



THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN YMCA CAMPS

THE ARROWHEAD



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At the Heart of Camp

As the CEO of the South Mountain YMCA Camps, I have the privilege of wearing many hats, overseeing everything from HR and Finance to Food Service. Yet, my greatest joy comes from leading Chapel before the Opening and Closing Campfires at Camp Conrad Weiser.

This year, we worked to restore some of Chapel's history while also updating it to make the experience more relevant and impactful for today's campers. Part of this change was my decision that the leader of South Mountain YMCA Camps (me) should guide this tradition every session. By doing so, I hope to give campers direct access to the top of our organization while instilling the importance and gravity of this moment.

At the center of each Chapel is the Character Block Ceremony. While the words on the blocks have evolved over the years, their spirit has remained the same. After some research, we have come to the conclusion that no other camp appears to practice this ceremony. We believe it is unique to the mountain -- an extraordinary tradition that belongs to our community.

First Level – The Foundation: These are the YMCA's core values that form the base of who we are becoming.

- **Caring:** We show kindness by helping others and considering their feelings.
- **Honesty:** We tell the truth and do what is right, even when it's hard or unseen.
- **Respect:** We treat people, places, and things as though they matter.
- **Responsibility:** We keep our promises and care for what has been entrusted to us.



Second Level – Perseverance: These values help us move forward when life becomes difficult.

- **Welcoming:** We greet people where they are and make sure everyone feels they belong.
- **Resilience:** When we fall or fail, we get back up, keep going and try again, even when it's hard.

- **Empathy:** We seek to understand how others feel, show we care, and offer to help.

Third Level – Connection: These values guide us in building strong friendships and a supportive community.

- **Integrity:** We do the right thing, even when no one is watching.
- **Courage:** We try new things even when they're scary and stand up for what's right, even if we stand alone.

Top Level – Our Highest Goal: This value is both the hardest and the simplest. If we can do only one thing for ourselves and others, it should be this:

- **Love:** Through kind words and actions, we show people, places, and even ourselves that they matter.



Each Chapel concludes with **The Prayer of a Camper**, a tradition since 1948:

Spirit of the Hills, grant me thy strength to go back into the cities without faltering.

Strength to do daily tasks without tiring and with enthusiasm.

Strength to help my neighbor who has no hills to remember.

Spirit of the Lake, Grant me thy peace and thy restfulness.

Peace to bring into the world of hurry and confusion.

Restfulness to carry to the tired one whom I shall meet every day.

Content to do small things with a freedom from littleness.

Self-Control for the unexpected emergency and patience for the wearisome task.

With a deep depth within my soul to bear me through crowded places.

The hush of the nighttime when the pine trees are dark against the skyline.

The humbleness of the hills, who in their might, know it not.

The laughter of the sunny days to brighten the cheerless spots in the long winter.

Spirit of the Stars, may I take back the gift of friendship and love for all.

Fill me with a great tenderness for the needy person at every turning.

Grant that in all my perplexities and everyday decisions I may keep an open mind.

Spirit of the Wilderness, with the pure winds from the northlands, drive away my pettiness.

With the harsher winds of the winter drive away my selfishness and hypocrisy.

Fill me with breadth and depth and height of thy wilderness.

May I live out the truth which Thou has taught me by every thought and word and deed.

There are two things I reflect on with joy during every Chapel. The first is external: it is vital to highlight, again and again and in as many ways as possible, what we do at the South Mountain YMCA Camps. We are in the business of building better people, and that message must be consistently shared with our campers and with ourselves.

The second is internal: as I lead the ceremony, I look out at our campers and staff and see the future -- the future of our camp, of our community, and of our world. That vision fills me with joy and hope.

Keep the Fires Burning,



Bill Hinton, CEO, South Mountain YMCA Camps



Give the Gift of Camp!

Every summer, hundreds of campers arrive on the mountain with the same wide-eyed wonder. But for many, that journey is only possible because of the **Reach Out for Youth 566 campaign**, which will provide financial assistance to 566 children this year alone.

Jordan, age 13, is one of them. Before camp, he had never left his neighborhood for more than a day. At camp, he tried archery, learned to paddle a canoe, and discovered what it meant to be part of a cabin family.



His mother shared, "Camp gave my son the gift of belonging. He came home taller, not just in posture, but in spirit. He sings the songs at home and can't stop talking about his friends."

For those of us that have walked the mountain, it's easy to see yourself in Jordan's shoes. You remember the thrill of your first bullseye, the laughter in the dining hall, the hush of the woods at night.

Thanks to scholarships, children who might never have had the chance are now building the same memories and character you still carry with you.

These are not just financial awards. They are lifelines, opening doors to joy, growth, and resilience. They ensure that camp remains what it has always been: a place where every child belongs.

