Camp Treetops

Family Handbook

Trees and fields; sun, rain, wind, cloud, and stars; soil, sand, grass, and flowers; chill and heat; sound of bird or leaves in wind; changes from light to dusk to dark —these can be more closely seen and more surely felt at camps than in city life or within solidly built walls anywhere.

—Helen Haskell, Treetops Director 1929-1969

Camp Treetops
4382 Cascade Road
Lake Placid, NY 12946
Phone: 518-523-9329
Fax: 518-523-4858
E-mail: Hannah@camptreetops.org

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We hope that this booklet answers some questions about Treetops. We have included answers to questions and information about topics that come up often in correspondence or phone calls with families.

Mission Statement

North Country School and Camp Treetops strives to create a diverse and inclusive community that gives children the self-confidence, knowledge, skills, and values to lead fulfilling and productive lives while contributing to a more equitable and sustainable world.

Values

- **Cultivate Community:** We believe in the inherent value and contributions of every person, and in fostering connections to build and nurture a strong, inclusive community.
- **Walk a Mile:** We believe that understanding and honoring every person's unique worldview, experiences, and challenges is at the root of empathy and compassion.
- **Dig Deep, Keep Growing:** We believe that by setting ambitious goals, working hard, and persevering, we build strength and character and set a course for lives of growth, purpose, and fulfillment.
- **Stay Curious:** We believe in the power of creativity and wonder. We believe that curiosity about ourselves, other people, and the world around us leads to growth, innovation, and sometimes unconventional ideas.
- **Our Planet, Our Job:** We believe in individual and collective responsibility for our planet, and in leading by example as a community that works to respect, protect, and restore the natural world.

Equity and Inclusion

We take pride in our long history of equity and inclusion. It is crucial to the mission and philosophy of Camp Treetops that we continue this tradition and expand on it. Our history requires that we continue to lead in sustaining a camp that is diverse in all ways, and where differences continue to be recognized as strengths. Such diversity includes, but is not limited to, differences in racial, cultural, religious, geographic and ethnic origin; economic status; sexual orientation; gender identity; physical and learning abilities. These differences among us that we call diversity are recognized as a core strength, too precious to homogenize.

We aspire to create and sustain a model environment where issues of equity and inclusion are discussed freely, honestly, and in an informed manner for the purpose of achieving and maintaining a community where children will grow to their full capacities.

In keeping with our commitment to honoring our differences within a diverse camp community, Treetops is a safe space for all LGBTQ+ people. Occasionally, a camper or counselor may wish to share or reveal something about their gender identity. If an individual wishes to go by a different name, use different pronouns, or change living spaces, we understand that it is of the utmost importance to affirm and respect each and every member of our community. In the case that a change such as this takes place during the camp season, counselors and leadership staff are trained to ask campers if they would like to communicate these details to their families. We respect the wishes of each individual and respond with support, sensitivity, and confidentiality, as needed, in order to support, respect, and affirm all members of our community. You may review the complete policy here.

Why Send a Child to Camp?

We all want the good life for our children. We wish youngsters to progress steadily towards independence, maturity and confident responsibility with a chance for unhurried individual growth, good health, and happiness along the way. The special emphasis of camp leadership at its best is that it attempts these goals in a community independent of the child's home circle and in an environment which gives back what city and suburb have taken away—farm animals to care for, sand and earth to dig in, trees to climb, grass to roll in, woods and fields to explore, flowers to pick or a garden to tend, wide stretches in which to play safely, a place to swim in the sun, to sleep out under stars.

- Helen Haskell, Treetops Director 1929-1969

Even the phrase *send a child to camp* brings forth in some of us feelings of guilt. "Why am I sending my child away from me?" Children grow from many different experiences, and camp can be one of them. For example, by living in a small peer group they learn the importance of cooperation and consideration. Not only are these behaviors expected, children also discover that they work. Children come away with a heightened sensitivity to other people's feelings and a realization that, in order to get along, one must sometimes make compromises.

At camp, children encounter a new set of friends, new expectations and challenges. The children begin with a clean slate. No longer do they define themselves as being in a certain reading group, or as the youngest in the family. A child who may have had difficulty in school can experience success in hiking a mountain. The non-athlete may become involved in weaving or in caring for an animal at barn chores. The child who lives in a city comes to respect the natural world so that in the future they may choose to use the earth wisely. At camp a child is challenged rather than entertained, and in gaining new skills and new insights becomes a more self-confident person.

This growth occurs at many well-run camps, not just at Treetops. In reading what families and children say about summer camp experiences throughout the country, one finds common threads of thought. Here are some insights that Treetops families have had about their child's summer away from home:

"Each year Sam returns from camp measurably more mature and responsible. This year has been no different but even more so. He's showing much more diligence and commitment to his schoolwork. He's showing more interest in keeping their room orderly. (Could he indeed be an alien clone substituted while our backs were turned?) The other day he overtly accused Treetops of being a major contributor to these newfound behaviors."

"I wasn't sure if Jason would survive the whole summer, or if I would, but it turned out to be the best experience of his life. You remember how shy he was and the fact that we'd never been separated. Jason just started in a new school, and he keeps asking me why he made friends so quickly at camp, and why it's so difficult at his new school . . . There are a number of reasons, but I think that the counselors and campers at Treetops are encouraged to be loving and caring of each other's feelings."

"I want you to know that Kelly had the most incredibly wonderful summer . . . she really did finally learn that she can make and keep good friends, and at long last this is happening at school too. She just seems so much happier and self-confident in every way."

