

## **OCAsional News**

The Newsletter of the Ontario Camping Association

#### December 2000

250 Merton St. Suite 403 Toronto, ON M4S IBI 416-485-0425 F: 416-485-0422 oca@ontcamp.on.ca

## Working with campers who learn differently

by Henri Audet, Executive Director, Camp Kirk

Recently, I had the privilege of being the keynote speaker at a conference for teachers and educators, the theme of which was "Celebrating Bright Children Who Learn Differently - Strategies for Success." In preparing my address, I had an opportunity to dwell on the many different facets of what it means, in a global sense, to have a learning disability; I was constantly reminded of the significant impact that a positive camping experience might have on a child who has learning difficulties. Having spent the last eight years directing a camp that serves such children, I am happy to share with you a few tips which, I hope, will encourage you and help you to better understand and help these children.

My first recommendation is for camp directors and senior staff to

get as much information as possible about the various types of learning disabilities. Familiarize yourselves with not only the terminology, but also the causes and effects and the realities associated with each type of learning disability, and particularly their impact on children's self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. Don't get stuck, like so many do, on the labels, the

behaviours and the issues surrounding behaviour

Don't get stuck, like so many do, on the labels . . . and the issues

modification medications that are so often associated with certain learning disabilities. Get in touch with institutions, organizations or associations that deal with learning disabilities and related issues. For instance, the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) and the Integra Foundation have a great deal of valuable information and resources. I highly recommend two PBS videos titled, "How Difficult Can This Be?" and "When The Chips Are Down," both by Richard Lavoie. They are not only informative, they also offer great strategies that you can later pass on to your staff. In fact, if you are going to welcome children who have learning disabilities to your camp, I would encourage you to share either one or both of those videos with your staff as part of your pre-camp training session. They are available through the LDAO office in Toronto.

See Learning Disabilities, page 5

## Standards Review ubdate

by Howard Oretsky, Standards Review Task Force Co-chair We are now reaching the point in the process of our Accred-

itation Standards review where we need to ask the membership for their help. We need samples of general forms used in the administration of camps. We need copies of guidelines for all types of camp procedures (e.g., waterfront, pool, missing persons, fire, risk management inventories). We need staff stuff, such as application forms, contract templates, job description sheets, and camper stuff such as registration forms, medical forms, etc.

We are in search of any document form or manuals that would be useful in the process of creating a comprehensive standards (training) document. All materials used will be modified to appear generic. Bibliographic credit will be given for all contributions. We really do need your help in this quest. Please send any materials to Craig Hartley & Howard Oretsky c/o the OCA Office, 250 Merton St, Suite 403, Toronto. Your contributions need to reach us by the 15th of February, 2001. Thanks to all our colleagues in camping for their co-operation in this project.

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It could be worse, part II

The official newsletter of the Ontario Camping Association, the OCAsional News is published monthly from October to June of each year. The newsletter helps to keep the OCA membership informed about developments both in and out of the Association pertaining to children's, youth, and special needs camping.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Ontario Camping Association.

Queries regarding submissions and letters to the editor are welcome. Please direct correspondence to:

OCAsional News 416-485-0425 oca@ontcamp.on.ca

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## 'Nash'onal News

by Ellen Nash OCA President As a year draws to a close, we always start to look back on what has happened over its course. If we have time to take a breather from the hectic pace of this season, we also use the opportunity to give thanks. In the religious sphere, this is the time of festivals in many faiths, festivals like Christmas, Chanukah, Ramadan, and

Diwali, at which we are thankful for blessed events and miraculous happenings. In the OCA sphere, while the happenings may be more mundane, I wish to give thanks to a number of individuals for the efforts they have put in over the year on our behalf, and in support of the work we do. Without all these people, the Association could not have functioned, and we collectively as well as personally, would have been the poorer.

I would like to thank our staff, who frequently do more than their job descriptions demand, and who spend countless extra hours working behind the scenes. So thank you for keeping us on track and on time, and for thinking of all the little ways we need to improve.

I would also like to thank all our committee chairs and representatives to outside organizations. Sometimes with large committees, and sometimes alone, they are tireless as well as effective. Volunteers all, committee work is the backbone of the organization, and without all these folks nothing would have happened. The list is long, and I will thank each of you individually at our AGM. In the meanwhile, a collective thank you.

Thank you also to the entire Board of Directors. From regional reps through to directors representing the various sub-classes, we have worked with a new structure this year. Because it was new, we did not have all the answers, and it is now becoming clear that next year will require some fine tuning. But each of you has represented your area diligently, with sensitivity to the importance of representing a particular point of view with conviction and consistency. Our Association will become better for us all through efforts like yours.

