

## **The Susquehannock Camps** **“Setting Your Child Up to Succeed at Camp”**

Every year we receive a large number of calls from parents who are sending their children to camp, most for the first time. So we have put together some responses to what are “the frequently asked questions.” This should not discourage you from calling and speaking to the site directors during camp but we want to provide you with some valuable information that will enable both you and your child to have a successful camp experience.

### **1.) What do I do if my child is worried about being homesick?**

You can help by reassuring your child that most people feel anxious when they are in a new and unknown environment. This is a totally normal feeling and therefore really to be expected. Help your child to focus on all of the reasons s/he decided to go to camp in the first place: new friends, exciting activities and a chance to try new things. Here are some other ideas...remembering that different things will work for different people!

-Share positive experiences you had as a camper or in a similar situation. Your excitement may be contagious. Ask what your child thinks it means to be “homesick”...some children use it as a “catch all” term and when you talk in detail you will find that your child is concerned about specific things like not making friends, being teased, not being able to do the activities ...if you know more about what scares your child, you will be able to calm his/her fears!

-If your child wants to feel “connected” to you while away then encourage that s/he pack something that is familiar from home- (a favorite stuffed animal or a family photo!) Writing letters can be very helpful, so you should send your child with stationery, addressed envelopes and stamps. You can even make a list of the topics to describe when they write!

-Suggest ways for your child to distract themselves so they do not have a chance to feel lonely....especially during quieter times of the day like “Rest Hour.” They need to *stay* busy and work on making new friends.

- Send your child email (through Bunk 1) or a letter, or a package (remember NO FOOD) and in those letters it is better not to mention things that the camper will perceive as really fun that they are missing and do not share sad news like the death of the family pet... Campers do not receive or make calls with home except for a birthday, death or another emergency.

- Encourage your child to ask their counselor for help...some campers hide their emotions really well. Try not to give your child an “out” from camp if they feel unhappy. As educators, we realize the value that children need to learn to survive a struggle and they need to develop and use coping mechanisms! The directors and counselors will be in contact with you during the adjustment period to camp if your child needs some help! Please know that it is extremely rare to have a camper be so homesick that we can not work through it together.....many end up crying at the end of camp with the idea that when they leave they will be “campsick!” Your child can and will meet with success and will grow at camp if you help and support their efforts, even when you are “childsick!” Remember that you can call us as you need to!

### **2.) What if other campers tease my child?**

Our goal for every camper who attends camp is to have a safe and a positive experience. We define safe in physical, emotional and social terms. Behavior that affects other campers’ experiences in a negative way is not acceptable. Counselors are trained to help campers work together as a group, and will intervene if another camper or group of campers is picking on a camper or a group of campers. If the behavior continues, a director becomes involved. We will call the parents of the campers misbehaving if the director’s intervention does not result in changed behavior. In severe cases, we will send children home if they cannot act in a way that is appropriate for camp. Because counselors can not possibly see everything, encourage your child to talk to his/her counselor if situations arise like this for them. Assure him/her that counselors are trained to handle these situations in a confidential manner, and if he/she is not comfortable talking with his/her counselor that the directors are always available to them.

### **3.) What if my child gets hurt or becomes ill at Camp?**

We are fortunate to have a dedicated, skilled group of medical staff to provide care for our campers each summer. There is a doctor and a nurse on staff at all times. Medications are dispensed at meals or at times during the day or evening as needed. Primary care is provided for things like scraped knees, bumps and bruises as well as sore throats, headaches and coughs. The doctor is able to diagnose and prescribe medication if necessary. If your child does get insured, someone from the medical staff will contact you. If your child becomes ill at camp (needing more than some ibuprofen or a cough drop), you would also receive a call. There are excellent medical facilities close by in Binghamton, NY.

### **4.) My child is worried about doing activities that s/he has never tried.**

Susquehannock's program is based on a "challenge by choice" philosophy. While we want each camper to try new activities, we do not force a camper to do anything but we allow them to choose which challenges they want to meet. We have what we refer to as a "minimum level of participation" for each activity. So, for example, a camper who did not want to climb the tower, would be expected to put on the safety equipment (harness and hardhat) and help the rest of their cabin group in climbing the tower by providing support to others, but they do not have to make an actual attempt themselves. We have found that campers may say they don't like an activity or do not want to participate because they have never done it before and are afraid of looking "silly" or not performing it perfectly. Once they see their counselor or other campers in their group trying the activity, they almost always want to give it a try themselves. In addition, we recognize that the majority of campers do not have extensive experience with a lot of our activities. We do provide instruction in each of our activities so campers gain new skills through exposure.

### **5.) Will my child have the opportunity to choose his/her own activities?**

The magic and the success of the Susquehannock experience is that all campers are divided into groups, according to their cabins, ages or skills and will participate in all of the activities that Camp has to offer. Everyone is offered the opportunity to choose special activities or to specialize in something they already enjoy. Our mission states "*Camp Susquehannock encourages the moral, social and physical development of campers. Through a combination of fun activities, athletic competition, sharing meals in the dining hall, and in cabin life; campers create life-long friendships and discover their own potential. Campers are taught to embrace tolerance, show respect for others, handle conflict gracefully and develop a sense of fair play. Through individual guidance, we provide opportunities for self-reliance, self-confidence, sportsmanship and leadership.*" We accomplish our mission through this group-centered approach. Campers learn to work as a team, solving problems, encouraging each other, respecting each other's strengths and appreciating each other's differences. Campers benefit from their close relationships with their counselors who take their role modeling very seriously.

### **6.) What are the Camp discipline policies?**

The entire staff takes time within the first days of camp to help campers get to know each other. Together they discuss expectations and appropriate behavior for the community while they develop rules and consequences within their own cabins. When expectations are not met or rules are breached, depending on the severity of the situation, counselors will speak directly to the camper(s) involved and work with them to come to an acceptable solution. If there is further need to address the situation, counselors will turn to senior staff or the directors for guidance or additional support and suggestions. Directors will call parents if necessary. Since you know your child best, any insight may be helpful. We are usually able to work through all cases but if a camper's behavior prohibits them from being a contributing member of the community, then we reserve the right to have the camper leave camp and return home.