Wanna Be a Camp Grandparent?

Dear Young at Heart Older Adults,

Thanks for your interest in our camp grandparent program. We feel that this program adds a great deal to our youth camps and have also found that both the campers and the grandparents have benefited greatly from the experience.

Because of the mobility of our society, we are finding that many of our campers have not developed strong relationships with their own grandparents. There are many reasons for this, but the two that really stand out are that they live too far away from each other to visit frequently or that their grandparents died when they were very young and the camper never really knew their grandparents at all. Camp grandparents provide the opportunity for our campers to relate to senior adults and to maybe learn from the great wisdom and knowledge that this age group possesses.

Camp grandparents are basically grown up campers. We want them to participate in everything the campers are doing, including Bible Study, worship, games, planning with their group, hiking, wood carving, etc. Your job is to play with the campers, worship with them, study and learn with them, and love them... as one of them. By spending quality time with campers, you will develop relationships with them that will allow you to talk about things beyond just small talk. Each day, you will choose your activities to try and spend as much time as possible with as many campers as possible, so that they may experience you. You will also work very closely with our staff and will be involved in our staff meetings and will help us address camper concerns that may exist. It will be a very busy week for you, but it will also be a very rewarding one.

We typically have only two to four grandparents each week. This is mainly because adult housing is limited on our site. We provide a guest room with toilet, sink, and shower either in the staff lodge or Columbine apartment. There is no charge for your week; however, we require that you complete an adult camp health form. We will provide you with the form and you do not need a signature from your doctor. You will also need to fill out and sign a registration form and voluntary disclosure that we will also provide.

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The following are portions of letters written by Rev. Jerry Brown, and the late Dave and Ruth Ericson regarding their experiences as Camp Grandparents. The experience proved to be invaluable... both to the campers who grew to know them and they themselves, as you will read:

"Recently, I spent the week as "Grandpa Jerry" for the Junior Week, those entering 4th through 6th grade, and this was an "Extraordinary" week. The Bible study entitled "From Ordinary to Extraordinary" was conducted by the Counselors covering the various persons in the Bible such as Mary, Peter, David, Martha and Mary, and Samuel. Each of them had ordinary but unique gifts and that is what the campers discovered in the Bible study held each day. The week was filled with activities like archery, wood-carving, arts and crafts, and hikes to Balman reservoir, and Rainbow trail, plus good meals with fresh bread each day. There was a chapel service in the morning and one to close out the day. This week was fantastic as I am sure each week is for the Confirmands, the Senior High, the Junior High, and Family Camp. I had a wonderful camp experience as a Grandparent and would highly recommend it for any of the grandparents out there. Think about coming to Rainbow Trail as a Grandparent."

"As a grandparent you get to participate in one of the Bible study groups during the week. This summer we explored the theme "Ordinary to Extraordinary" by looking at the lives of five specific Bible personalities. As we did, we found that the younger campers seek answers to simpler questions about the Bible passages, while the Seniors ask penetrating and thought provoking questions about how what they are reading applies to their lives and how one forms a life view based on Scripture. If you are concerned about where our church and country will be in a few years, a few hours with our high school teens will give you a much more positive outlook. Their ability to share and care for each other is impressive.

Grama Ruth is an "arts and crafts" person and she has found that being a part of that experience in the Pavilion with the campers offers time for relaxed talk and sharing. As hands are busy with a project there is time to get to know the campers and to share questions and life stories. She has great fun helping them learn a new skill and sharing their excitement as they make a "special gift" for mom or dad.

Grampa Dave is more attracted to the wood carving cabin as a place to get to know the campers and their stories. Helping the younger campers learn to handle the carving tools opens many doors for talking. It is especially fun to watch returning campers move from two dimensional plagues to three dimensional figures. These figures are a challenge for all of us as we try to follow Master Carver Wayne Jarvis' direction to "just remove any wood that doesn't look like a dog (or seal, or swan or whatever the figure may be). "

If you are 55 years of age or older, enjoy the outdoors, have a strong faith in Jesus Christ, and enjoy kids, then being a camp grandparent can be a great opportunity for you! You don't need to be a real grandparent, and you don't need to have a grandchild attending camp. All you need is to have a loving heart and a willingness to share yourself with kids. Weeks are assigned on a space available basis. Register at the link on our website. We hope to hear from you soon!

Yours in Christ,

Dave

Dave Gunnlaugsson
Executive Director