



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA Camp Onyahsa

Parent and Camper Handbook 2012

FOR FUN
FOR FRIENDS
FOREVER



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Dear Campers, Parents, Guardians and Friends;

Thank you for choosing to join the YMCA Camp Onyahsa Family! To help ensure that your experience with us is memorable in a special way, please consult the following essential information and policies carefully for the benefit of your child's participation. Please also remember that final payments and health forms must be received (paper version) or posted (online version) at least two weeks prior to the start of your camp session.

All campers should bring loads of enthusiasm, an openness to play and have fun, a willingness to try new and challenging things, and a desire to make lasting friendships with them to Onyahsa. The things we're sure they will take home from Camp are a lifetime of special memories, increased self-confidence, and healthy attitudes.

Please take a moment to meet and speak with your child's directors and counselors on arrival day. If any camper has a question or any type of problem, please instruct them to speak with their Counselors and/or the Camp Directors immediately. Parents, please feel free to contact the administrative staff if you have questions or concerns.

We are constantly on duty, and we are here for you! We are looking forward to camping with you soon! Thanks for registering for a great camping experience with YMCA Camp Onyahsa.

Sincerely,

Jon O'Brian, Camp Director

THE CAMP ONYAHSA MISSION

YMCA Camp Onyahsa was established in 1898, and today its Mission is *“to foster the Spiritual, Mental, and Physical well being of Camp Participants of varied backgrounds and abilities within a nurturing Outdoor Environment, while creating a meaningful sense of Community among them.”* Central to this personal and social growth is the strengthening of traditional values; especially Honesty, Caring, Respect, and Responsibility. Our vision is to foster excellence in youth development.

Camp Onyahsa is owned and operated by the YMCA of Jamestown, New York. It is accredited by the American Camp Association and licensed by the State of New York. In 2012, it celebrates its 114th anniversary!

THE ONYAHSA PHILOSOPHY

Onyahsa exists to build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities. Central to this vision is positive youth development. We believe resident camping should be a safe, healthy, and happy experience. It should also be fun, but not be equated with amusement or a mere vacation. Likewise, with an average residential camper enrollment of fewer than 100 per session, we are a small camp that fosters a *real* sense of belonging. We are not a “Big Box” camp. Here each child is important, and no one is a “number.” Important learning takes place at Camp; as we all develop life skills, explore talents, and find new interests. This learning experience focuses on personal development in Spirit, Mind, Body, and Community. Research has shown that quality resident camps are successful in promoting these outcomes.

Spiritual Growth: At Onyahsa we share and live positive values and develop character traits that include honesty, respect, responsibility, and caring. We learn to make better decisions, become more appreciative of diversity, and grateful for the gift of life and the beauty of creation.

Growth in Intellect: Emotional intelligence and critical thinking are vital life skills. Appropriate to our developmental level; Camp can help us to explore, develop creativity, enhance our sense of self worth and self-confidence, become more emotionally independent, and face new situations with an open mind. By thinking critically, we can respond to adversity rationally.

Physical Well-Being: Onyahsa stands for safe, healthy, and active lifestyles. We learn that wellness includes moderate exercise, good nutrition, stress management, relaxation, proper rest, and a realistic self-image. We stand against negative behaviors and poor life-decisions that put the health and lives of ourselves and others at risk.

The Experience of Community: We believe that in the truest sense, “Community” is not only a place, but a positive and genuine experience of interdependent belonging. We try to foster a sense of family where we exercise improved social skills including leadership, peer mentoring, teamwork, and cooperation. We do not foster a competitive environment; but focus on working together, doing our share, respecting others’ rights, fairness, equality, and lifelong friendships among individuals of varied backgrounds and abilities.

WHAT TO BRING TO CAMP:

- Sleeping bag, blankets, bed sheets and pillow (to fit a twin-sized bunk bed)
- Warm, water-repellant jacket and a sweater/sweatshirt
- Aqua shoes (or old shoes) – must be worn in the lake to protect feet
- Athletic shoes – one pair to remain dry, the other to get wet
- Shower sandals (for indoors use only)
- Suitcase/duffel bag or backpack to hold items
- Toiletries bag (the Bath House is not adjoined to cabins)
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, shampoo, comb/brush)
- Laundry bag
- Raincoat/poncho and boots (when it rains at Camp it pours!)
- Shorts, jeans, T-shirts – light colored for sunny days
- Underclothes, socks and warm pajamas
- Cap or hat with a brim; light colored for protection from the sun
- Two swimsuits (please be modest)
- Towels/washcloths
- Flashlight (check the bulb first) with new batteries
- Sunscreen (SPF 45 or higher), lip balm, sunglasses
- Insect repellent (non-aerosol, please instruct camper in proper use)
- Reusable stainless steel water bottle
- Small travel-size games or a deck of cards; and if age-appropriate, a stuffed animal/toy
- Letter writing supplies, stamps, and/or a journal
- Books or other appropriate reading material
- Self-addressed, stamped envelopes to send mail home
- A photo of family members, pets, home (in case of homesickness, and to share with friends)
- You may wish to give the administration camper mail on the first day, or send it prior to arrival.
- Optional items include a disposable camera with film, fishing or sporting equipment, musical instruments and equipment for Horseback Riding Camp.
- Some of these items are available at Onyahsa Outfitters Trading Post, along with Official Onyahsa merchandise. Please visit during check-in or check-out.

