

Bring a New Kind of Flood
Or
Bringing in *Legions* of Campers to Your Camp!!!

Thoughts on increasing your camp from Rev. Gary Powell (Coburg UMC)

I think that the techniques for increasing camping today will need to include at least the following:

1. **Direct contact**, testimony from current campers. Put something in their hands (written) and have them encourage friends.
2. **Financial Aid**: Figure out how the church can assist campers financially. Most churches want to help, but sometimes people are reluctant to ask. The best approach is to have the church dedicate funds and offer a blanket scholarship to any youth who attend (say \$100 off the cost of registration).
3. **Transportation** is a big issue. Get campers connected for car pooling. This is a killer for many families given the distances and cost of gas.
4. **Telephone**, text message invitations, direct contact with past campers.

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Joyce Hays on social networking (Time to Grow Campaign)

- Email is dead for youth.
- Involve kids that are involved to put out invitations on their Facebook. GET PARENTAL APPROVAL FIRST.
- Set up your own Facebook account for your camp.
www.Facebook.com (IT'S FREE AND EASY).
 - Create a Page
 - Radio button: Organization ... Religious Organization.
 - Pick a good name. Make it what it is!
 - Invite the folks you know in/out of the church to be your friends.
 - Watch it daily.
 - Make entries 3-4 times/week.

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Rev. Beth Estock

- **Recruit** as many counselors and campers from my own congregation.
- If I can get the **pastor** to be the camp theologian, it will bring in even more.
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- I do weekly announcements in church, keep folks up-to-date via the bulletin and church newsletter about who is going to camp.
- Have a bulletin board about camp stuff, encourage the kids going to invite their friends. Once you get a following, it gets easier.

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Karen Benson, Banks UMC

- **Direct invitations** to youth, both from the dean and from friends that are attending.
- **Asking other churches** in your area (both UMC and non-UMC) to help find youth that might fit the camp.
- Having a **great description** written that parents will want to send their kids too.
- Make it a **youth night** focus for teens new to your church.
- Themed camp ... create a **themed meeting!!!**

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KendraSue Phillips

1) It is key to **make yourself well known** within the population of the camp you are deaning or within the camping world period. Make sure this knowledge of you is positive. It is unlikely that parents will sign their children up for a camp where they do not know who is leading it. It is also unlikely that teens will volunteer to go to a camp when they do not know who is in charge. I have done this by being a camper, CIT, Counselor, Summer Staff, Dean...being a member of the United Methodist Church, leading youth events, working within a church, going to US wide church events, visiting other camps, attending church retreats,etc.

2) It is key to find a **good staff** and keep them! When campers know they will see the same counselors year after year and be able to build a mentoring relationship with those counselors, it makes it easier and much more fun to come to camp. In all the camps that I have deaned I have made sure that at least half my counselors (would like all) are returning from previous years of the camp.

3) If you have control of it, make sure the **blurb** about your camp that goes out to everyone for registration is up beat and exciting and short and sweet. You want to pull out some of the exciting things that happen during the week while tying in growing spiritually. If you just write or let the conference write a general overview of the camp without giving any details or insight into what the week is going to look like you won't attract much interest.

4) **Find something or make something unique about your camp.** What is the one thing each year that makes your camp different than all the others? Perhaps, you are the only music camp, perhaps you are the only camp that teaches how to rock climb...maybe your camp is the only one in the whole summer that spends the majority of the day on the challenge course or in the water. What does your camp have that no other does? When I was the dean of Superkids camp (3-4-5 grade) we took the "Superkids" name and played off of it. Each day and new theme a new superhero would arrive to camp and spend the day with us (the counselors played the superheros), we made capes out of pillow cases and masks out of foam, each kid got to share their super power...at the end of camp each super hero appeared and parents and kids got to take pictures with them before heading home. This didn't happen at any other camp...and each year the super heroes returned to teach us about God.

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5) **Meet with your staff** at least twice before camp starts. Every year, I do staff team building and planning sessions before camp. I make sure that everyone knows each other, works well together, and each person is in charge of a different part of the program. I usually hold a BBQ at my house and do team building in the yard. It is easier for the week to run smoother (less drama) when the staff is already familiar with each other.

6) Have an even **balance of activities** that are age appropriate. It is probably not a good idea to have 3-4 graders sit and listen to someone talk about the theme for 2 hours when they could be playing a game related to the theme and getting a lot more out of it. Teens usually like a large array of activities...when they have free time they get in trouble so find a way to provide them with free time (independence) that is structured and they are still learning. The camp I dean now has little "free time" but in the morning they have family group time and rotate through different activities and in the afternoon they have time to learn something new and can attend those things with their friends.

7) **Have a good worship team.** Make singing fun. Make praying exciting. Give opportunities to lead. Sing music that they know and like. Try something new for communion.

It is important for everyone to remember that people go to camp to get something that they don't get out of everyday life. People go to camp to enjoy the presence of God in nature and grow spiritually. People go to camp to have fun, be themselves, and meet new people. Provide opportunities for this to happen when you are leading camp.

I probably have more but this is all, off the top of my head. Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my successes and help others succeed.