"Frank learned so much about the outdoors, woodworking, weaving, sailing, and he loves the mountains. But even more impressive was the knowledge he gained about himself. The opportunities to sail, weave, and to build a bookcase gave him a real sense of their own abilities and the chance to take some risks and try out some new things. His 'growing up' process certainly was enhanced by this wholesome experience with other children, nature, and the wonderful counselors who guided him in so many ways."

Why We Have a Seven Week Season

Treetops has several goals for children. We seek to build a child's sense of independence, an ability to cope with challenges and fears, and a sense of confidence within a group. All this takes time. In addition, we strive to build a variety of skills and allow children to test these skills on trips away from camp. The level of competence required for a child to go on a three-day canoe trip, to hike the Great Range, or to sail in a brisk wind on Lower Saranac Lake demands a good deal of practice. Traditionally, the first three weeks of camp stress the building of skills and physical strength that allow children to go on challenging trips during the remainder of the summer.

We also strive to build a sense of community at Treetops and to establish friendships and connections that will be lifelong sources of strength for a child. This takes time. We have devoted alumni; many campers return as counselors and send their own children to Treetops. In a world in which we increasingly lack roots, Treetops provides a continuity of tradition that many of our alumni cherish. This kind of allegiance and sense of community is much less likely to occur in a shorter camp season.

"My daughter had a fantastic time and made gains in health and independence. She kept saying how she could be herself at camp unlike the rest of her life at a pressurized academic school with very little free time. She was able to overcome her initial shyness and make new friends and learn new skills. A life-enhancing experience –she never stops talking about it!"

How to Prepare Your Child for a Summer at Camp

Make sure your child gets as much of a feeling for camp as possible before arrival. Sometimes children are quite shy about asking questions, so if you have a Zoom or in-person visit with the Camp Director, make sure you ask about things the child may want to know (even though they don't ask). Where will they sleep? What are the washhouses like? What do we eat for breakfast? How is a typical day structured?

Try not to color your child's expectations too much with what you want them to do or what might have been your own experiences at a summer camp. You might talk about general things: "I bet it will be neat the first time you sleep out on an overnight!" or "Doing barn chores sounds like an interesting experience." Just because you were an avid hiker does not mean that your child will be, and it is respectful of their individuality to allow them to make their own choices. You may very much want them to climb twelve 46'ers or become proficient in tennis; they may want to learn about edible weeds and do rock climbing. Your child may discover a talent neither of you knew that they had.

If your child has never spent the night away from home, it would be a good idea to provide opportunities to sleep over at friends' houses before coming to camp.

Talk with your child about homesickness but be clear that they will stay the entire time that has been planned so that they will have an opportunity to adjust to camp and take advantage of all it can offer. (More on homesickness later.)

Make getting ready for camp a joint effort. Have the child see what they have from the clothing list and what you will need to get. Help them pack. When they go to put in the Skittles and cell phone, you can point plainly to our policies concerning candy and electronics and make sure these items do not come to camp.

Most of all, make sure they know that you are providing them with this experience because you love them.

The Camp Program

The Structure of The Day

6:30 Children on garden harvest and barn chores wake up
7:00 Barn chores and Garden Harvest
7:15 All children get up and are checked through the washhouse
8:00 Breakfast, followed by tent clean up
9:00 Morning council
10:00 First activity period
11:00 Second activity period
12:15 Lunch, followed by an afternoon council and Rest Hour
2:45 Third activity period
3:45 Juice and crackers
4:00 Fourth activity period
5:00 Work jobs for everyone in camp
6:00 Supper, followed by a brief evening council and evening activities
8:30 Junior bedtimes
9:00 Senior bedtimes

Choice At Treetops

A typical day at Treetops is a mix of scheduled activities and those that are a matter of choice. Children are assigned to a daily swim class and a riding lesson that meets once a week. Children also have a work job or barn chore that meets every day at 5:00 p.m. These are commitments. Children have a choice as to what they do during other activity periods. Activity offerings are presented at council, which is a meeting of all campers and counselors held three times a day. The counselors sit with the children during council to help them with their choices. They make sure that over the course of a summer a child's choices have provided both a continuity of experience in those activities of particular interest to the camper, and an exposure to a variety of new activities.

We also make sure that children understand the prerequisites for participating in certain activities and for going on certain trips so that they can avail themselves of opportunities to build the needed skills. For instance, in order to go on a canoe trip, one must pass a swim test, learn about canoe safety, and receive instruction in paddling. Some choice activities may last only one period, and others may entail a time commitment of many periods over several days: completing a weaving, making a canoe paddle, putting on a play. By giving children choices, we allow them to pursue their interests and help them develop decision-making skills.

Keeping Track

If a child raises their hand for an activity, he is expected to attend it. Counselors keep track of this and ask children where they were if they do not show up. We also keep track in more formal ways. Each child has an "activity card." Counselors fill out these cards with information and observations about a child's accomplishments in an activity or on a trip. The craft counselor may list the projects completed and the child's attitude about clean up or care with materials. The riding counselor may comment that although Sally is a beginner, she is not afraid. Even the table counselors comment on these cards.

A child's group counselor also sits down with them during the summer to fill out a camper interest sheet which records what they have done thus far in the summer and what they hope to do before summer ends. These aspirations are communicated to activity counselors. If Sally wants to climb Giant more than anything in the world, we do our best to make it happen.

The Work Program

"Even small camp children can do many jobs. They can make their beds, sweep a cabin floor, and hang up their clothes. Work for the community can spring from individual interests: enthusiastic tennis players can be appointed to roll courts, swimmers to arrange paddles, horse lovers to mend a bridge on a bridle path . . . As children increasingly understand what makes their place go and see themselves part of its functioning, they develop pride and self-confidence.