PLEASE DO NOT BRING:

*The following items are NOT allowed at YMCA Camp Onyahsa: food, pets, music boxes, TV's, electronic games, laptops, large sums of money, expensive items, skateboards, rollerblades, fireworks, matches, scooters, jack knives or any type of weapon, any illicit substances or inappropriate materials, *open heel (flip-flop) sandals to be worn outdoors (these are a leading cause of injuries and program delays in camps, as well as long-term podiatric problems)*, dark or black clothing to be worn constantly in the sun, snack food/drinks or any valuables. Onyahsa does not have vending machines or other opportunities to spend money; (with the exception of our Outfitters Trading Post, which is only open during check-in and departure times).*

If present, prohibited items will be put in the Main Office for the duration of the camp session. Any valuables (such as passports, money and airline tickets) must be deposited in the Camp's safe. Please deposit these items with Camp Administration upon arrival. *Camp Onyahsa cannot be held liable for lost items.* If it is brought to Camp, the camper should see to its safekeeping and care. *Please mark the camper's name on all items with a permanent marker.* Please check the Camp's Lost and Found (located at the Flag Pole) before departure. Lost items will be held until the end of the summer season, and then donated to charity. See the Camp's cell phone policy on page 8.

DIRECTIONS TO CAMP

Camp Onyahsa was founded in 1898 and is *one of the longest-established YMCA resident camps in the nation*. This beautiful lakefront camp is nestled within wooded acreage along the shores of northern Lake Chautauqua. Its facilities include a large winterized dining hall, year-round lodges, sports fields, nature areas, cabins, "cab-ents," and tents. Recent development has created a beautiful year-round facility. The site is available for off-season group use year-round.

Onyahsa is located at 5411 East Lake Road (also known as Route 430) in Dewittville, New York, 14728; twenty minutes from Jamestown NY; fifty minutes from Warren PA; fifty-five minutes from Erie PA; two hours from east Cleveland OH; and eighty minutes from Buffalo NY. For Internet directions and a map, please consult the Onyahsa website at www.onyahsa.org.

HEALTH and CONFIDENTIAL DISCLOSURE FORMS

Our top priority is the safety, health, and happiness of your camper. While no place is accident-free, statistics show that the organized camping environment is actually safer than that of the school or home. To better prepare for your camper's health needs, Camper Health History and Confidential Disclosure Forms **must be fully completed, signed, and returned to the Jamestown YMCA (print version) or emailed (pdf version) at least two weeks before the camper arrives, in accordance with New York State Health Codes.**

All campers must have received a physical examination within the last 12 months, must be in good health and have **all immunizations** required for school attendance. Please list these immunizations and dates administered on the Health Form, or attach a record from your primary physician. By mandate of the NY State Health Department, the applicant's healthcare provider must complete the Individualized Orders form to allow the Camp Health Director to administer standard over-the-counter and/or prescription medications to the camper.

The camper's personal insurance and emergency contact information is also required. The Camp's Health and Accident insurance only covers incidents beyond those covered by the camper's own family policy. (Note: international campers, please check the Health Form to review medical and immunization requirements for U.S. camps and obtain travel insurance, as health care coverage may differ significantly from what you experience in your home country).

A Health Director resides on-site, and will be available for consultation during check-in hours. Please see the Camp Health Form for more information. The enclosed Confidential Disclosure Form will allow the Onyahsa staff to better serve your child. Please complete and submit this form with your Health Information.

If your child will reside seven or more consecutive nights at resident camp (more than one session), please

consult and complete the information on Meningitis included in the Health Form. *Under State law, completion is not necessary for campers staying fewer than seven consecutive nights. (One camp week equals six nights).*

PHOTO AND VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDING RELEASE

Please complete and sign this release (page 5 of the Health Form).

GENERAL RULES & the ONYAHSA PARTICIPANTS' CODE OF CONDUCT

All participants are expected to follow rules outlined in the Participant Code of Conduct (page 6 of the Health Form). This includes the ability to self-monitor and the ability for participants to foresee the consequences of their actions. Onyahsa does not provide one: one supervision. The Camp will provide *reasonable accommodations*, but will remove campers from the program who present an undue risk to themselves or others; and those who significantly detract from the Camp experience.

Please review these general rules and sign the Code of Conduct (included in the Health Form) with your camper before arrival at Onyahsa. While the main focus of the Camp program is not on rules and regulations; this Code of Conduct has been created by campers, staff, and parents for the safety, well-being, and benefit of all participants.

We believe that attendance at Camp is a privilege, which entails participant responsibility. Both campers and parents or guardians must sign it as part of our registration process. Staff members also sign the document.

As Children of God, all Camp Participants share equal individual human rights, regardless of income, gender, race, ethnic background, religious belief, ability, national origin or age; and as equal members of the Camp Community, each has the responsibility to adhere to the following general rules, based upon universal values established for the Common Good:

Honesty- Camp Participants are expected to show honesty by telling the truth, refusing to steal, and by demonstrating integrity and moral character.

