



## “The Current”

The American Camp Association  
Great Rivers Section Newsletter  
Fall 2007

### From the Section President, Lee Walz

Man, it doesn't seem like three years already! I have been your Section President the last three years, and the years have gone by quickly. Great Rivers has experienced a lot of change during this time and there is more ahead! I know our President-Elect, Robyn Ratcliff, is already working hard and excited about starting her term. We are working on more ways than ever to serve you, and help your camps and programs become better. The ACA Great Rivers Annual Conference is coming up, Nov 12-14. The conference is looking to be the usual high quality we expect from our program committee. I hope you are planning on joining us. If you have not yet registered, do so now! And, we are planning another round of cluster meetings for March. See the information in this newsletter. I hope you will take part in these educational and networking opportunities. I have enjoyed serving you as Section President the last three years, and am looking forward to participating in the section events in the future.

### From the Section President-Elect, Robyn Ratcliff

*Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it! Boldness has genius, power and magic in it! --Goethe*  
In May of 2008, we will celebrate 10 years as the ACA Great Rivers Section! Our section slogan is **Great Camps – Great People – Great Leadership – Great Rivers!** This slogan has continued to define our work, our region and our legacy of superior camp experiences. Excellent educational events, outreach to members, and a top-notch standards program have become hallmarks of the Great Rivers experience.

More accomplishments are in store for us! After four days of ACA president-elect training in Indianapolis, I am excited to assume the leadership of our board and build on our successes. Topics of interest from the training included: human resources law and section executives, board development, legal responsibilities of the section, charter requirements, financial health and fundraising, and intellectual property. All of these topics will inform and influence our future operations as a section.

In 2007, the ACA Great Rivers board set and achieved three specific commitments in pursuit of our three-year strategic plan. We made significant strides in education with our March cluster meetings and our annual conference and advocacy with the appointment of a legislative chair. In 2008, we will refine our strategic plan for 2008-2010 and select three new commitments to focus on in the first year of the plan.

In preparation, we will spend the next two months evaluating our strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Along with the nominating committee, I will be working to fill all board positions with the best volunteers to move us forward and help us achieve our goals. As a volunteer-run organization, our board members are responsible for the work of our section—very important roles to keep things running smoothly and moving forward!

In my role as incoming president, I welcome the opportunity to talk with you about ACA and the Great Rivers section. You can contact me anytime at [RobynRatcliff@GirlScoutsKSMO.org](mailto:RobynRatcliff@GirlScoutsKSMO.org). Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the work we are all doing...enriching lives, changing the world!

### ACA Great Rivers Annual Conference – Great Rivers – Great Resources November 6-8, Wesley Woods Camp & Retreat Center, Indianola, Iowa

Plan now to discover some **Great Resources** this fall – It's your opportunity to gather with other camp professionals, hear the latest camp information, share some of your own great ideas, and watch the excitement build as you learn new things to take back to your program!

Join over 70 camp and youth professionals from local camps and youth programs throughout the Midwest as we gather for a time of education, networking and renewal at the ACA Great Rivers Conference. There is truly something for everyone -- administrators, program staff and directors. Keynote Speakers include Peg Smith, the ACA CEO, Kat Shreve, ACA Program Director and Joey Greene, an experienced based learning professional. Download the registration information at [www.acagreatrivers.org](http://www.acagreatrivers.org).

## Standards News Fall 2007

**Standards Books Updates:** All member camps in the Great Rivers ACA section were mailed new standards notebooks last fall. We will not be sending out additional copies to camps that are to be visited in 2008. Since last fall visitors and camps have discovered a number of issues and needed clarifications to this new book. The national ACA website has all the revisions in PDF format to download. You should download the file and place these pages in your standards notebook. The revised standards are what you will be scored on at your visit. Go to [www.acacamps.org/accreditation/interpretations.pdf](http://www.acacamps.org/accreditation/interpretations.pdf).

