



ACA Talking Points — For Parents

1 **The American Camp Association (ACA) is the only organization that accredits all types of camps, with up to 300 national standards for health and safety.**

ACA Accreditation means that your child's camp cares enough to undergo a thorough review of its operation — from staff qualifications and training to emergency management. The American Camp Association collaborates with experts from The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Red Cross, and other youth service agencies to assure that current practices at your child's camp reflect the most up-to-date, research-based standards in camp operation. Camps and ACA form a partnership that promotes growth and fun in an environment committed to safety.

2 **Camp is an important social development opportunity for children.**

ACA camps provide:

- Healthy, developmentally-appropriate activities and learning experiences
- Discovery through experiential education
- Caring, competent role models
- Service to the community and the environment
- Opportunities for leadership and personal growth

3 **The ACA camp experience enriches lives and changes the world.**

Camp provides children with a community of caring adults, who nurture experiential education that results in self-respect and appreciation for human value. All of the outcomes — self-identity, self-worth, self-esteem, leadership, and self-respect — build personal competencies. These personal competencies are reflected in the four "C's" of the camp community: compassion, contribution, commitment, and character! For years, campers' parents have reported that when their children return home from camp they are more caring, understand the importance of giving, are more equipped to stand up for what they know is right, and are willing to be more responsible. These are the qualities that will help build a successful nation and a civil society.

4 **Research indicates camp promotes youth development.**

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%)

5 **The camp experience is recognized by child development professionals as valuable in helping children mature socially, emotionally, intellectually, morally, and physically.**

- Social Skills Development: Leadership, Communication Participation
- Self-Respect and Character Building: Responsibility, Resourcefulness, and Resilience
- Community Living/Service Skills: Caring, Fairness, Citizenship, and Trustworthiness

6 **Child development experts endorse concept of camp as "community" for children.**

Peter Scales, Ph.D., is a senior fellow with the Search Institute in Minneapolis. A noted educator, author, and psychologist, Dr. Scales says, "Camp is one of the few institutions where young people can experience and satisfy their need for physical activity, creative expression, and true participation in a community environment. Most schools don't satisfy all these needs."

7 **Play thrives in the camp experience.**

"The traditional summer camp recognizes that play is a powerful form of learning that contributes mightily to the child's healthy physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development." Dr. David Elkind

8 **Camp teaches children about their natural environment and is the antidote to nature-deficit disorder.**

ACA values the natural world. We seek and appreciate what is real, genuine, and nonartificial. In seeking those qualities in people as well as in the actual world, we foster understanding of the importance of human connections for survival and of the critical connections to our physical world. Campers realize the need to protect not only one another, but also the environment in which they live. Our intent is to preserve and share that legacy with the next generation.

9 **Camp by the numbers—statistics overwhelmingly prove that parents are recognizing the value of camp for their children.**

- More than 11 million children and adults benefit from a camp experience at approximately 12,000 camps throughout the United States.
- In 2005, despite the ever-growing menu of opportunities for child and youth development and the current economic conditions, camp enrollment has increased 1 to 3 percent over the past year.

10 **Camp is Fun!**

Children can be kids and enjoy meeting new friends and learning new activities in a safe and nurturing environment. Camp is fun!