Respect- Camp Participants are expected to respect other members of the Camp Community by using appropriate language and gestures, minding their own property, respecting the belongings of others, refraining from inappropriate touching or photographing, and injuring others, listening to staff members, and following established rules.

To facilitate this goal and to prevent false allegations from arising, **at no time shall one camp participant (camper or staff) be alone with another participant in a private location.** Camps call this "The Rule of Two," and we have adopted it at Onyahsa too.

Caring- Camp Participants are expected to care for others, as they would like others to care for them. All members of the Camp Community will refrain from being hurtful in language or action to others, and will seek to help others in need.

Responsibility- Privileges at Camp entail responsibility. Camp Participants are expected to act responsibly and to be accountable for their actions. As members of the Camp Community, they must be in attendance and well-behaved at all assigned activities. Older participants shall serve as good role models for younger ones.

Cabin groups, Village units, and the Camp Community may expand upon these rules by common agreement, within the parameters of general Camp policies. Rule violators who infringe upon the rights, well-being, and camp experience of others may be suspended from camp privileges, or expelled from Camp without refund.

COMMUNICABLE ILLNESS

To reduce the spread of viral or bacterial illnesses, which have become common in the communal settings, please stress the need to frequently wash and sanitize hands to your camper. Children should also not touch each other or share personal items (i.e. water bottles) or food.

If your child has exhibited symptoms of the flu (sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, and/or a temperature of 100 degrees or more), or if your child has been in contact with someone who currently has (or who has very recently had) a communicable illness, *please contact the office to reschedule your camper's session at no financial obligation.* Campers exhibiting these symptoms will be placed away from other program participants and sent home to avoid the further spread of illness. Please take your child's temperature and ask about her or his well-being shortly prior to arrival at Camp.

HEAD LICE ISSUES

Head lice are increasingly common, and should not carry a social stigma. All participants will be screened on the first day of each week-long session for evidence of head lice. Under health protocols, any participant with evidence of nits or head lice will be sent home for treatment with belongings. To avoid significant inconvenience for your family, please check your child for head lice well prior to her or his arrival at Camp. Tools for performing this quick inspection and means to treat infection may be found at www.ndhealth.gov/head-lice, www.headlice.org, or other online sites.

TREATMENT OF INJURIES

All injuries are treated according to the American Red Cross First Aid Handbook and parents are notified in case of any severe injury. Parents are also notified of any illness experienced by their camper for which symptoms last longer than 24 hours. In case of emergency, all

attempts will be made to notify emergency contacts immediately.

BUGS and BATS

To minimize the risk of mosquito or tick-borne illness, please bring insect repellent to Camp and instruct your camper in its proper use. Please also instruct your children about the potential dangers posed by bats, (which could carry rabies and should not be approached or touched).

SPECIAL NEEDS and CIRCUMSTANCES

If a camper has any special needs, (including disabilities, medicinal requirements, behavioral conditions, or child custody concerns) please indicate these on the registration form and notify the Camp Director **in writing at least one month prior to registration.** A copy of the child's IEP or ISP is also required to better serve your child. The IEP/ISPs will only be shared with the appropriate staff members.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for campers who have special needs, provided a written request is made at least one month before the child's attendance. One-on-one aides are not provided by the Camp, but will be accommodated if the family provides them, and they meet the Camp's hiring and volunteer criteria. Unless a family-provided personal aide accompanies them, campers must possess the ability to self-monitor and the ability to reasonably foresee the consequences of their actions.

No camper will be denied acceptance unless his or her presence would pose a significant risk to himself or herself, or to the general population, as determined by the Camp Administration. Moreover, if the Camp cannot meet the child's needs through reasonable accommodations, the placement cannot be accepted. If your child has Special Needs, please check-in with our Health Director and Special Needs staff during Sunday registration at Camp. *A physician's specific approval may be required for some programs.* Children whose lack of ability to self-monitor and attend to the rules results in an unsafe situation for themselves or others cannot be accepted into the program. *The Camp site is an open environment with several natural hazards, and is thus unlike a school setting that is staffed by certified Special Education teachers.*

ONYAHSA BEHAVIOR POLICY

If the applicant has received in-school or out-of-school suspension, has been suspended from a camp program, or he/she has been assigned to a restrictive placement for behavioral/disciplinary reasons, has seen a professional to address mental/emotional concerns, or been involved in a legal infraction within the past 12 months; the parent or guardian must contact the Camp Office at least one month prior to arrival at Camp. Thereafter, a letter from a school guidance office attesting to the appropriateness of the child's placement in the camp program must be attached to the camper's applica-

tion. In addition, the applicant's primary care physician must sign the Camp Health Form, attesting to the campers' suitability for this program.

Every camper is a member of a group, and is expected to cooperate. Camp is a social setting that requires an ability to self-monitor, understand social cues, and behave appropriately for the safety and well being of all participants. We all clean up, do small tasks, and act responsibly towards one another and Camp property.

THREE TUITION RATES

Realizing current economic circumstances have presented fiscal challenges for some families, Onyahsa has instituted a voluntary Three Tier Tuition Program. Families may pick the tuition rate that best fits their current financial situation. This choice does not affect the quality of your child's camp experience.