If the camp is not too formal or polished, tinkering and fixing can be done by children. The child from city apartment or neat suburbia can make that old hideout he could not construct at home. If his fishing rod pokes a hole in a tent, there is an adult with time enough to show him how to repair the damage. He can help fix and paint a boat. Thus he has opportunity to identify himself with an adult working on a job and can share his pride in well-ordered equipment. The place becomes 'ours.'"

- Helen Haskell, Treetops Director 1929-1969

The work program is an important part of life at Treetops. Not only are children responsible for keeping their own quarters neat and for helping set and clear tables, they also have a weekly job that meets daily at 5:00 pm and if it is a barn chore or garden harvest job, at 7:00 am as well. These jobs are not make-work. They are vital to the smooth running of our community. Some children may have to sweep the shop areas; others supply wash houses with toilet paper and soap; some work in the hike house setting out gear for upcoming trips; older children help in the kitchen. There are many different jobs, and children sign up for three choices on a weekly basis. All jobs are supervised by an adult who works along with the children. Not only is this a time for work, but a time for teaching, too. Children learn about the reason for mulch, what makes the best firewood, how to care for a sailboat or a horse. Children derive satisfaction from knowing that the lettuce they helped pick and wash that morning is in the evening dinner salad. In addition to the daily work job, each camp gathers for about forty minutes once a week to do a large-scale job. This might be a bucket brigade to spread compost on the flowerbed or a mass bean harvest. By all working together we demonstrate that many hands make light work.

Tent Groups

We try to place children in tent groups in which we think they will be compatible. Particular care is taken in the placement of new campers. We try not to place returning campers with the children they lived with the year before, thereby preventing the formation of exclusive groups within a tent. If a child has a specific request about a tentmate, they must write to the Director, who will consider the request. Occasionally, as in any family situation, conflicts arise within the tent group. But, just as at home when siblings fight, they do not get to change families, so at camp we do not switch children in tents merely because there are moments of disagreement. A tent group works through problems with its counselor just the way siblings work out problems with the help of their families. You may receive a letter telling about a "fight" with Mary, and by the time the letter reaches you, the incident has been long forgotten. Part of what we are trying to teach children is how to get along with others even though they may not be their best friends. Occasionally if the chemistry of a group is really volatile, we will make changes, but it is rare that a counselor can't help the group work things out.

Homesickness

Every summer some children are homesick, a few acutely. Invariably they weather this pain and return year after year to Treetops with a new found sense of strength. There is no rule as to who is afflicted. A seven-year-old may not be homesick at all while a twelve-year-old who is "grown-up" in other ways may be very sad. Homesickness is not something to be taken lightly, as the pain is very real. On the other hand it does not last the whole summer. Most children get over being homesick in a week's time. Intense cases may last three weeks. During that time the child is usually saddest at meals, bedtime, and Rest Hour. Because children are allowed to write at Rest Hour, you may get sorrowful letters when a child is feeling low even though they

just spent the morning happily engaged in activities. You may call the camp director or the program directors when you get an upsetting letter. Often by the time you call, the crisis will have passed, but if it has not, together we can help your child make the adjustment to being away from home. At camp we help children deal with homesickness by making sure they become involved in activities, by giving them T.L.C., by listening and acknowledging their feelings, and by assuring them that homesickness does go away.

Saying to a child that if they are homesick, they can come home at Visitors' Weekend makes them feel unsettled and undermines their confidence that homesickness is a challenge that can be met. Furthermore, this places an incredible burden on a child, as the entire focus of their time at camp becomes the decision of whether they should stay or go home. We have seen children struggle with this decision to the point where they are unable to derive any enjoyment from the camp program—practically guaranteeing they will be unable to overcome their homesickness. A better tack is to discuss going away in a positive manner. "Camp is a friendly place where you can learn lots of things. You may be homesick, and that is okay. Lots of kids are homesick their first time away. Talk to a counselor if you are homesick and they will help you." Acknowledge the reality of homesickness and assure the child that it is nothing to be ashamed of, but also express faith in the child's ability to overcome these feelings of sadness. The following words of advice come from the mother of a child who was acutely homesick:

Send along a small 'bonding' item that will make their new home their own. This can be their own pillow and pillowcase, a stuffed animal, a calendar, a picture of the family.

All children love to get mail from home and frequent letters help a child feel less homesick. It is not helpful if these letters say how terribly you miss your child, how lonely the dog is without them, or what exciting things you are doing in their absence. What is helpful is your asking about what they are doing in camp and responding in a positive and encouraging manner to their letters home.

We are also aware that a child's first time at camp can be very difficult on families too. We know how hard it is when you get a tear-stained letter. (One child we know circled the drops so that their mother was sure not to miss them.) Feelings of guilt, of "What have I done? Have I made a huge mistake?" can obscure why you wanted your child to come to camp in the first place. In a conversation with one mother, she talked about how upset she was when her son told them that he didn't really think he liked this place. In letters to him she kept asking what he was doing, thereby accentuating the positive aspect of being at camp. He survived and after a week of tears was enthusiastic and happy. This camper spent many happy summers at Treetops.

"This was our daughter's first summer away and it was potentially going to be really challenging. She stayed for four weeks and wanted more. She is going for the whole summer. She learned that she could be happy without her families for a long stretch of time, able to make good friends, handle challenging situations by using her own resources and seeking out others when help was needed. She felt confident and loved. She had great support from the staff."

Phone Calls

Our policy is that children not call home and that you not call your child, except on your child's birthday. We will schedule this with you, if applicable.