**Camp Visits 2007:** This summer 25 camps in the Great Rivers section were visited by our volunteers. A big "Thank You" goes to all the volunteer visitors and to all the camps that worked hard to have everything ready for the all-important visit day. Good job everyone!.

**Standards Trainings for 2007-2008:** The first standards training for 2008 visits will take place at the Great Rivers fall conference on November 5. There will be three additional sessions:

**ACA Standards Training, Des Moines, IA, January 7, 2008**

Camp Fire USA office, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

**ACA Standards Training, Ashland/Lincoln, NE, February 25, 2008**

Site TBA, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**ACA Standards Training, Kansas City, MO, March 10, 2008**

Girl Scouts of NE Kansas and NW Missouri office, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Be sure to bring your new standards book to the training; we only have a limited number of extra books.

**Visitor Update at Fall Conference:** Most ACA Great Rivers section visitors were updated in 2006-2007. If you are a visitor who did not update and would like to do visits in 2008, you have a chance to update at the fall conference on Nov. 5. This is the only scheduled update this year. Please let Linda Du Brul, Standards Chair, know if you wish to attend. Contact her at 1-417-862-0004 or [outdoorprogram@dogwoodtrails.org](mailto:outdoorprogram@dogwoodtrails.org).

**Visitor Training:** Are you interested in becoming a volunteer camp visitor? An Associate Visitor training is scheduled for January 24-26 in the Kansas City area. Contact Linda Du Brul, Standards Chair for more information and an associate visitor application. Her contact information is phone 1-417-862-0004. Email: [outdoorprogram@dogwoodtrails.org](mailto:outdoorprogram@dogwoodtrails.org).

## Section Staff Training Events

Does your camp offer a training that other camp staff could attend? Are you looking for an Archery course or other trainings? Jim Cherry, ACA Great Rivers Section Executive, collects information about camp staff trainings that are open to other camps. He has placed the information on the ACA web site. Go to [www.acagreatrivers.org/training.php](http://www.acagreatrivers.org/training.php) to see what has been collected. The following are some of the trainings listed. If you have other trainings to share, please email them to Jim Cherry, [executive@acagreatrivers.org](mailto:executive@acagreatrivers.org).

**American Red Cross Wilderness First Aid:** Course to be held at Carol Joy Holling Camp, Ashland, Nebraska, January 9-10, 2008. Wilderness First Aid is a two-day, 14-hour class designed for trip leaders, camp counselors, and outdoor enthusiasts. No previous experience is required. This emergency response training includes patient assessment, musculoskeletal and soft tissue injuries, splinting, and a variety of other topics. \$125 per person - includes housing, meals and program supplies. Register on-line at [www.nlom.org](http://www.nlom.org). Click on "Get involved," then "Adult Programs," then select Wilderness First Aid. For more information, call or email Gretchen at 888-656-6254 or [gahrens@nlom.org](mailto:gahrens@nlom.org).

**AAHS Instructor Clinic:** Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries will be hosting an American Association for Horsemanship Safety Instructor Clinic May 13-17, 2008. The clinic will take place at Carol Joy Holling Center in Ashland, NE. It is a 40-hour intensive training program for riding lesson instructors, trail guides, wranglers and other equine staff at camps or stables. Registration is on line at [www.nlom.org](http://www.nlom.org). Click on "Get involved," then "Adult Programs," and then select the AAHS instructor clinic link. Cost of clinic is \$425 for commuters and \$525 including overnight lodging, May 13-16. \$150 deposit is due at time of registration and balance is due at the start of the clinic. Registration deadline is April 1, 2008 and class size is limited to 12 participants. Registrations will be taken on a first come, first serve basis and last year the clinic filled up very quickly. For more information, call or email Gretchen at 888-656-6254 ext 605 or [gahrens@nlom.org](mailto:gahrens@nlom.org)

**ACA Great Rivers Cluster Meetings:** March 4, 2008 to be held in Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri. Specific locations will be announced later. We had our first annual Great Rivers Cluster Meetings last March. They were a great opportunity for camp staff to network, discuss topics related to their state or region, and learn about topics discussed at the ACA national conference. Put this date on your calendar now, and watch for more information!