Tier 1: True weekly cost of quality camping that is still below national average tuition for similar programs.

\$440 (Traditional and Teen)
\$540 (Horseback and LIT)
\$200 (Mini Camp and Day Camp)

Tier 2: Traditionally subsidized weekly tuition, which does not reflect the true cost of camp operations.

\$390 (Traditional and Teen)
\$490 (Horseback and LIT)
\$175 (Mini Camp and Day Camp)

Tier 3: Heavily subsidized by local donors, and available only for local* residents. It does not reflect the true cost of camp operations.

\$340 (Traditional and Teen)
\$440 (Horseback and LIT)
\$150 (Mini Camp and Day Camp)

"Local residents" are defined as "full-time residents who are enrolled students in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, Warren or McKean counties;" (except for Weeks A or B, when Tier 3 rates are available to anyone).

TUITION DEPOSIT AND REFUND POLICY

A **non-refundable** deposit of \$100 per resident camping session and a \$50 deposit per day camping session is required to hold the camper's reservation. The balance of the tuition and fees must be paid in full at least *two weeks prior* to the start of the Camp session to guarantee this placement. Cancellations must be received at least one week prior to the start of the Camp session to receive a refund of the balance. No refunds will be granted for children who are sent home for misbehavior, homesickness, violating the Camp's Code of Conduct, or other reasons beyond the Camp's control. Since camp sessions cannot be filled during mid-week, no *per-diem* rate is available for late-arriving or early-departing campers. Most sessions fill to capacity, therefore balances left unpaid two weeks prior to a session's start,

may result in the cancellation of a reservation and its re-assignment to another camper.

THE ONYAHSA ASSOCIATION

YMCA Camp Onyahsa is part of a membership organization that seeks to foster community and belonging. It is also an experience that serves to encourage responsibility. Therefore, each resident and day camper will become a member of the Onyahsa Association on an annual (12 month) basis for \$25. Alumni and parents are also invited to join the Association to stay connected to Camp, and to assist in its capital development.

The Association fee will fund the Camp's site development and endowment, and members will receive discounts on non-summer programs and access to the Facebook page. The \$25 Association fee will be added to each camper's first resident week only, and will be good for one calendar year. Current members of any YMCA who attend camp will be automatically enrolled in the Association at no extra charge.

CHECK-IN TIMES & PROCEDURE

Check-in is scheduled between **2:30pm and 4:00pm on Sundays**. All campers arriving for their first session of the summer must meet the Onyahsa Director and health staff during this time. Due to its importance, this process will take approximately one hour and includes cabin assignments, health screening/collection of medications, moving in, and meeting your child's counselors. Please do not request or attempt to check-in early without the prior permission of the Camp Director. **The staff will be meeting to preview the week, and will not be available until 2:30pm.** Because the first few hours at Camp are among the most important, we also discourage late arrivals. If you will be arriving late, please notify the Camp Office 716-753-5244 to guarantee your cabin assignment.

Based upon their order of pre-Camp complete registration (fully completed registration form, health form and payment in full), campers will receive a specific check-in time listed on the confirmation letter (included with the pre-Camp materials packet). Please note that Onyahsa's natural outdoor setting has been designed to serve children, not vehicles. Thus, parking may be limited upon arrival and your patience is appreciated, especially in the event of inclement weather.

Camps in New York State are mandated by the Health Department to review all health forms very carefully. Participants whose fully completed paperwork is received at least two weeks prior to their arrival date will be permitted to check in at a separate health desk ahead of participants whose paperwork has not been received two weeks prior to arrival. Ensure that all payments are received and health information is complete two weeks prior to arrival to avoid significant delays during registration. **If you would like to have your camper confidentially screened for head lice/nits during check-in, please inform**

the Camp Health Director. This check could prevent the need to retrieve a camper who is found to have this condition.

Please understand our need to comply with State laws designed to protect the health and safety of your camper. **During check-in, all medications (in their original containers) must be given to the Camp Health Director, so please pack them separately. In accordance with state Health Department regulations, the camper may not keep them.** (However, upon approval by the Camp's Health Director, mature campers may retain asthmatic inhalers).

CHECK-OUT TIME & PROCEDURE

Camp sessions conclude on Saturdays, at approximately 11:30am. An awards presentation is held after brunch, from approximately 10:45 - 11:30am, and parents are invited to view the awards presentation or visit the Onyahsa Outfitters Trading Post. If you will be late for pick-up, please call the Camp Office at 716-753-5244.

To officially check-out your camper, please inform his or her Village Director of your identity, and **sign your camper out so we know he or she is safe. If someone other than the person who brought the child to Camp will pick him/her up, please notify the Camp Administration and the child's Village Director on arrival day, and note this departure in writing on Camper Release Permission Form (page 5 of the Health Form).**

As our counselors deserve to spend this day with their own families, *all departing campers should be picked-up by 12:00pm.* Please remember to check the Lost and Found (located at the Flag Pole), and to reclaim any medications from the Camp Health Director prior to departure.