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Summer Returns to the Mountain

If you close your eyes, you can almost hear it: the cheerful call of the trading post bell floating across the cabins, the creak of the flagpole as the morning breeze stirs the Stars and Stripes, and the shuffle of campers hurrying toward the dining hall.

This summer, the mountain feels more alive than ever. Laughter rings from the archery range, the dining hall shakes with songs both old and new, and the trails echo with footsteps and village chants.

For alumni, so much of it is a familiar comfort -- the unique smell of our cabins, the taste of bug juice on a hot day, the cool quiet of the Peak. And yet, there are new delights, too. Campers themselves have asked for programs that reconnect them with timeless skills, and the result is magical: the woodshop hums with the sound of hammers and saws, and the garden below Bynden Wood bursts with tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers.

"Camp is where you learn the things that stay with you forever," said Emily, age 12, proudly displaying a camp chair she built with her own hands. "I didn't think I could make something like this, but I did. And now I'm taking it home."

It's a scene we all know well: a camper, beaming with pride, discovering that they can do more than they ever imagined. That is the heart of camp, and it's beating strong this summer.



"Mistakes are part of learning. That made me want to try again." – Jacob, camper

Program Spotlight: A Return to Tradition

Step into Uncle Harold's Gimme Shop, which houses Diego's woodworking program this summer, and you'll be carried back in time. The scent of fresh-cut wood fills the air. Shavings curl to the floor as hands -- small and careful, but determined -- guide sandpaper over edges until the wood is smooth. The scene could just as easily be from the 1960's or '70's, when campers worked on similar projects with equal pride.

Woodworking topped last year's camper wish list -- and judging by the sawdust and smiles, it was worth the wait! Camp chairs, desk organizers, napkin holders, and jewelry stands, each telling a story of patience and perseverance.

"When I first started, I was scared I'd cut it wrong," admitted Jacob, a first-time camper. "But Diego told me that mistakes are part of learning. That made me want to try again."

It's not just about building a project; it's about building confidence. Campers leave the shop with more than a finished project. They carry with them the knowledge that, with effort, focus, and guidance, they can create something lasting.

Alumni who once worked in cedar and steer horn or burned their initials into a wooden box will smile to see the same tradition thriving today. The tools may be sharper, the projects more polished, but the feeling is unchanged: the pride of saying, *I made this with my own two hands*.



Great golf. Greater impact.

Join us for our 28th Annual Golf Classic on Monday, September 15, 2025, at The Manor Golf Club for a day of golf that truly changes lives! Spend the afternoon on one of Berks' best courses, complete with contests, raffles, prizes, and plenty of fun on and off the greens. Whether you gather a foursome, sponsor a hole, or step up as a major event partner, your participation makes a lasting difference for local kids and families.

After golf, the celebration continues back at camp with a social hour and a delicious dinner, where you can relax, connect with friends, and toast to making a difference. Every swing you take helps send kids to camp. Proceeds benefit our Reach Out for Youth 566 Campaign, providing financial assistance so that every child -- regardless of family income -- can discover the magic of camp and return home with a spark that lasts all year long.

To register your team, explore sponsorship opportunities, or donate an auction item, contact our Golf Tournament Coordinator Extraordinaire **Tracey**, at (610) 670-2267 or tbraymiller@smyca.org





Adventure-Palooza: A Summer Journey to Remember

This summer, our campers once again had the opportunity to embark on *Adventure-Palooza* -- a newly expanded two-week experience that blended the magic of traditional camp with the thrill of an unforgettable outdoor excursion. Offered three times throughout the season, Adventure-Palooza quickly became a highlight of 2025.

The journey began with a week at camp, where campers settled in with an opening campfire and orientation before diving into classic camp activities. From swimming and archery to crafts and team challenges, the week was all about building friendships, developing new skills, and preparing for the adventure that awaited.

Week two took campers beyond the mountain to the beautiful town of Jim Thorpe in the Pocono foothills. Living in a tent campsite, campers learned to cook their own meals and embrace the spirit of outdoor living. Campers spent their days tackling one adventure after another: whitewater rafting the scenic rapids of the Lehigh River, biking 25 miles through breathtaking Pocono landscapes, exploring the historic streets and landmarks of downtown Jim Thorpe, descending deep into the wonders of Crystal Cave in Kutztown, and testing their limits on ziplines and high-adventure challenges at Refreshing Mountain in Lancaster.

Guiding them along the way was trip leader Marko, whose roots in the Jim Thorpe area gave campers an insider's perspective and a deeper appreciation of each stop. With his local knowledge, boundless energy, and larger-than-life personality, Marko drew campers in, kept them engaged and helped transform every activity into both a learning experience and an adventure.

