



Jewish Foundation for Camp Leader's Assembly

The State of Service at Jewish Camp: Informal Research Results

Interviews

- 19 camps; 15 overnight camps, 3 day camps, 1 overnight and day camp
- Spoke with Directors, Assistant Directors, and Trip Supervisors
- URJ, Ramah, Habonim Dror, JCC Day Camps, Federation affiliated Camps, Reconstructionist Movement Camp

Why Service

- Being a mensch
- Responsibility and Jewish value
- Community building
- Learning about participation in the world around you
- Thirst for interacting outside of the Jewish bubble
- We learn a lot about ourselves and who we are as people by engaging in service

Training Staff

- Need staff who are passionate about service
- Staff needs to be flexible and adaptable to the situations at hand
- Turnover and timeline of camp staffing

Types of Service

- Service to camp vs. service to other communities
- Special needs
- On-camp farms: food justice, sovereignty, stewardship as well as sharing the produce
- Philanthropy
- Service that happens *in camp* for the external community: packing food, food and clothing drives, writing letters to IDF soldiers, introduction to partner organizations
- Service that happens *away from camp* for the external community : shelters, homes and/or camps for children/adults with disabilities, nursing homes, food pantries

Success Stories & Highlights

- Work in relationship with others (ex: Senior Centers) and Education (ex: Fair Trade foods)
- Year-long behavioral change; *How do we know if we're successful? We'll know in 15 years*
- Ramah Poconos: Camper was inspired by her work with special needs community and has led to a career in Special Education and running Tikvah Family Camp program for last 6 years

- Teen Service Learning (TSL) is an immersive travel program for 11th/12th graders that started with AJWS and then bought curriculum. *'At the age of 22, I can say that TSL was the single most impactful experience of my life so far. It made me a lifelong servant of justice, I'm a global jewish citizen in a way I hadn't seen before.'* Full time staff who spends 50% of their time planning service through camp (Camp Tawonga)
- 'Typically people hear service and they think, what are you doing for the community? We look at service as meeting the needs of the individual campers.' (Camp Wooden Acres)
- The most exciting thing that ever happened was in 2007 our 10th graders were able to volunteer for a day on the nascent presidential campaigns in Iowa (Camp Ramah Wisconsin)
- One day of Jewish Education each week is focused on Tikkun Olam and they learn about a different organization through experiential education and then they and their parents learn how they can be involved during the year (Camp JRF - Reconstructionist Camp)
- In the summer of 2015, brought campers to Baltimore and when the kids went into the city and they saw some of the destruction, it led to inquiry into the racial injustice at the heart of these issues in Baltimore (Camp Moshe - Habonim Dror)

Challenges

- Finding volunteer opportunities for the size of camp group, the ages of campers
- Building and sustaining partnerships with local organizations and agencies
- Getting off camp is expensive and energy intensive
- Enhancing what has worked while continuing to develop new and interesting partnerships
- Creating meaning around a direct service activity
- Moving camper through age groups and developing service learning curriculum that builds on their past experiences and challenges them in significant ways as they get older
- Communication: *"You can't just call it Tikkun Olam and it will be a meaningful experience."*

Salient Themes

- Desire for direct service to connect to greater issues of social justice; prioritization and institutional knowledge
 - Personality Driven
 - Movement Driven
- Partnerships with Jewish social justice and/or social service organizations (local and nat'l)
- Location matters: proximity to cities, groundedness in local community relationships
- Intra-camp culture as a form of community building and service
 - *'We're teaching kids to be better people with each other, and be accepting of everyone. Culture is all that matters at camp.'*
- Desire to develop aspirational arcs in programming for service learning
- Continuation of service and community involvement outside of camp

Interest in Resources

- Additional time and money: grants for transportation, staff time
- Expertise in local community
- Concern that training is never specific enough for one community
- Desire to have generic service learnings that are age appropriate for 5-17 year olds. Can be facilitated easily by an 18, 19 or 20 year old