**No Child Left Inside! Part Two:** Saturday, March 8, 2008 at Girl Scout Camp Maha near Omaha. Project WILD is a national conservation and environmental education program emphasizing wildlife. This program is based on the premise that young people and their adult mentors have a vital interest in learning about the Earth as the home for people and wildlife. Participants will receive the Project WILD K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide and the Project WILD Aquatic K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide. Cost is \$12. Contact Luther Mardock for more information, 402-558-8189. Registration required. Bring your own sack lunch.

### **ACA National Conference-*The Strength of Many Voices***

**February 12-15, 2008, Nashville, Tennessee.** Join a nationwide network of camp professionals and others furthering child and youth development. Attend this educational event and bring back to your camp valuable insights. *The Strength of Many Voices* offers a platform to explore ways to share what we know, with new and expanded audiences, in a compelling way. Headlining Speakers include Rick Rigsby, Ph.D., speaking about *Making an Impact in the Lives of Children, Youth and Teens*, Sally Jewell, CEO, REI, Inc. speaking about *Creating Winning Teams* and Michael Thompson, Ph.D. speaking on the topic, *The Pressured Child at Camp*. Early-bird registration rates are available through December 10. Read more about specific sessions and register at [www.ACAcamps.org/conference](http://www.ACAcamps.org/conference).

### **ACA Mid States Conference- *Learn Together, Grow Together: Our Camper's World***

**April 10-12, 2008, St. Charles, Illinois.** The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Mid States Camping Conference is a great opportunity to connect with camping professionals, train your staff, shop for deals, and fill your "bag of tricks". The 2008 theme, *Learn Together, Grow Together: Our Camper's World*, embodies the conference mission of staff and administrators learning together with emphasis this year on the campers we all serve. The keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Thompson is a psychologist, school consultant, and author. From director to first year counselors, there is something for everyone with over 100 educational sessions. Call for Proposals for Educational Sessions for the 2008 conference are now being accepted, and are due by November 30. In addition to the conference, Leadership Institute sessions are held prior to the Mid States Conference, and offer full day workshops and certifications from industry leaders. Put April 10-12, 2008 on your calendar, and visit the Web site [www.acamidstates.org](http://www.acamidstates.org) for more information.

**If you have other training sessions to share, please email Jim Cherry!**

## **NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS**

### **Changes of Staff and Retirements**

There have been several camp personnel that have changed positions in the past few months.

Becky Godfrey, former director of Girl Scout Camp L-Kee-Ta retired from Girl Scouts in May. Becky and her family moved from their camp home to Burlington, Iowa this past summer. Becky is now working with Planned Parenthood in Burlington.

Roger Sasse will be retiring from his role as Executive Director of Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries and Camp Carol Joy Holling. As part of the transition, Dave Coker has been announced as the new Executive Director effective January 1.

Cindy Findley, director of Girl Scout Camp Tanglefoot, in northern Iowa is retiring. Her retirement celebration was held the end of October. Cindy is taking time to decide what she wants to do next.

Denise Scribner, site director, Starwoods Outdoor Center, Girl Scouts of the Golden Plains has announced her retirement after 32 years with the Girl Scouts. Denise has been the director for Starwoods for seven years.

### **Positions Available**

Assistant Camp Director/Retreat Coordinator position open at YMCA Camp Wapsie, near Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Contact Paul Denowski for more information at [denowski@crmetroymca.org](mailto:denowski@crmetroymca.org).

Conference and Retreat Director position open at the Des Moines YMCA Camp, near Boone, Iowa. For more information and to apply, go to [www.dmymcajobs.org](http://www.dmymcajobs.org).

Outdoor Program Specialist position open at Girl Scouts of NE KS & NW MO, in Kansas City. For more information, email [KateWottring@girlscoutsksmo.org](mailto:KateWottring@girlscoutsksmo.org).