We encourage children to become self-reliant, turn to their counselor or another caring adult on the staff for help in problem solving, and learn to be independent of families for seven weeks. Time and again families comment on how much their children seem to have "grown" when they return, so our efforts seem to work. For a homesick child, phone calls often exacerbate the situation, and they may even trigger bouts of homesickness in children who have not been homesick before.

Practically speaking, we are not set up for children to make phone calls. We have a very limited number of phones that must serve the kitchens and administrative offices of camp and school. Children are allowed to receive phone calls only on their birthdays. Even these calls need to be arranged with the administration ahead of time to make sure that the child is near a phone. If you have concerns, we encourage you to call and speak to the camp director or the program directors. In the event of an emergency, we will be certain to call you.

Mail And Packages

Though a phone call is gone the minute you hang up, letters endure and serve as wonderful mementos of an age that passes too quickly. Children are required to write home every Sunday except Visitors' Weekend. They may also write home during daily Rest Hour. Treetops provides stationary, envelopes, and postage, though feel free to send campers with stationary from home. Please know, children tend to write more often at the beginning of the summer. Children love receiving letters or postcards, so please write often.

We encourage you to keep packages to a minimum. In practical terms, children have a limited amount of storage space for their belongings. Please limit packages to the absolutely vital—the forgotten favorite stuffed animal or wool hat, etc. **Our address is 4382 Cascade Road, Lake Placid, NY 12946.**

A note on Federal Express - If you do choose to send something Federal Express, please include the child's name inside the packet. We have had instances when the carbon copy was completely illegible and no one knew whom the package was for.

Communications With Camp

Communication between camp and families is vital for a successful and smooth-running summer. We encourage you to share with us concerns or special needs that your child might have. Does your child wet the bed? Have they been exposed to lice at school? Do they have nightmares? Is their grandmother ill? If there has been an upsetting occurrence in the family situation, let the Camp Director know so that we can provide support for your child while they are at Camp.

Early in the season you will receive a brief letter from your child's counselor introducing themself and letting you know how your child has settled into camp. If a child spends a night in the infirmary or sees a doctor in town for any reason, the camp nurse will notify you promptly. After camp is over you will receive a more detailed letter from the counselor describing your child's summer. Prior to and during the camp season you will receive a number of mailings concerning travel to and from camp as well as Visitors' Weekend. Included will be forms to complete indicating your plans for these days. Promptly returning these forms will save us considerable time on the telephone.

As is true in any camp, the Treetops administrative staff spends a great deal of time in the direct supervision of counselors and children, and are not always immediately able to come to the phone. Phone calls often must be returned. While we don't encourage you to phone regularly simply to check on your child's summer, we do want you to feel free to contact us by phone or email with concerns or problems throughout the camp season.

Birthdays at Treetops

We always sing to a camper on their birthday and usually the tent group does something special together on that day. The actual party with cake and decorations is held with other children who have also had birthdays that month—a group celebration. If you indicate that a package is a birthday present, we will make sure that it isn't given out until your child's actual birthday. We encourage you to send gifts that your child can use while at camp: writing paper, sketchpad, colored pencils, Frisbee, books, a stuffed animal, baseball mitt, etc. Please make sure all items are labeled. Sometimes families send small gifts and then re-celebrate the child's birthday after camp.

Reading Matter

We have a Rest Hour each day during which campers may either rest, read, draw, or write letters. There is also often time in the evenings to curl up with a book. We have libraries in each camp, but we encourage you to pack books with your child's belongings. Having books of one's own is special. You might consult with your child's teacher as to suggestions for good books for summer reading. We ask that you think about the kind of reading material you allow your child to bring to camp. We consider comics and magazines, which sometimes promote violence, electronic games, and commercialism not in keeping with our camp philosophy, and we will use our discretion in deciding if any material should be packed away to be returned to your child at the end of camp. This may seem an old-fashioned stance, but in many ways we are trying to help children discover in themselves resources that may have been obscured in the hurly burly of the outside world.

Kindles and other e-readers can be terrific at home, but are impractical at camp where children live in canvas tents and there are few electrical outlets. An e-reader could easily get wet, be lost, and is not in line with our effort to allow children to have an "unplugged" summer. Please leave e-readers at home.

Clothing and Equipment

You will receive a detailed packing list in the family mailing. Please do not send too much clothing, as it will not fit in your child's storage space. If a child arrives with excess clothing or with inappropriate items (jewelry, make-up, cell phone, electronic games, etc.), we will pack it with the child's luggage to be stored until the end of camp. Some of the items on the packing list may be puzzling or hard to get, so what follows are some explanations and a list of places to find things that may not be available in your local stores.

What Kind of Clothing is Appropriate for Treetops?

We are situated at an altitude of 2,000 feet and we hike mountains well above 4,000 feet. Even on hot days, the top of a 4,000-foot peak can be a cold place. Layering is the key to dressing in this climate. Please send children with a wool or polar fleece sweater or jacket. Cotton sweatshirts are okay for around camp, but will not do for day or overnight trips. A lightweight wool or polar fleece hat is also necessary as one loses a lot of heat from a bare head. A baseball hat will keep strong sun off the face on a canoe trip. Rain gear must be light and durable, and should be marketed as ***waterproof*** rather than ***water-resistant***. Inexpensive, plastic rain gear will not hold up to the rigors of camp life. Wool (Smart Wool, Darn Tough or similar) socks are necessary for hiking as they keep feet warm, even when wet, and are less likely to cause blisters than cotton or synthetic socks. Polypropylene long underwear is particularly useful. For physical activity and hikes, synthetic shirts and shorts are best, as they will dry quickly if wet from sweat or rain.