CAMPERS DEPARTING WITH NON-PARENTAL ADULTS

If you would like the Camp Administration to release your child to another adult, such as the parent(s) of another camper, please note this permission in writing on the Camper Release Permission Form (page 5 of the Health Form and inform the Camp Director upon the camper's arrival at Onyahsa.

CABIN ASSIGNMENTS

Cabin assignments are gender and program-specific, and are made by general age. We will do our best to honor placement requests; however, like most camps, in fairness to campers who are not attending with acquaintances, we cannot guarantee particular cabins or cabin-mates. Nor can we guarantee specific counselors or cabins. Our goal is to encourage new friendships and a sense of inclusion.

FOOD POLICY

Central to our wellness aims, Onyahsa offers nutritious meals and fresh fruit throughout the day. The

presence of food or beverages in the living areas presents safety concerns with respect to food allergies, spoilage, and rodents. It also poses equity issues. Therefore, do not send food or beverages to Camp with your camper or post them during his/her stay. **Such food items brought to Camp will be removed to storage until the end of the camper's session.** Special dietary foods will be accepted and stored in the kitchen area for serving under the supervision of the Health Director. If you want to send your camper a non-food care package, you are welcome to make and send one of your own.

If your child has a **food allergy**, please note it on the Health Form and also make the Camp Health Director and the campers' cabin counselors aware of his or her needs. Onyahsa does not serve soda pop, so campers who consume caffeine on a regular basis may wish to limit consumption of soda for several days prior to arrival at Camp to avoid the onset of caffeine-withdrawal symptoms. **Foods provided by the Camp kitchen may have come into contact with peanuts, tree nuts, and other allergens during production by processors or during preparation at Camp.**

ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Consistent with our goals of promoting self-reliance and genuine (face-to-face) social interaction, YMCA Camp Onyahsa limits the use of electronic technology by campers. To protect the privacy of all participants, each member of the Camp Community is asked to refrain from bringing electronic gadgets other than flashlights, watches, and prescription medical devices to Camp. All prohibited electronic items brought to Camp will be collected and held for safekeeping during the camper's stay. Disposable cameras are permitted, if they are used appropriately.

CELLULAR PHONES and SMART GADGETS

Cellular phones and web-enabled PDAs present special challenges to organized camping programs, which by nature seek to remove participants from their routine environments and allow new experiences. Therefore, camper cell phones and other similar electronic technology brought to Camp will be collected by the Unit Leader for each group and held for safekeeping.

Campers may use their cell phones and smart gadgets by permission at appropriate non-program times such as Rest Period and after the close of the evening program, prior to Taps. As with any communication from campers to their parent(s) during or after the camp experience; if the camper expresses homesickness or any other concern, the parent is asked to contact the Camp Administration as soon as possible.

Similar to any camera, cell phone cameras may not be used in the cabins, restrooms, or other private area where participants may be changing clothes. Failure to abide by this policy will result in the loss of cell phone/camera privileges for the duration of the camp experience.

DAILY SCHEDULE and CAMP LIFE

During check-in on Sundays, campers meet the administrative staff, cabin counselors, and each other. This is a very important time in the camp program. After parents introduce themselves to the cabin staff and assist the camper with settling in, the cabin group will engage in team-building activities, practice area fire drills, create cabin rules, discuss the camp program, take a tour of Camp, have a health check with the health staff, and (weather permitting) take a swim test. An assembly of all campers and staff follows, with an overview of rules and the program, and then we share dinner. After making sure we are settled in our cabins, we learn waterfront and safety procedures, then experience our opening campfire and the "Story of Onyahsa." There's a lot more to come during the week, so we get ready for bed and turn out the lights as the bugle calls "Taps."

During the week, the typical camp day begins at 8:00am with an assembly and breakfast. Campers then do responsibility-building small jobs ("details") around camp to foster responsibility before beginning morning activities. Traditional campers participate in three interest group areas, (such as boating, swimming, and crafts), while Specialty and Teen campers may spend the morning on an extended activity. Around 11:30am, the entire camp assembles for AM Choice, followed by lunch; and thereafter a rest hour and cabin inspection. Selected groups may spend a morning or afternoon participating in our Adventure Program-hiking, boating, or sailing.

In the afternoon, Traditional Camp participants rotate through three other activity areas (like Nature, Sports, and Challenge), while Specialty and Teen campers have an extended period for their particular interest. The afternoon concludes with PM Choice (including informal games and an optional "free swim"). Club Time follows dinner. An all-camp or village activity follows, and the day concludes with an all-camp program, such as campfires, skits, theme night, or specials. Older campers typically have extended evening program time, or take an off-camp overnight trip with staff. As an outdoor educational program, activities and times will be flexible and contingent upon weather conditions. We realize that campers have a variety of learning styles and strive to offer a variety of choices and activities appropriate to their developmental level. Throughout the program, our main focus will be on personal development and the creation of friendships. Our typical daily schedule is available online at www.onyahsa.org.

All campers live in rustic cabins or tents as members of a small group with their unit staff. They are responsible for keeping their living areas clean, as well as contributing to the general camp experience by performing small daily tasks. All meals are served "family style," and campers share table setting and clean-up duties with their cabin mates. The cabin group, consisting of about eight campers and two staff members, is part of a larger Village group of two cabins. Activities take place at the cabin, village, and all-camp levels. Campers must stay with their group or let unit staff know their whereabouts at all times.

