of parents had indicated that they wanted to go on vacation but were looking for a 3-4 week summer day camp but would not pay for the entire 6 weeks. I am happy that the Board agreed to institute this program which resulted in approximately 25 campers. In the recommendations that follow I will discuss this issue in more depth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I would like for you to consider these recommendations which are designed to increase camper enrollment, offer more in the camp program and enable us to prepare more adequately for the 2009 season.

1. Sessions- Eliminate the 2 three week sessions and instead substitute one 4 week session starting on July 1. Price the 4 week session only slightly below the full camp fee. This will give parents the opportunity to save some money, go on vacation after camp and not disrupt the camp in the middle with the addition of new campers. It is not always in the best interests of campers to join camp after a few weeks when friendships have already been made and patterns already established.
2. Teens- Teens should only be allowed to register for the entire 6 weeks. Teen bonding is essential for the end of camp bike trip and this takes place from the first day of camp.
3. Bike trip- All teens must complete at least 6 mandatory bike training sessions in camp to qualify for the bike trip. This is in addition to the training class conducted by the local Police Department.
4. Teen Staff- The teen staff should have the right to deny the bike trip with cause to any camper who either does not qualify or has not exhibited behavior worthy of the trust and cooperation needed for this long and grueling trip.
5. Tennis Lessons- I recommend that the camp offer tennis lessons after camp for an additional fee to be divided between the instructor and the camp.
6. Hats and shorts- I would like to include the sale of hats and shorts on the registration form at a price to be determined.

7. *******Registration**- It is extremely difficult to program the camp and hire personnel when enrollment forms come in at the end of June. I would like to see a May 1 deadline for enrollment instead of June 1. Anyone registering after May 1 would be subject to an additional fee of \$200 instead of the \$100 that is now in place.
8. **Policy- I believe that anyone who gets sent home from the bike trip for whatever reason should not be allowed to attend camp for the final 2 days with no refund. I also would like your approval to agree that anyone sent home from the bike trip should never be allowed to become a future employee of PHDC and this would include prior years as well.**
9. **CAMP FEES-** I urge the Board to immediately set the camp rates for 2009. Given the financial situation of this country, it is in the best interest of this camp to begin the planning and organization right now. We must post this information on the website so we do not lose any campers to competitors.
10. **Camp Dates-** I believe the camp should operate from July 1- August 7, 2009.

GOOD NEWS- REVENUE VS. EXPENSES

As many of you know, I have been involved in the camp industry for many years both as a camp owner and camp director. I tried to treat the 2008 season as a camp owner fully knowing that finances are important but also insuring the safety of the campers as a priority. I was unhappy in 2007 when I had to report a camp deficit (which came about because of inherited expenses beyond my control) and I privately vowed to make sure 2008 did not have the same result.

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that camp revenue was \$309,698.12 while expenses were \$304,893.14. This resulted in a \$4,804.98 PROFIT.

I will do all in my power to duplicate this result.

In 2008 we enrolled 310 children. The amount of reduced and free children declined while the number of non residents increased from 42 to 45. This in combination with tight control of equipment and supply purchases helped to provide the positive cash flow.

ADMINISTRATION-

Any camp cannot operate without the help of the people who work behind the scenes and deserve to be recognized. I would like to thank JoAnn, Olive, Patti, Linda, Sally, Gina, Mary, Kevin for all their help and support.

Special thanks to the entire custodial staff for your work ethic, cooperation and friendship.

Laura Hansen provides the spirit that is needed in a camp atmosphere and deserves special recognition for all of her work.

We were also very fortunate to have a new nurse this year who exhibited a calm, mothering attitude toward our campers and staff. Lynne Jackson was a great addition and hopefully she will return in 2009.

My special, special thanks to Sharon Rubeo who without a doubt is the most efficient, best prepared, hardest working person I have ever had the pleasure of working with.

POCANTICO HILLS SCHOOL

I would like to express my gratitude to Stan Steele and Jay Scotto-Friedman for their assistance and guidance with a number of crucial matters that were resolved due to their patience and understanding of the school and community.

Last but certainly not least, I want to extend my gratitude for the support I received from Dr. Smith. You were an inspiration to the campers and the staff and I thank you for everything.

REMINDER

The 2009 camp calendar is available online on the camp website. As soon as the camp fees are agreed on we will put that information online as well.

Finally, finally. I want to thank the Board for the confidence you have shown in me to direct this camp and I look forward to another great camp season. The planning has already begun.