Clothes get hard wear at camp. Children get dirty doing barn chores and on trips. Do not send expensive clothes. There is no need to spend a lot of money on hiking boots. The lightweight varieties are fine as are the old-fashioned leather boots. Children will need some sort of footwear for canoe trips where their feet will get wet and muddy. Inexpensive, slip-on canvas sneakers, water shoes, or sandals are adequate. Campers can also bring boots with a small heel for horseback riding. We will provide riding boots, but campers are welcome to bring their own from home.

Pajamas

Pajamas are necessary. It gets cold at night in the Adirondacks. Routinely, we have children who come to camp without pajamas because they say they do not wear them at home. They would much prefer to wear sweatpants and a sweatshirt to bed. In order to make sure that the clothes worn to bed are not those that were just on at barn chores, we require that children bring pajamas. We know that flannel pajamas are hard to find in April and so have included sources for cotton long underwear or ski pajamas that are warm and comfortable.

Swimwear

Please send swim suits that are appropriate for rigorous physical activity. Please do not send bikinis.

Earrings and Make-Up

If your child wears earrings, please leave dangling ones at home and send only inexpensive studs to camp. Dangling earrings are a potential danger, and we cannot allow them even at square dances. We are also aware that some children may wear make-up at home or to school, but we ask that it not be brought to camp. Make-up attempts to recreate a healthy glow, which campers will get naturally at Treetops.

Electronic Equipment

At Treetops, we strive for a simpler lifestyle and children have the opportunity to learn what they can create using their hands and imaginations. They have time to explore their natural environment and we encourage them to create their own music, drama, games, and art. Therefore, we ask that you **keep all electronic equipment at home. This includes Kindles and e-readers, cell phones, iPads, electronic games, laptops, and even watches (digital or analog).** Children are welcome to bring musical instruments to camp. We will store them in the music room or the camp office, so they will be safe from the weather, but accessible to your child.

Cameras

We want the campers to be able to take pictures and to document their experiences at Treetops. We recommend Polaroid-type instant cameras for use at camp. They are less expensive and if lost or broken, are easier to replace. The use of digital cameras presents a challenge because much of their technology goes against our philosophy of simple living, disconnected from the outside world. We have limited the use of digital cameras to senior campers only. Cameras with internet access will not be allowed. **Memory cards must be blank upon arrival at camp.** We have a digital camera use policy, which will be explained to all senior campers who bring digital cameras to camp.

Riding Gear

We provide riding helmets for all children. If children want to bring their own, they must meet ASTM F1163 standards and bear an "SEI Approved" label or else, by law, we cannot allow them to be used. Children may bring riding boots from home. It is not necessary to buy riding boots, as we will provide riding boots for children who do not bring them to camp.

Sleeping Bags

We supply children with all items they need for day and overnight trips, and so there is no need for children to bring their own gear. We have high quality, warm sleeping bags with liners that are washed after each use. If your child wants to bring their own sleeping bag, make sure it is lightweight and compact. (They will be carrying it in a pack on their back along with other gear.) Down is light and compact, but expensive, and it loses its insulating value when wet. If you feel you want to send a sleeping bag, consider getting one filled with compressible and non-absorbent insulation. A rating of 35-40 degrees is adequate. L.L. Bean, REI, Eastern Mountain Sports, or Campmor are good sources for sleeping bags. Make sure to get a stuff sack and mark both the bag and the stuff sack clearly with the child's name so that it does not get mixed up with camp bags.

Knives and Flashlights

Please do not send children with sheath knives or folding knives with large blades. We have camp knives that have the absolutely necessary blade for mumblety-peg (a game at which our campers become proficient), which is really a leather awl. If your child is a returning camper, have them bring their camp knife from last year. We can help them oil and sharpen it if it has become rusty or dull over the winter. Your child needs a flashlight or headlamp (highly recommended) that can be carried on trips. Make sure it is durable. We have extra batteries at camp.

Mumblety-Peg rule #19, Tony Chestnut - Starting at the toe, place the point of the blade on the end of the shoe and snap away from the tosser; repeat this at the knee, then at the chest, then from the front of the head. When snapping from the toe, the toe may be elevated, and the point placed against the thumb.
-The Complete Book of Games - 1940

Mail and Internet Order Sources for Camp Gear

The following companies provide durable clothing if you cannot find what you need in your local stores.

Campmor — 810 Route 17 North, P.O. Box 997-P, Paramus, NJ 07653-0997 (1-800-526-4784) – www.campmor.com - wool socks, rain gear (Children's PVC Rain Suit), wool hats, hiking boots, and children's outdoor clothing. Inexpensive and good quality.

Eastern Mountain Sports —51 Main St., Lake Placid, NY 12946 (518-523-2505) – www.ems.com . EMS has many other outlets in the Northeast; the Lake Placid store will gladly look up a number for your nearest outlet.

Lands' End —1 Lands End Lane, Dodgeville, WI 53595. (1-800-356-4444) – www.Landsend.com - fleece bathrobes, knit ski pajamas, rain gear, durable clothes.

L.L. Bean, Inc. — Freeport, ME 04033 (1-800-221-4221) – www.llbean.com - A good source for general outdoor clothing, boots, wool hats, rain gear, wetsuits (called wave bodysuit), etc.

R.E.I. — Sumner, WA 98352-0001 (1-800-426-4840) – www.REI.com - R.E.I. is a cooperative so you pay a one-time $10 fee. Based on the amount of your purchases, you get a dividend check at the end of the year. Good source for inexpensive kids' rain gear, polar fleece in kids' sizes, as well as things like wool hats.

Warm Belly Wetsuits – (1-800-927-6543) – www.warmbelly.com - good source for adjustable Neoprene wetsuits for children up to 12 years old.