While staff members are trained to spot potential problems, campers should not hesitate to inform counselors, Village Directors, or the Director if they have any problems or questions.

SWIMMING

Lake bacteria levels may fluctuate in the summer. If they rise to unacceptable levels, we will substitute another activity for swimming. Always be sure to avoid consuming lake water and have our staff swab any skin lesion with an alcohol swab upon exiting the lake. Campers should not swim if they are menstruating or have an open wound.

WEEKEND CAMPERS

Campers staying more than one consecutive week may spend the interim weekend at Camp. The cost for Weekend Stayover is \$125/camper. This fee includes all weekend meals, laundry money, a recreational activity (usually at the Jamestown YMCA), weekend programming at Camp, a Saturday night snack, and Sunday meals. Weekend Campers will be loaned mesh bags for laundry, which will be washed by staff. This weekend experience is only available for mature and self-monitoring campers who are enrolled for consecutive sessions.

TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

For long-distance travelers, round-trip transportation to and from the Buffalo-Niagara International air, rail, and bus terminals is available for \$150/roundtrip (per camper). **All campers must schedule their arrival to the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport between 1:00pm and 3:00pm on Sundays. All departures from Buffalo Airport must be scheduled between 11:30am and 1:30pm on Saturdays.** Please consult Onyahsa's transportation timetables before booking air, train, or bus tickets for your camper. Information on private livery services is available through the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce or the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. Campers arriving to airports will be met at the relevant baggage claim area unless other arrangements have been made. Rail and bus passengers will be met at the appropriate gate.

Any camper might be transported in YMCA-leased vehicles by Camp directors during field trips and on weekends. These vehicles meet relevant safety standards and are driven by approved drivers. Campers will be loaded and unloaded according to name. They must remain seated and must wear seatbelts until advised to remove them by Camp staff.

VISITATION POLICY and CAMP TOURS

For the safety of all Camp Participants, *all visitors who arrive beyond our check-in or departure times must report to the Camp office upon arrival, sign-in, and wear a visitor's tag. Please be aware that parental visitation of campers during the week often upsets children who do not have visitors, and creates distractions for the Camp program. Because the ideal camp experience is a respite*

from the usual routine, parents who are visiting their children, or who are picking them up during the week (i.e. for sports events) are requested to keep this practice to a minimum.

Any camper who is leaving Camp during the mid-week must sign-out with a Director, and then sign-in with a Director upon their return. For campers who are staying for extended sessions, the interim period (Saturdays from 12:00pm to 5:00pm, and Sundays from 12:00pm – 2:00pm) is best for visitation. **If the child must leave Camp during their session, or if someone other than the person who brought the child to Camp will pick him/her up, the adult who registered the camper must provide written notification to the Camp Administration and the camper's Village Director on arrival day. Parents will be asked to sign-out their children on departure days.**

If you would like to tour the Camp during the summer season or anytime during the year, please call the Onyahsa Site Office 716-753-5244, to make an appointment, so we can arrange staff guides without detracting from the program and campers. You may also visit the site during normal check-in times. With the exception of check-in and departure hours, no visitors are allowed in the cabins or other living areas. An **Open House** is scheduled for Saturday, May 12th, from 10:00am – 1:00pm at the Camp. You are welcome to join us for tours, staff introductions, and a program overview on this date. RSVP for this event.

CAMP TELEPHONE POLICY

From years of our own experience, along with that of other respected resident camps, we recommend that parents *do not call children* during their first camp sessions unless it is an emergency. If your child is experiencing significant challenges, is injured, or becomes ill, *the Camp Administration will contact you*. Many campers adjust well to camp *until* a phone call from a well-meaning parent. Campers may not use the phones without permission from a director, and are asked to keep this practice to a minimum.

If you would like to check on your child's progress and welfare, or if you just need reassurance, please call the Camp Director at 716-753-5244. The best times to make calls to campers, in order to avoid program interruption, are Saturdays after 1:00pm, or during meals. Minimizing these program interruptions is greatly appreciated. If your child is a veteran camper who is staying for an extended period, please call him or her at a time arranged with the Camp Administration.

CAMP POSTAL SERVICE

Although we think it best not to make frequent calls or visits, we *strongly* encourage you to write and post letters or one-way email to your children. It is also a good idea to send pre-stamped postcards or envelopes, addressed to your home, with them to Camp. We also strongly encourage campers to bring journals to Onyahsa. The paper letters and cards tend to be those that are

saved and cherished later. Please address letters in the following manner: **Camper Name, Cabin number, YMCA Camp Onyahsa, PO Box 84, Dewittville, New York 14728.**

CAMP EMAIL SERVICE & CAMPER FAX BACK

To send one-way email to any camper use campers@onyahsa.org or for cabin counselors use staff@onyahsa.org. Camper emails may be pre-paid on the registration form. We might note that a substantive email, which will be delivered as a paper letter, (thus messages are not absolutely private) has a much better impact than a few lines. Sets of 10 emails/fax-backs are available for \$5.00, and are only available as sets of 10.