The journey wrapped up with a stop at Hersheypark before returning to camp for a closing campfire, celebrating the friendships and memories forged along the way.

Adventure-Palooza proved to be more than just a trip -- it was a journey of growth, discovery and adventure that campers will carry with them long after the summer ended. Even more, it serves as the perfect introduction to our Trip and Travel Program, giving campers the confidence and excitement to continue exploring. Many will go on to participate in our International Camper Exchange Program (ICEP) and travel to Germany, Spain, and one day, hopefully beyond.



The best part of camp is knowing you're part of something bigger -- something that stretches across generations."

The Mountain Is Still Home

Time changes many things, but not the feeling of walking onto camp. Whether you arrive for a reunion, a volunteer day, or simply a stroll on the trails, the moment your feet touch the ground, you are home. Everything seems right with the world and you are transported back to the best summers of your childhood.

This summer, alumni have returned in joyful numbers. Some joined us for tours, reliving memories. Others came to volunteer, lending a hand at the barn, check-in, chapel, or even leading songs at a closing campfire. A few simply walked the trails,

pausing at the Peak to take in the same view they saw decades ago -- well, maybe with a few more houses below.

One described it perfectly: *"I thought I was just coming back to see camp. Instead, I felt like camp remembered me and welcomed me home. It's like I never left."*

We hope everyone feels that way ... Because no matter how long it's been, camp never leaves you. It lives in the friendships you keep, the values you live, and the memories that surface with every smell of a campfire and sound of laughing children.

So as this summer draws to a close, remember: the mountain is still here. Camp is still alive with the sound of laughter. It's still waiting for you. And just as in days past, the campfire songs still rise, the trails still beckon, and the next generation of campers is still learning the same lessons that shaped you.



Program Spotlight: Growing More Than Vegetables

Just below the pony barn on the edge of Bynden Wood, neat rows of green stretch toward the sky. Peppers ripen in the sun, tomatoes twist around their stakes, and herbs release their fragrance when brushed by small hands. Though the gardening program is new this year, it feels as if it's always belonged here.

For many campers, this is their very first experience with gardening. They dig their fingers into the soil, water carefully in the mornings, and race back at dusk to see how their plants have changed. "I've never grown anything before," said Maria, age 11. "Now I feel like I can take care of something and then see it feed my friends." The harvest -- tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, garlic, basil, and mint -- is gathered by campers and used in Outdoor Cooking lessons.

Garden Specialist Anson has guided them not only in tending the beds but also in recognizing the edible plants that grow wild all around camp like chives, mustard, wineberries, and lemongrass. He's already looking to the future: raised beds, beans as a protein source, baking bread, making cheese, and planting earlier so harvesting can stretch through the summer. What excites him most, though, is the way campers of all ages connect with the garden, each in their own way.

But his lessons go far beyond the vegetables. He teaches patience, responsibility, and the joy of nurturing life -- virtues every veteran of camp will recognize. Just as campers once learned teamwork on the ropes course or courage on the climbing tower, they now learn gentler truths: that small efforts grow into big things, that care brings reward, and that nature always has something to teach.

There are quiet moments, too. Campers sit among the plants, dreaming up recipes they might try, or discovering the science of composting and pollinators. Sometimes they don't even realize that what they're really learning is resilience -- that growth, whether of friendships, character, or cucumbers, happens little by little and lasts a lifetime. And perhaps one day, one of these campers will find themselves in a situation where they can't get to a store but will be able to sustain themselves, if only for a little while, thanks to the knowledge first planted here at camp.

Time to Update Your Camp Wardrobe?

The Trading Post has been buzzing all summer with brand-new 2025 gear, and now we're letting the secret out in the *Arrowhead*!

For **Camp Conrad Weiser** fans, you'll find:

- Cozy heather gray hoodies (perfect for chilly campfires!) and light blue t-shirts -- both with a fresh new design for 2025
- South Mountain YMCA Camps **Jibbitz** (to dress up your Crocs!) in five fun styles: *I ♥ Camp, S'more, SMYMCA logo, Compass, and Keep the Fires Burning*

For **Bynden Wood Day Camp**, the swag is just as fun, with Hugs the mascot taking center stage:

- Red hoodies, for cozy mornings
- Safety-orange t-shirts so bright they'll remind you of the glow of a campfire
- Long-sleeved bright blue rash guard shirts, perfect for any outdoor activity
- Plus, a brand-new gray plushie of our mascot, **Hugs the squirrel** (listed as *Glenky's Squirrel*)!

Sizes and quantities are limited, so don't wait—snag your favorites now. All items are available on the **Trading Post Online** -- just in time for early holiday shopping!

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