Labeling Things

LABEL EVERYTHING with FIRST and LAST NAME. That means books, combs (try a silver Sharpie or red nail polish on anything dark or plastic), musical instruments, duffels, tennis rackets — everything! Sharpie permanent markers work well on sneakers and raincoats, but nothing can beat sewn-on nametapes for permanence. (Iron-on ones come off in the first wash in our industrial washers and dryers.) Sew nametapes at the neck or back waist of things and doubled over (like a tab) at the tops of socks. We encourage you to involve your child, if possible, in sewing nametapes. There is nothing like an investment of time to encourage responsibility towards one's belongings. We have also heard from families that having children's clothing clearly marked pays off in the school year with mislaid items getting returned.

Where to Get Nametapes

Sources for nametapes are listed below. A veteran of many nametape sessions tells us that these woven ones are a bit more expensive but that they are much easier to sew on.

Best Name Tape – www.bestnametape.com
Label Weavers – https://www.labelweavers.com
Name Maker, Inc. – www.namemaker.com

Toiletries

Children have very small cubbies in which to keep their toiletries. We provide shampoo, conditioner, and liquid soap, so it is not necessary to bring these items. We also stock specialty hair products for those with textured hair. Send children with the minimum: toothpaste, a toothbrush, floss, deodorant, a hairbrush or comb. Mosquitoes seem to be attracted to scented things, so if possible choose unscented products. Do not send aerosol spray containers of anything. We have ample supplies of bug repellent and sunscreen.

Money

Do not send money with your child. We have no camp store in the traditional sense. If a child needs a toothbrush, a flashlight, a disposable camera, batteries, etc., your child can let their counselor know. We deliver the item to them and charge your account. We are quite careful about not allowing children to get unnecessary items.

Food

Our philosophy promotes the eating of nutritious food. In the dining room we serve well-balanced and varied meals. The main course is usually accompanied by fresh vegetables from our garden and homemade bread. Children get plenty to eat although they may have a period of adjustment as they get used to new food.

Please do not send or pack with your child any gum, candy, or food, even homemade cookies. Candy, in particular, sets up a situation of haves and have-nots among the campers. Because of its scarcity it becomes a kind of currency in the campers' world. Additional problems include litter and the very real concern about attracting forest animals. New York State Health Department regulations prohibit food in camper living areas. More importantly, some of our campers have significant food allergies, so food brought in could pose a serious health risk for our campers. Please respect the Treetops staff and program by showing your support in this request.

Many well-meaning camp families have sent a care package of food to their child completely unaware of the problem it creates at camp. As mentioned above, our staff have been instructed to take away any candy or food. This situation inevitably places the camper and counselor in an adversarial position and undermines the efforts that have gone into establishing a positive relationship.

In case you fear that your child's sweet tooth will be totally neglected, rest assured that the weekly ice cream cone, home-baked pies, cookies, and other desserts do not force them to go completely cold turkey.

Camper Behavior and Discipline Guidelines

Camp Treetops focuses on creating a culture of respect throughout the camp community. To achieve this goal, we specify expectations, use clear language when engaging campers, and respect the community around us.

We have three basic rules:

- Do no harm to yourself
- Do no harm to others
- Do no harm to the property

We also have additional rules and expectations. Below is a more detailed description of the discipline program and how it is implemented.

The adults at Camp Treetops are dedicated to encouraging behavior that supports growth and discouraging behavior that works against the health and safety of the individual or community. We value community and feel that we learn and grow best in the context of many caring relationships. If you behave kindly and respectfully, you will grow, learn, and feel like you belong to a caring community that will continue to nurture and protect you. If you do anything to hurt yourself, another person, or the larger community of people, animals, and property or the land around you, you will probably feel that you are less connected to the community.

We expect campers to make mistakes, and we will do our best to use those mistakes as opportunities for learning. We will encourage campers to know themselves well and to practice resolving conflicts before they become too big. There are times, however, when adults need to intervene and choose the help and/or the consequences for a camper.

Every member of the Camp Treetops community deserves respect, even in the midst of conflict. Respect means remaining mindful and courteous; it means making time to listen and trying to understand what the other person is saying. It means being willing to stop what you are doing in order to solve a conflict or a situation that needs dialogue.

We approach discipline in two ways at Camp Treetops. The first approach is proactive discipline. It involves getting everyone involved at the beginning of the summer in discussions about rules, expectations, and consequences for breaking rules. Campers and staff are encouraged to model appropriate behaviors and remind and redirect others before rules are broken.

Reactive discipline is reserved for those times when campers make mistakes. The purpose of this approach is to have an orderly, consistent, and predictable way to respond to those mistakes. We focus on logical consequences that are respectful, relevant, and realistic, and which are usually one of, or a combination of, three basic types: repairing what's been broken, loss of privilege for a specified time, or time-out of the program. Other strategies that may be employed include adult-facilitated dialogues and behavior contracts. We encourage and work with campers to:

1. Take responsibility for their actions or own their mistake.
2. Make it right.
3. Move on.

When a camper makes a mistake or engages in behaviors that are considered harmful to themselves, others, the community, or the property, the Camp Director along with the Program Directors may choose to have the camper spend time out of the program for a period of time. Discipline at Camp Treetops is highly individualized.

Sexual Misconduct

Camp Treetops has a zero tolerance policy for any form of sexual misconduct between campers, including unwanted touching, sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, relationship violence, sexual exploitation, or retaliation. If sexual misconduct is reported to any employee at Treetops, the Camp Director and leadership will be notified immediately, along with the families of all campers involved. In this instance, Treetops would gather information about the matter and will meet individually with all involved parties as appropriate. Any allegations of abuse will be reported to the New York State Department of Health. In concert with authorities, as necessary, the Camp Director would decide appropriate consequences, up to dismissal from camp.