Fax forms may also be purchased, upon which campers may compose hand-written notes that will be faxed to your designated fax number. Fax Backs may be ordered by email, including adding this request to the email sent to your camper or on the registration form. Sets of 10 emails/fax-backs are available for \$5.00 Please remember to provide your fax number when ordering Fax Backs. These services are only available in sets of 10.

ONLINE PHOTO GALLERIES

Our photo galleries are available at camp's website and Facebook profiles: [onyahsacampers](#) or [onyahsaalumni](#). There is no extra charge for this service for current campers. Please note that our top priority is to provide a quality camp experience for your child by directing staff resources to the on-site program, thus the photo galleries will not be updated daily.

HOMESICKNESS and CAMPER ADJUSTMENT

An experience at a resident camp is challenging by its very nature, but it's one of the best means to foster personal growth. At Onyahsa, emphasis is placed on individual responsibility, independence, cooperation, and social growth, not merely amusement. As gaining autonomy entails overcoming challenges, campers may expect to experience a period of adjustment in this new environment. This is a *normal* part of the developmental process. Most youth (and adults) have these feelings, although they may vary in intensity. By meeting these challenges, the camper's increased maturity, emotional independence, and self-confidence will help to make his or her next away-from-home experience easier.

We realize that sending a child to camp may be stressful, for both the parent and the camper. You can help to facilitate a successful camping experience by preparing your camper and yourself for this stay away from home. Let your child help in the preparation and packing for the camp experience. Pre-camp overnight or weekend stays with relatives or trusted friends are strongly encouraged. You may also wish to visit the Camp during our Open House in May, or to view the photographs on our online gallery. Monthly weekend camps at Onyahsa are also scheduled throughout the school year.

Set realistic expectations for the camper and yourself. Like life, resident camping will have its "ups and downs." This is central to the learning experience. While you cannot guarantee to your child that camp will be "wonderful every minute", you can let her or him know that caring, committed, and competent staff members will do all they can to provide a positive experience for him or her.

Most importantly please make sure the camper really wants to "go" to Camp; that he or she is not being "sent." Attendance must be the camper's desire, not only that of the parent. Campers who are part of the decision-making process usually feel better about going to camp. Often children experience homesickness if there is a major transition in their home life, (such as a birth, death, major illness, or divorce), or if they feel the parent(s) will not do well without them. Moreover, the parent's own confidence in his or her camper's successful experience is instrumental in making it a reality. In short, a secure home "base" makes for a more successful resident camp experience. Be sure that you, as a parent, are willing and able to "let go" briefly, to allow the child to grow.

Sometimes parents unwittingly create a self-fulfilling situation when they tell a child; "If you have *any* problems, you can come right home." Minor "problems" will arise, and campers should be encouraged to work through them rather than to view going home as the first option. Challenges will arise in camp environments, and reasonable and realistic expectations must be set prior to attending camps. Letting kids know that missing home and loved ones is a normal, and healthy, response to new situations that usually subsides after a few days, will help to reduce anxiety. Getting involved in cabin life and camp activities is very important to overcoming these feelings and gaining a level of emotional independence.

In addition, please let your child know that he or she may always speak with counselors and the camp's directors at any time if he or she is having difficulties. The Administrative and Health Staff reside on-site, and we are *always* on duty. Thereafter, they may telephone you, if they are still experiencing significant challenges. If this happens, you may wish to encourage the camper to stay by instructing him or her to "call back tomorrow if you still feel the same." However, as the child's parents, we also encourage you to trust your instincts. *Campers are not to leave Camp on their own (without counselor or parental supervision) at any time, as this "run-away" situation will necessarily and immediately involve the local Sheriff's Department. No camper will be forced to endure a camp experience they perceive as negative.*

To foster a successful camp session, please encourage your child to write home or keep a journal. Sending pre-stamped and addressed envelopes is a wonderful idea. Let them know that it's "going to be great;" that you will be "OK" without him or her for a while, and what a "wonderful" experience they will have. Upon check-in, please have your new camper meet the Directors, get cabin assignments, and meet the area staff. Then accompany your child to, and help her or him settle

into the cabin. Depending on the child's age, a stuffed animal and family photo may be helpful in alleviating homesickness. In addition, reviewing the camp's daily schedule and photos (found online) prior to the camp experience may be helpful. Please introduce yourself and your child to the group's counselors, and then please allow the cabin group to begin its formation. Please also discuss your expectations for your child with his or her counselors during cabin check-in. More advice on setting the stage for a successful camp experience may be found at: www.aca-camps.org.

Campers are often not ready for resident camping if they are unable to independently perform tasks such as dressing, brushing teeth, showering, cutting food, etc. For these youth, a day camping experience or short-term overnight program might be more appropriate.

The staff is trained to foster group cohesion, and this team-building process begins during the first hours of the camp experience. Most children will overcome this period of adjustment if they get involved with the program and if you express confidence in their ability to cope. Please call or email us if you need to inquire about your child. If you have real doubts concerning your child's ability to cope with this residential situation, we recommend that she or he first try an Onyahsa Day Camping, Parent-Child session, School-year Monthly Camp, or Mini-Camp (1/2 week) experience.

