

# MINISTRY MINUTE



NOVEMBER 2022

## SUMMER CAMPER FOLLOW-UP

This summer we hosted thousands of young people at our day and overnight camps. They had wonderful weeks making new friends, trying different foods, participating in a variety of camp activities, receiving encouragement from their cabin leaders, singing campfire songs, and being introduced to Jesus. We don't want those good memories to fade; we want to continue to nurture relationships that began through our summer ministries by being intentional about connections with campers and their families. Invite camp staff to help with your camper connection events. We want to encourage you with some ideas submitted by your fellow ministry workers for you to consider using.



### Ruth Gillingham, Cascade Community Church, BC:

#### PRE-CAMP CONNECTION

We host a camper orientation family night within a couple of weeks of camp departure. We invite families to come to Cascade Community Church for a family BBQ, we play some camp games, and then give a brief orientation to Camp Sunrise, our departure procedure, what to expect at camp, our return from camp procedure, and then an open time for questions. Our Camp @ Home staff host the event as well as attend camp to continue to build relationships with the campers. (They will also be a part of the Just Show Up and Messy Church leadership team - see below).

#### CAMPER PICK UP AND FALL CONNECTIONS

At camper pick up we give all parents an information package that invites the family to further community events at our corps.

#### CAMP @ HOME (July to August)

Families who participate in our Camp @ Home (and who go to our overnight camp) are invited to these events throughout the year:

**Just Show Up** - a once a month Saturday family event from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. All campers will receive an email invitation each month to invite them to this family fun day. We provide information regarding our summer camp at home program which is available for their children. (Sept to June)

**Messy Church** - a once a month family worship experience that takes place on a Saturday morning (10 a.m. - 12 p.m.) - brunch included (Sept to June)

**Family Thanksgiving Community Dinner** - Mid week dinner for all camper families (October)

**Angel Tree** - Christmas support for families (Toys and Christmas Dinner Food Support)

**Valentines Family Community Dinner** - Mid week dinner for all camper families (February)



### Jillian Penny, Vernon, BC:

#### REGIONAL CAMP REUNION

Our campers in nearby cities attend the same holiday camp. This year, we are hosting a regional follow up event connecting these same campers. It will be a two-hour event at a corps, following the same theme as camp, and we will enjoy some games, activities, and pizza together. It will be like a mini camp reunion!

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## **SNAIL MAIL**

Every kid loves to get their own personal mail! Mail out something special to your campers (a coupon for ice cream, a book, personalized bookmark, a birthday card, keychain, or magnet, or even just a card). Make sure to include an invite to the next kids' event or program happening at your ministry unit. Don't have something coming up soon? Plan one!

## **EMAIL LIST**

By registering your campers, you now have their contact information. Be sure to include these families in your regular email lists for children's programming. Consider just sending an email with no purpose other than just to say hello! Consider including a video to show to the campers.

## **CAMP SUNDAY**

Host a special camp emphasis service at your church. Wear a camp shirt, include some camp songs, and ask a camper to share a testimony from camp. Be sure to invite the camper's families to attend. Have some fun refreshments after the service like a free tuck shop (pop, chips, and candy).



**Kassandra Nelson, Ottawa Citadel, ON:**

### **SUPPORT THE FAMILY**

Connect with parents by sharing what their kid(s) experienced at camp. Schedule family visits throughout the year. This can be a great way to make a face-to-face connection. In this day and age when a personal touch is rarely given, a personal visit could make all the difference to a family. Offer practical support.

### **BIRTHDAY CARDS AND POSTCARDS**

Celebrate your campers by sending out birthday cards at the beginning of the month to all who have an upcoming birthday that month. A couple of times over the school year send out a 'thinking of you' postcard, include a small tidbit from camp like 'remember when \_\_\_\_\_'.

### **KEEP FAMILIES INFORMED**

In the registration package for day camp include a space where families can decide if they want to receive information on different programs at the church. If they choose yes, send them emails when you have different activities running - such as messy church, spring break programming, or any children/youth programs.



**Jillian Rideout, Ontario Youth Dept:**

### **CAMP SUNDAY AND BBQ**

Invite all the kids who went to camp (and their parents) to a camp Sunday service and BBQ afterwards. If there are camp staff in the area invite them to join in as well. Spend time sharing about what the kids learned that summer and have a general time of fellowship where they could meet up with the friends they made. Feel free to connect with DHQ staff or the bible director to get more info on what the campers learned, what songs they sang, etc.

### **CAMP DAY**

Host something like a "Day at Camp" where previous campers are invited to the Church on a Saturday. Do camp activities with them, and be sure to include an evening type program with campfire songs, skits, etc.

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**Melissa Sunnuck, Westminster Park, ON:**

## **PRE-CAMP FUN NIGHT**

In partnership with London Community & Family Services and the corps here in London, all the kids (and their families) that are registered to go to Adventure Camp from London are invited to a BBQ and Carnival so that we can get to know them, they can get to know us, the kids can get to know each other, and hopefully everyone will have a friend they can go to camp with.

## **BEGIN FOLLOW UP EACH DAY AT DAY CAMP**

At the conclusion of the day at Day Camp, announce the final program and give out information about upcoming special events as well as ongoing programs. For overnight camp, give this information out at the local church as kids are being picked up by their parents.

## **THE PERSONAL TOUCH**

If a child or family doesn't immediately attend an event or program, I have found that sending a personalized invitation to the child/family through the mail can also be effective. Mail is rare these days, so kids love getting it!

Remember your campers throughout the year by sending them a birthday card from the camp (or local church for a day camp). The cards are all filled out, signed by the camp staff, and addressed at the end of each session or day camp for the local church. The camper's birthdate is marked very lightly on the back of the envelope. The cards are kept in the office and then mailed out each month throughout the year. (My kids loved getting these cards. They read the messages from their leaders and immediately started talking about all the fun they had. It got them thinking about going back.)

## **CAMP REUNION DAY**

A camper reunion on a P.D. Day in the cold and snowy months of January or February is a great way to keep the camp spirit burning. This also provides valuable childcare for the family.



**Carson Decker, former Divisional Youth Secretary, The Maritimes:**

## **ASSEMBLE A CONNECTION TEAM**

Find trust-worthy people to be influencers and encouragers. Have them visit camp during the week, interacting with and supporting campers. After camp has ended, don't let the connection stop. Send out postcards/ encouragement cards each quarter. Acknowledge birthdays with a card. Send out invites to youth/family events at the corps.

## **POST CAMP PARTY OR FUN DAY**

Before campers forget the details of camp, host a party or fun day where they share stories and highlights from their week at camp. Show photos and videos from the week. If possible, have camp staff share in the fun.

## **LET KIDS SHARE THEIR STORIES**

Provide opportunities for campers to share their stories and the changes they made with the congregation.

## **SCHOOL CONNECTION**

Have children already involved in your ministry who attend the same school with campers be the ones who extend an invitation to return to your church.