Camp Treetops handles private information with sensitivity, and would not disclose information about the matter or identify the involved campers to anyone unnecessarily. Campers who believe they have experienced sexual misconduct and wish to report it will not face disciplinary consequences for their own actions connected to the incident if they violated any camp policies.

It's worth noting that experiences of sexual misconduct have rarely ever occurred during Treetops' history, though we find it valuable to explicitly state our expectations for campers and to have a plan if a situation were to arise. If you have any additional questions or concerns please don't hesitate to reach out to the Camp Director or leadership.

Interpersonal Relationships

Camp Treetops strives to nurture an inclusive community with an emphasis on child-centered education, the fostering of self-reliance and confidence, living in harmony with nature, and preserving a child's world through a summer unplugged. Critical to achieving those values is the physical and emotional safety of our campers.

Our expectation is that all touch and physical interactions between campers are safe, consensual, kind, and well-intentioned. Asking for consent before physical interactions is an essential part of respecting people's boundaries.

Much of a camper's experience at Camp Treetops occurs in an outdoor setting and a wilderness expedition setting. Both offer a level of intimacy that campers may not experience in a traditional school. Campers might find themselves changing clothes, bathing, sleeping, toileting, and caring for personal hygiene in close proximity to others. They will be given support and guidance for how to navigate these activities in a respectful, safe, and comfortable manner.

During a camper's time at Camp Treetops, they can expect to encounter a variety of interactions with fellow campers, including the following:

- Holding hands in a circle
- Playing physical games that involve chasing, tagging, grabbing, or hugging
- Being assigned partners for chores or other activities, such as: swimming, paddling, carrying supplies, feeding animals, harvesting, washing veggies, weeding in the gardens and cooking etc.
- Packing personal belongings into shared space within a bag or backpack
- Exchanging personal crafts or gifts
- Partnering with another in square dancing and traditional New England folk dancing
- Changing clothes in semi-private circumstances
- Swimming and bathing in outdoor wilderness settings in buddy pairs
- Sleeping in close proximity in a tent or cabin
- Verbally expressing appreciation or feelings of affection for one another
- Using nature as a restroom while hiking, camping, backpacking, etc.
- Exchanging hugs during moments needing comfort or celebration
- Taking care of animals in small groups, pairs, individually (grooming a horse, collecting/washing eggs, refilling food/water for animals, observing animal behaviors)
- Family style meals in the dining rooms
- Chicken harvest (a challenge by choice for senior campers)

We know and accept that community members will inevitably experience occasional awkward or uncomfortable moments. We cannot completely eliminate the possibility that staff or campers might accidentally or deliberately end up harming one another through words or actions. Employees and counselors want to help campers navigate these scenarios. The majority of these incidents will be resolved through the head of senior or junior camp, the camp director and the mental health professional. If relevant, families may be notified about a situation that arose. Unless a situation or interaction is witnessed by an employee or counselor, it is a campers' responsibility to report uncomfortable interactions or policy violations that they experienced, heard about, or witnessed to the appropriate personnel for support and guidance.

Exclusionary Relationships

Campers may naturally develop close friendships or romantic feelings for one another during their time at Camp. While romantic feelings and sexuality are a healthy aspect of being human, there are many important reasons why exclusionary relationships can negatively impact the social dynamics of the community as well as limit social opportunities for campers. As a result, exclusive relationships and sexual interactions are firmly discouraged. If a situation involving a sexual interaction arises, the Senior Camp Program Director or Junior Camp Program Director, Camp Director or Mental Health Professional will be involved. If CTT learns that there is sexual activity between campers the Camp Director will notify families immediately. The campers involved will have a conversation with the Camp Director, who will then decide appropriate consequences, which could include a variety of actions including dismissal from camp.

It is perfectly normal for campers to explore their bodies and it's also important to recognize that camp spaces including tents and cabins are shared spaces much like a living room at home. For this reason, all sexual activity in sleeping spaces is not allowed, whether conducted individually or between campers. This is to ensure the safety, comfort and privacy of campers.

Boundaries Between Employees and Campers

All touching between employees and campers is done with the intention of promoting interpersonal safety and benefit the wellbeing of the campers. Some examples of these physical interactions can include:

- If a camper asks for a hug
- Putting a life jacket on
- Playing tag and other physical activities
- Supporting a camper who is struggling in the water
- Any time a camper is in immediate danger, an adult will take action in order to keep the camper safe.

Camp Treetops has zero tolerance for any form of hazing, child abuse, sexual activity between staff and campers, and/or sexual misconduct or sexual harassment within our community. If a camper or a camper's family experiences, witnesses, or learns about any of these actions, they are encouraged to report the experience to Camp Treetops leadership.

Mandated Reporting

All camp staff are Mandated Reporters. This means they are responsible for making a report to the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and maltreatment if they suspect that a child has been abused or maltreated. This is because New York State mandates that anyone who is responsible for the care and supervision of children is required by law to report when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their professional capacity is being or has been abused or maltreated. If you have any questions about this obligation, feel free to reach out to the Camp Director for more information.

Visitors' Weekend

You will receive mailings concerning the dates of Visitors' Weekend. The following are some general guidelines. If you have further questions, please contact the Camp Director.

It is our policy that children not be taken off camp property. Visitors' Weekend is a time to see what your child has been doing at camp, to meet their tentmates, their counselor, and to let them be your guide for a day.