To the members of our Executive I would like to say a personal "thank you." You have supported me in everything I have asked of you, and more. To Barb Gilbert, Past President, I say thank you for always being there for me and for the Association. Even in the throes of personal issues, you have been a gracious mentor and a valued friend. To Eoin Wood, Secretary/Treasurer, I say that it is not your prowess with the budget that I value (although that is definitely there), it is your advice whenever it is needed. Calm and level-headed, you are a joy to work with. To Brian Blackstock, Vice-President, I say thank you for the depth of experience you brought to our table, as well as the determination to finish any project you have begun. You have shown an insatiable appetite for hard work; keep it up, as you will need it for the next two years. To Jill Dundas, Vice-President, I say thank you for your willingness to do any task, for your efficient completion of everything you take on, for your everpresent smile and good humour even in the face of adversity. Thank you for keeping me grounded. In a nutshell, thank you for being a friend.

Most of all, thank you to the members of the Association for allowing me to be your President for the past two years. I have tried to represent you with an understanding of the issues which concern all of us, and I thank you for allowing me, at times, to come to different answers than your own. I hope to continue to see all of you at future OCA events.

# Be careful of gifts in kind

by Jason Brown

As we head into the holiday season and also start the planning season for next summer, thoughts may turn to charitable giving. Many of the OCA's

Non-Profit and Agency Camps are also registered charities and may receive gifts of goods and money in return for which the donor receives a charitable tax receipt. Gifts of services, however, can cause problems if you are not very careful. Revenue Canada says a gift is a "transfer of property" without payment. Property can be a good or money, but not a service — service does not qualify.

The issuing of charitable tax receipts is simplest for money and slightly more complicated for a good or item of value. Money is easy to quantify and goods can be professionally appraised and evaluated to determine the amount of the receipt. However, charities should never issue charitable tax receipts to someone providing services for no fee. In essence, if not law, these people are volunteers, not charitable donors.

While volunteers are incredibly important to Non-Profit and Agency Camps, it is more important to make the distinction between a volunteer and a donor. It is permitted, however, to pay someone for a service at an agreed upon rate and arrange to have that person issue payment back to the charity for a lesser or equal amount and then receive a charitable tax receipt.

For more information on the Revenue Canada policy, contact an accountant, search the Government of Canada website at www.gc.ca, or visit www.charityvillage.com – an excellent website with a lot of links and resources helpful to the voluntary sector.

Jason Brown is the OCA Board Member representing Non-Profit and Agency Camps and is the Manager of Camping and Outdoor Education for the National Capital Region YMCA-YWCA.

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#### Northeastern Ontario (Sudbury): Dave Ward, YMCA John Island Camp

185 Lloyd St., Sudbury ON P3B INI 1-800-465-9622 F: 705-674-3236 david ward@ymca.ca

#### Northwestern Ontario (Thunder Bay): Charlie Wilson, Dorion Bible Camp,

408 South Marks St., Thunder Bay ON P7E IM5 807-857-2331 F: 807-857-1141 dbccc@northroute.net

#### Southwestern Ontario (London):

David Woollven, YMCA-YWCA Camp Queen Elizabeth 1795 Clarke Rd., London ON N5X 3Z6 519-667-3300 F: 519-455-2519 david\_woollven@ymca.ca Learning Disabilities, continued from page 1

Invite someone who you know has had direct, hands-on experience working with children who have learning disabil-

ties to attend your pre-camp session. They will be able to answer questions, give examples and offer suggestions, and put things into the context of the camp environment which, for your application, is imperative.

And now, please allow me to put on my Camp Director's hat: while I realize that most of your camper population doesn't have learning disabilities, it is important that those campers that do be given every possible chance to succeed at

Don't be afraid to ask questions and have parents give examples to better illustrate certain points, particularly those surrounding behaviour or conduct issues. your camp. I know from personal experience that this is often easier said than done, given each camp's mandate, programmes and physical layout. However, in welcoming children with learning disabilities to your camp, there are things you can do to make this happen. First of all, have a personal visit with each child and his/her parents or guardians as part of your registration process. This will enable you to gain more insight and get a bet-

ter sense of the nature and degree of the child's learning disability. It will also allow for the free exchange of questions and answers about your camp and your programmes, and will go a long way in making both parents and child feel more secure, notwithstanding your own comfort level. Don't be afraid to ask questions and have parents give examples to better illustrate certain points, particularly those surrounding behaviour or conduct issues. More importantly, a personal visit or meeting will enable you to connect with the child which will be very useful in assuring that the child has a quick and favourable adjustment to your camp.