CAMP STAFF

The Onyahsa staff is comprised of adults and young adults who have been interviewed, screened and trained by the Jamestown YMCA. Over 75% return from previous seasons, bringing their experience to the program. The Director, Jon O'Brian, is a local educator who holds a Masters degree and several hours of graduate work in Education. He started at Onyahsa as a child, and moved through the ranks to become Director. The administrative staff is comprised of adults, most of whom hold bachelor's degrees, and often teaching certifications. The directors and a health supervisor reside on-site during camp sessions.

Counselors live directly in cabin areas, which have an average of two staff members per eight campers. In addition to regional staff, several international counselors join the Onyahsa Community each summer. Staff members receive training prior to the camp season on issues such as recognizing subtle signs of homesickness, handling delicate matters (i.e. bedwetting) discreetly, and safety procedures. They meet regularly through the summer to communicate and learn leadership skills.

GRATUITIES and TIPS

As a professional American Camp Association accredited program, which seeks to promote equality within the Camp Community, tipping counselors is forbidden. Parents wishing to show appreciation to Camp Staff may instead make a contribution to the Onyahsa Development Fund in the counselor's name.

ONLINE REGISTRATION AND THE ONYAHSA WEBSITE

You may register for camp sessions at and find and print forms from www.onyahsa.org the official Onyahsa website. This site will also offer a link to our one-way camper email service, Fax-Back Replies, FAQs, Camp Calendar, daily schedule, activities, news, updated camp information; and email links to the Camp Director, Administrative Director, cabin staff, and campers.

ONYAHSA OUTFITTERS: CAMP'S TRADING POST

Official Camp Onyahsa shirts, sweatshirts, caps, blankets, water bottles, flashlights, and many other official Camp items will be available for sale at Camp on Sundays during registration and Saturdays, after dismissal. All items are available for campers, family, and friends.

FUNDRAISING PROGRAMS and TUITION ASSISTANCE

During the year, Camp Onyahsa conducts fund-raising events, such as our Annual Spring Sale, designed to enable any camper to earn his or her way to Camp. Please inquire for more details on our Fundraising Programs, such as our Annual Earn-Your-Way-to-Camp Sale. (Fundraising participants need not be Financial Aid applicants.)

Through the generosity of our local supporters, a limited number of full and partial camp scholarships are available to qualified applicants who reside in Chautauqua County. As our mission is to bring together people from all walks of life, any local youth in need of financial assistance is encouraged to apply. Early registration discount programs, Ambassador Discounts, and Multiple Week tuition reductions are also available. Please contact the Camp Office for more information or to obtain a financial aid form.

THE ANNUAL YARD SALE FUNDRAISER

This summer consider bringing a household "rummage sale" item to Camp upon check-in (except clothing). These items will be stored until our huge Yard Sale, held at Camp in May. Save your Spring Cleaning "stuff" to help us raise funds for program and facility improvement at Onyahsa. Please visit us during this event.

WAYS TO HELP

Several fundraisers are held annually for our kids and the Camp. Our 4th annual "Take A Hike" sponsored walk will be held on Saturday, May 12, the Pathways Brick drive runs through the summer, and we will hold our 11th annual Dinner Dance for adults in November. For more information on any of these worthwhile events, please contact the Camp Office.

THE SPIRO BELLO SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Spiro G. Bello Camp Teen Leadership Scholarship Fund for deserving youth who display leadership abilities has been created through the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation to honor the former Onyahsa Camp Director. Spiro directed the Camp from 1962 - 1984 and mentored countless young people, including members of the current Onyahsa staff and board. If you would like to apply for a leadership scholarship, make a contribution to this perpetual fund, or if you would like to receive alumni information, please contact the Camp Director.

ONYAHSA ALUMNI

Alumni of all generations are invited to join the Onyahsans; a Jamestown-based and Internet community of supporters. This group will assist in site projects, fund-raising, historic preservation (photos and narratives), awarding the Bello Scholarship, and in general support. Please consult the Camp Director if you are interested in joining this local and international community. See also our OnyahsaAlumni Facebook profile for information and photos.

ONYAHSA PARENTS' ORGANIZATION

Parents, we fully realize the tremendous trust you place in us, and while we deeply honor your confidence, we want you to know that we also need your involvement. If Camp is important to your child, please consider joining our Onyahsa Parents Organization. Local parents will meet twice each year, with help via email from non-local families, to help develop policies, programs, and priorities for development. We really value your time, and would love to have your help in making Onyahsa even better! Please contact the Camp Director, for more information.

MORE INFORMATION*

More information may be found at the American Camp Association website; www.aca-camps.org, at our own: www.onyahsa.org, via Camp Onyahsa on Twitter, at Onyahsa Campers on Facebook, or through our Camp Onyahsa You Tube channel.

* Works cited include: "About Choosing a Summer Camp," Life Advice, MetLife, NY 1997; "Directions: Youth Development Outcomes of the Camp Experience," ACA, Martinsville, IN, 2005; "The Summer Camp Answer Book," ACA, Martinsville IN, 2003.