We cannot accommodate the families of 185 children for both days and therefore ask that you choose either Saturday or Sunday to visit your child. The only exceptions to this are families who have two (or more) children at camp.

Please do not bring dogs to camp. We know it is difficult to leave the family pet behind, but please realize we have many visitors, this is a farm with animals that are not accustomed to strange dogs, and the parking area for your cars is in the direct sun.

Your greatest gift to your child will be yourself, the time you spend really looking at what they have accomplished, and listening to their adventures at camp.

We know how hard it is to say good-bye. There may be tears on both sides at the end of the afternoon. We expect this. Children go immediately to work jobs when you leave and then to dinner and a special evening activity. Any homesickness that may follow Visitors' Weekend usually lasts no more than a day.

ACA Accreditation & Department of Health Standards

In order to be accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA), a camp must meet stringent standards covering all areas of camp life: programs, administration, personnel, site, and health care. At five-year intervals we are visited by a trained team of volunteers who evaluate the camp in over two hundred different areas. This process makes us self-evaluate on a regular basis and assures that we remain current with changes and innovations in the camping field. Treetops has always had superior marks on the ACA evaluation.

The camp is also inspected and permitted by the New York State Department of Health for compliance with strict health and safety standards.

Staff

"Each year my daughter has formed a deep bond with her camp counselor, camp leaders, staff and whomever else is around. She brings them up in conversation. She knows where they go to college and of their achievements aside from Camp Treetops. I feel her world has opened due to having these relationships and it seems that nothing is beyond her scope of what one can do in the world. She has been given excellent guidance and a picture of what a healthy young adult person looks like."

We are fortunate at Treetops to be able to attract a mature and highly competent staff. We do not have Junior Counselors or Counselors in Training. Our youngest counselors have a year of college or a gap year behind them. Usually, about 75% of our staff are over the age of 21 and 33% are over 30. Most of our staff have certifications in Wilderness First Aid, Lifeguard Training, and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation in case of emergencies. All staff are trained in the proper treatment of anaphylaxis and in the proper usage of administering an EpiPen. We have staff that return year after year and some have been on staff for more than 20 years. They offer diverse areas of expertise and, because of our small adult to child ratio of 1:3; they can really get children involved at camp.

Camp Nurses

We hire at least two registered nurses who are on-site around-the-clock throughout the summer. On campus, there are two Camp infirmaries. Additionally, we have access to more advanced medical care at nearby hospitals in Saranac Lake and Elizabethtown.

Please note: The tipping of counselors and staff (including gift cards) is not done at Camp Treetops. The best way to express your appreciation for a counselor's care and hard work is a friendly conversation, a thank you note, or a donation to the Treetops Annual Fund or the Treetops Scholarship Fund.

Medications

Please be sure that all medications (prescription and non-prescription, or over-the-counter) are listed on the Health Form signed by your physician and arrive at camp in original containers. Please provide enough of each medication to last the entire time the camper will be at camp. We ask that families provide an additional empty medication bottle from the pharmacy that is identical to the original bottle, so that medications can be dispensed on off-campus trips. Upon arrival at camp, all medications should be delivered to the nurse.

Our nurses dispense medications to campers before meals and occasionally before bedtime. Prescription drugs can only be administered with a prescription from a licensed medical professional (not a parent or guardian), thus why it must be listed on the Camp Treetops Physician's Form. We must have either a written prescription or the original labeled bottle of medicine in order to dispense any prescription medications.

Illness or Injury

Our alert and trained staff assist our nurses in taking early note and prompt care of small blisters, cuts, and insect bites. If a child has a fever or an illness such as strep throat they will spend the night in the infirmary under the care of one of our Camp nurses. If a child has an illness or injury that requires attention from a physician, they will be taken to a local hospital either in nearby Saranac Lake or nearby Elizabethtown.

Families will be notified by our nurses if a child has an appointment with a physician, is taken to the emergency room, or spends the night in the infirmary.

Families are responsible for expenses not covered by their insurance, and agree to promptly pay the treating physician, clinic, or hospital directly.

Food Allergies & Dietary Preferences

We serve three healthy, well-balanced meals per day with a focus on homemade, whole foods, many of which are grown on our farm.

We do our best to reasonably accommodate children with food allergies, restrictions, and intolerances. To help us ensure we can properly accommodate your child(ren), you will need to alert us if your child has a:

- vegetarian or other special diet
- lactose intolerance
- gluten and/or wheat intolerance
- food allergy.

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Health Forms

Although this item is last in the handbook, it is very important. We cannot stress it enough.

You will receive health forms, which must be filled out, signed by a physician and signed by you. By New York State Law, enforced by the New York State Department of Health, your child cannot be at camp without a signed health form. We must adhere strictly to this law or risk losing our permit to operate. Please set up an appointment for your child to have a physical as soon as you receive the health form. Please send us the completed form by June 1st.

We hope that this handbook answers some questions that you may have about camp!

In closing, we share with you the following from a former camp parent:

"My three children, who are as different as it is possible to be, each had wonderful and unique experiences at camp. Jeff as a camper and counselor, Sarah as camper and perennial Friends' Weekend attendee, and Paul, having conned himself into Junior Camp before his eighth birthday, as a camper. Camp encouraged each of them not only to follow their natural propensities, but provided them with opportunities and encouragement to reach beyond what they knew and what they thought they could do.

The Treetops experience was not theirs alone. From watching my children and from taking part in Friends' Weekend, I came under the spell of the place, school as well as camp. I was a Trustee for several years and still come back in the summer when I can. The place not only nourished and inspired me, it created in me an awareness of and a hunger for a different kind of life and kindled in me the confidence to go out and create it. Not many camps or schools have that kind of power."