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Secondly, be realistic as to your camp's ability to serve and/or meet a child's needs. Make sure that you understand the parent's and the child's expectations and, in turn, that they undertsand what you can and cannot do for their child. Don't create false expectations, and be up front with the parents. The last thing a child with a learning disability needs is yet one more failure. Incidentally, it is very important to note that a child's failure to "make it" at camp is also very hard on you, on your staff, and on camp morale. You and your staff need to be prepared for the fact that, despite your best efforts, in some cases it just isn't going to work and so everyone simply needs to move on. This is also something you need to address in pre-camp.

Thirdly, without creating an impression of preferential treatment, try to make sure that the child is put in the best possible cabin group, according to his/her needs, but also keep in mind the welfare of every group member. The staff in charge of that group should be well aware of the child's learning disability and, without prejudice, should be given as much support as possible to help them meet the child's needs discreetly and in fairness to all members of the group.

There are so many variables when it comes to working with children who have learning disabilities; I won't even attempt to list suggestions on how to best deal with potential scenarios. Just remember: the better prepared you and your staff are to meet the needs of these children, the better the chances of success. You have to keep in mind that, for the most part, these children will come to you with very low self-esteem and with little, if any, confidence. If, right from the beginning, you show a child with learning disabilities that you know something about his/her difficulties, that you care and that you show compassion and fairness, the element of trust will prevail, and the pendulum will begin to swing the other way.

One of our directors once came out with a punch line which basically said "learning disabilities don't kill, they merely destroy lives." After nine years of being exposed to the realities surronding young people with learning disabilities, I am of the opinion that learning disabilities can, in fact, kill. We must do everything in our power to try and help these children. Camp is a wonderful tool and, given the current state of education in Ontario, it may be the best tool we have to reach some of them. Whether you are a camp director, senior staff member, program staff counsellor, CIT/LIT or support staff. don't ever underestimate your capacity to change lives, even if you do it one camper at a time.

## Help save the loon

by Barry Lowes, Camp Timberlane The wild calls of the loons upon our lakes in summer are synonymous with wilderness and camping. These magnificent birds are threatened as man and his activities impact

increasingly upon the lakes of Canda and the northern U.S.A. I cannot imagine our lake silent, no loons to greet us each spring and to fill our days and nights with their presence and their calls.

Many years ago, the Long Point Bird Observatory began a study to determine the success rate of nesting loons. I became involved, and we at Timberlane have participated and reported our loon sightings year by year. The study has now grown to be an international study. Birds do not respect national boundaries.

Participants complete a simple report for the appropriate lake. It records first sightings in the spring, nesting attempts, eggs laid, chicks hatched and how many survive to fly south in the fall. This report is combined with many hundreds of reports. Together, they produce a picture of how well the loons are doing - their successes or failures.

This participation in citizen science by our camp and your camp is a valuable contribution. The large number of camps in Ontario could significantly increase the data base. I would urge you to contact Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, P.O. Box CP 160, Port Rowan, ON NOE 1M0, or call 519-586-3531, or fax to 519-586-3532.

Participation in this important project could be of great interest to some campers and staff, and deserves the fullest support of the camping community. Loons are in trouble. They need our help, so make the call and get involved.

## Summer Nursing Student from McMaster University

- Does your camp have a physician as well as an RN on site?
- Would you be interested in providing clinical experience at your camp this summer for a nurse practitioner candidate from McMaster University?

If so, contact the OCA office by January 1, 2001:

tel: 416-485-0425 fax: 416-485-0422

email: oca@ontcamp.on.ca

Attention, Member Camps!

## Looking for name label order forms?

Are you preparing your registration packages for 2001? Don't forget to include an OCA Name Label order form.

Contact the OCA office (416-485-0425, email: oca@ontcamp.on.ca), and we'll send you as many forms as you need - 100 or 1,000, we're happy to help!

Remember, the Name Label program raises valuable funds for the OCA.

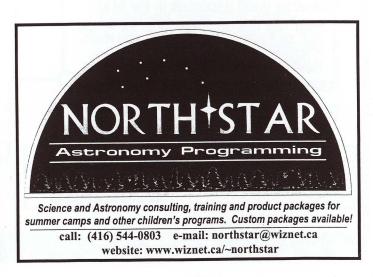


## remember!

The **OCA Annual General Meeting** takes place Tuesday, December 12, starting at 5:00 pm at the Toronto Cricket, Skating & Curling Club, 141 Wilson Ave., Toronto, ON (Avenue Rd. & Wilson Ave.)

### Sexual Abuse Insurance

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It could be worse, part II:

## The membership responds

by Catherine Ross, former co-owner, Camp Mi-A-Kon-Da

At the conclusion of an article in the November newsletter, "It Could Be Worse," we asked for your advice to the director who observed five of his senior staff swimming across the lake during a July rest hour without an accompanying safety boat. Mandatory stan-

I always gave my staff a second chance. dard PW11 reads: "Are persons participating in a distance swim outside the regular swim area accompanied by a boat?"