### **Other Camp and Member News**

Camp Courageous, in northeast Iowa, held their 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Variety Club Back to School Festival in early September. Over 500 special education students came for the day, joining other children who were there for a week long camp. Counting all the children, volunteers, teachers and staff, there were over 1000 people at the camp that day. There were carnival games, face painting, swimming, musical entertainment, a magician, hayrides, and Jeannie the Fortune Teller. What a great way to showcase the camp, and invite schools to find out more about coming to the camp for outdoor education!

Camp Fontanelle, Nickerson, Nebraska is operating a corn maze this fall, as a new fundraising event. They budgeted \$25,000 to get the corn maze planted, designed and developed. They used the Cokesbury curriculum in the corn maze design. See the information on their Web site at [www.campfontanelle.com](http://www.campfontanelle.com). Let's hope they met their fundraising goal! The maze is open through the first week of November.

Announcing the Birth of a New Council: Girl Scouts of NE KS & NW MO! On July 1, 2007, Girl Scouts of Kaw Valley, Girl Scouts Midland Empire Council and Girl Scouts of Mid-Continent Council completed a merger and became one new, high capacity council serving over 40,000 girls in Kansas and Missouri. Barbara Collins, Director of Outdoor Programs and Properties, oversees nine camps with a staff of 13 specialists, assistants and rangers. The council includes accredited camps Oakledge, Prairie Schooner and Winding River, as well as Camp Daisy Hindman and Camp Woodland—both of which were previously accredited and look forward to becoming re-accredited. Retirements: With the merger of three councils to form Girl Scouts of NE KS & NW MO, Girl Scouts of Mid-Continent Council announced the retirement of three camp rangers: Gary Sapp, Camp Winding River; Harold Green, Camp Timberlake; and Larry Mills, Camp Tongawood. Congratulations to these rangers and good luck in the next phase of their lives! New staff: Three new camp rangers have joined the team of the Girl Scouts of NE KS & NW MO. Join us in welcoming Raymond Swanstone, Camp Winding River; Keith Broxterman, Camp Daisy Hindman; and Jon Green, Camp Timberlake.

Wilderness Retreat and Development Center, in Missouri has broken ground on construction of a new swimming pool. This has been a dream of the camp staff for many years, and is now becoming a reality, thanks to many generous and thoughtful people. Though all funds are not yet raised for the complete project, they are going ahead with the construction. They have been blessed with many volunteer work groups that have donated time and money to begin upgrading the shower house that is next to the pool.

The Program Team at NLOM Camp Carol Joy Holling in Nebraska has two new players. Jolin Morelock joined the year round staff as the Environmental Education Specialist. She has served several years on the summer staff and so knows the program and is ready to help NLOM move forward fighting the nature-deficit syndrome. Joining the team at Youth Specialist is Tim Barr. He has also been on summer staff several summers, been an artist in residence, worked as an actor and is a writer. Tim will be working on camper recruitment especially recruiting non-traditional campers creating a more diverse camper base for NLOM. Gretchen Ahrens has taken responsibility for special needs and equine programs. Dennis Pope is working with Adventure Programs.

The Joshua Center is a new ACA Camp in the Kansas City area. The goal of the Joshua Center camp program for boys and girls ages 9 to 14 years is for each camper to enjoy a normal camp experience like children without disabilities, be in an environment where their symptoms are accepted, and make lasting friendships. The goal is achieved by having well-trained, supportive staff and by providing highly structured hands-on activities with many opportunities for positive peer interactions in a positive, encouraging camp atmosphere. Becky Ottinger had a vision to provide a camp experience for children with neurological disorders. The camp is designed for children with a diagnosis of Tourette Syndrome, Asperger Syndrome and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. The program requires lots of structure and routine for the kids to be successful. Therefore, the Joshua Center Camp program is tightly structured to meet their needs and to reduce opportunities for out of control behaviors. For more information, visit their Web site at [www.joshuacenter.com](http://www.joshuacenter.com).