After serious discussions with the five staff, consultation with several colleagues and considerable personal delib-

eration, the director decided to dismiss his Waterfront Director.

All who responded to this dilemma, though most with anguish, argued against dismissal. Thanks to these members for their thoughtful input. The respondents all stressed the gravity of the situation with comments such as: "serious discussion and suitable discipline necessary," "use as a teaching tool," "make an example of the group

in a staff meeting." Ask the five, "How would you respond if a camper did this?" "As your director, what do you think I should do with you?" One director commented that the disruption caused by firing would be in excess of the lesson learned.

Citing the impracticality of firing key staff in this of all summers, one director felt that the challenge would be to make the best of a very unfortunate situation.

Some of her advice included demoting the Waterfront Director to be replaced by, hopefully, a qualified assistant. After all, this is the person who should have said, "I will man the boat so that you will be safe."

With the exception of a no tolerance policy on drugs, I always gave my staff a second chance. The first time an individual broke their contract, after serious discussion and appropriate action, he/she wrote and signed a statement describing the offence. This letter remained on file. In the event of a second incident, dismissal was immediate. In 20 years, only two staff disappointed me a second time.



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Deadline December 15, 2000

## Health Care Committee Q & A

Q. Getting nurses was a problem last summer! What's going to happen this summer?

A. We don't see much of a change for the summer of 2001.

On behalf of the Association, we are addressing the current nursing shortage and are taking action on this issue. On October 18th the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario held a Recruitment and Retention Fair at the Marriott Hotel, Toronto. Thanks to Larry Bell and Elaine Cole for assisting me as we exhibited our first ever camp nursing booth on behalf of the OCA.

Over 100 Camping Guides were distributed to potential camp parents. RNs, RPNs (Registered Practical Nurses) and Graduating Nurses (student nurses in their final year of nursing who will subsequently be writing their licensure exams before camp starts) showed great interest in this diversified area of nursing.

So successful was our exposure at this event that we plan to attend a similar fair during Nurses Week on May 7th, 2001. Available at that time will be the updated video "Running An Effective Camp Health Centre," made possible with assistance from the Canadian Camping Association's Project Development Fund. This video is a great marketing and educational tool for camp directors, nurse educators and camp health care staff. To purchase this video contact the OCA office in the spring of the New Year.

The Health Care Committee will continue to reach out and make every effort to raise awareness for camp nursing and a healthier camp community.

Submitted by Pearl Bell, Camp Robin Hood Chair, OCA Health Care Committee

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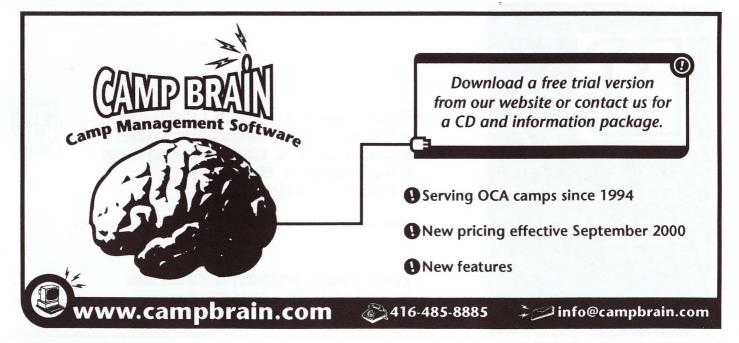
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## Classifieds

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POSITION AVAILABLE: Outdoor Education instructor/co-ordinator required for private, residential centre southwest of Barrie. Responsibilities include teaching curriculum based Outdoor Education and cross-country skiing programs, teacher pre-plans, and meal supervision. Other duties could include: marketing/maintenance/mountain biking/computer web page and internet skills. Accommodation available. Reply to: Mansfield Outdoor Centre, Box 95, Mansfield, ON LON 1M0. 705-435-4479, Fax: 705-435-370, email: mansfield@sympatico.ca

An Ontario children's camp is being offered for sale with availability in Autumn 2001. For information, interested parties may contact Peter A. James at 416-860-0166.

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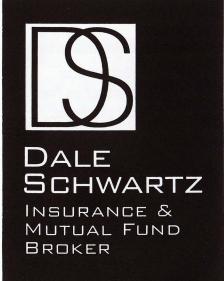
If you are interested in joining our team, please forward your resume to:
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502 Spadina Ave., Toronto, ON M5S 2H1

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Thank you for your interest. We regret that only those interviewed will receive a response.





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