Camp CUMCITO, is a Missouri Camp in the Ozarks. The camp is home for 350-400 children each summer that would never be able to afford the experience of summer camp without the support of faithful donors. Campers are treated to a week of great food, Bible teaching, crafts and outdoor activities including swimming, fishing, boating, archery, hiking, campfires and many more. The camp sessions run from the end of June through the first week in August. The campgrounds are available for groups to lease the rest of the year. For more information visit the Web site at [www.cumission.org/Involved\\_Camp.htm](http://www.cumission.org/Involved_Camp.htm).

## **ACA Hot Topics**

The ACA web site has the latest information about information relating to camp and camp operations. The Hot Topics area is devoted to those items that may be of the most interest to camp directors. Topics currently on the site include camp security, staff training, bully prevention, and other camp staff topics. Visit the site at [www.acacamps.org/hottopics](http://www.acacamps.org/hottopics).

## **Go Green – Environmental stewardship in the landscape**

Article by Tom Neppi, Neppi Landscape Architecture

Green landscape techniques differ quite a bit from traditional landscaping methods. Green methods emphasize the selection of appropriate plants for the given location, utilize water efficiency and conservation, and promote the use of fewer resources to blend the designed landscape into the surrounding natural setting. These techniques not only produce landscape areas which are naturally appealing but can also enrich the biodiversity of the area.

There are a number of green landscaping methods which are relatively easy to adopt at your camp and can yield numerous outdoor programming and educational opportunities.

**Native Plantings:** Native plants from your area are ideal for your camp as they have adapted to the climate, precipitation and soils of your region. They are typically more vigorous with reduced long-term maintenance needs, are less invasive (and thus stay put), provide wildlife habitat and can have historical or cultural interest – some plants played significant roles in Native American culture and European settlement and exploration.

**Stormwater Management:** Rain gardens and bioswales are two methods to properly manage stormwater runoff, enabling rain water to infiltrate the soil instead of running off into the community storm drain or a nearby creek. Basically, these are basins with modified soils and native plants which capture and utilize rainfall runoff on site instead of allowing it to run off site and causing increased flooding and erosion further downstream. Typically, rain gardens can be installed near existing buildings and gutter downspouts; bioswales are used in larger areas where there is significant runoff such as near parking lots and large buildings.

There are many more techniques you can implement at your camp and do a good thing for the environment. Recycling and composting reduce the amount of materials tossed in the landfill. Xeriscaping and naturalistic landscape design create interesting landscapes and reduce long-term maintenance costs.

These methods are great for the environment, can be easy on your pocketbook and provide educational opportunities to teach your campers, retreaters and staff about environmental stewardship in action. Stay tuned for more ideas! For more information, please contact Tom Neppi at [Tom@NeppiLandscapeArchitecture.com](mailto:Tom@NeppiLandscapeArchitecture.com) or Weston Wunder at [Weston@LBDIowa.com](mailto:Weston@LBDIowa.com).

## **2008 Summer Camp Pricing**

Article by Dave Sherry, Des Moines YMCA Camp

What are we going to charge next summer? This is a very common discussion this time of year, I know it's one that we are having at our camp right now. It's a question that many of us face while writing our budgets each year and can be a question that haunts us until we see registrations come in. It seems that there is no "right" answer, whatever we charge someone will argue is too much and others will think we are giving it away. As you take time to answer your pricing question, you may want to consider the following.

Avoid the temptation to do your annual increase. Many of us fall into the trap of an annual fee increase. Maybe it's an automatic \$5 per session increase every year, maybe it's 4%, either way is not really helping your camp. Your expenses don't automatically increase by a set amount each year, last year our insurance rose over 12%!! When we practice this method we find ourselves doing fine for awhile until someday down the road we realize we can't afford all we are doing and either facility repair, staff salaries or equipment quality start to show for it. Then you are left with a big increase to catch up or a worn out camp.

Always start with a fair cost analysis of your camp. This can be done relatively simply or it can turn into a mathematical equation equivalent of rocket science. Let's focus on some quick and easy ways to look at it. If you have a summer only camp, your numbers may be relatively easy. Looking at your actual expenses from this past year break them into two groups. Per camper cost (cost of food per meal, t shirt etc) and fixed cost (director salary, program supply, etc). Start by dividing your fixed cost by the number of campers you are realistically expecting for next summer. Add this to the sum of your per camper number. Walla!! You have a simple idea of your cost. When your camp has multiple functions, divide the fixed cost equally and fairly. If retreats makes up 20% of your revenue, then you can assign retreats 20% of your fixed costs, or whatever method you choose to follow. Add the per camper cost and Walla!! There you have it again. This of course is not a real scientific method, but it is a quick check on cost.

Consider funding appreciation. How are you going to replace the roof in five years? Does the dining hall need to be stained? Are we going to need a new cabin or mower? These should be addressed in your pricing and we all too often leave it out. Many of our camps are in struggling condition and leaving a poor impression on camper families, affecting all of us. One way to deal with this is to start a reserve fund and use camper fees to pay into it so the money is there when you need it. Talk with your accountant to get the details but long term planning needs to be part of your cost plan. Start with 10% of your fee and work from there, some camps are planning as high as 30% funded reserves. If you're charging \$400 and \$40 per camper is going into such a fund, you will find the funds start to grow and be there when you need them.

Don't underprice. Charging less than camp is worth hurts all of us, most of all the camp charging the low fee. Be sure to cover your expenses and depreciation and show what camp really costs. Cost can be lowered for your campers through scholarship, membership or a variety of other ways, but show them the true cost of camp and let folks pay for it that have the means. A quality program will attract campers and keep them even if the price is high.

Don't overprice. I know, I just said the opposite a paragraph ago, but we need to be realistic. Call around and check prices of comparable programs and see where you land. We also call parents and discuss with possible pricing with them. I am always surprised how many parent we visit with that say we could be charging more! Compare what you have come up with in your cost analysis and reserve program compare it to other camps and make adjustments as necessary. You do not need to be the cheapest camp, just don't price yourself out of the ballpark.

I am sure this is all old hat to most of you, but as you are aware price impact almost everything we do. I hope you can take the time to do a more detailed cost analysis in the future for your camp, most people are amazed on how much they are undercharging once they see the real numbers. Good luck with your math and answering the old question "how much do we charge for camp next summer".

### **Great Rivers Newsletter By E-mail**

Communication with Camping Professionals in the Great Rivers Section has changed over the past years. With more people communicating by email, our section executive, Jim Cherry has been passing on information to our section members by email. This helps us all stay informed in a timely manner.

The ACA Great Rivers Section newsletter will be compiled periodically. It will be distributed by email. This newsletter will also be sent by mail to those that request a copy and those not currently ACA members. If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter by mail, instead of email, please contact DD Gass, Camp Fire USA, 816-285-2004 or email: [dd.gass@campfireusa.org](mailto:dd.gass@campfireusa.org).

## ACA Great Rivers Section Board Roster 2006-07

If you have questions about the ACA Great Rivers Section, contact Jim Cherry or one of the board members listed below.

### Section Executive:

Rev. Jim Cherry, 2335 300<sup>th</sup> St., Ventura, IA 50482  
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### President:

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### President-Elect:

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### Vice President Development:

Chris Klingenberg, YMCA Camp Kitaki, 6000 Cornhusker Way, Lincoln, NE 68507  
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### Vice President Program, Nominating and Awards:

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### Treasurer:

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### Standards Chair:

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### Education Chair:

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### Legislation Chair:

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### Complaints Resolution Chair:

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**Board Member-At-Large:**

Dennis Hisek, United Methodist Camps, 34030 W. 204<sup>th</sup> St., Lawson, MO 64062  
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**Nominating Committee:**

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