

STAFF APPRECIATION BANK OF IDEAS

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Counselors say that the number one reason they don't return to camp is internships, but focus groups run by Foundation for Jewish Camp have discovered that the actual leading issue in regards to staff retention is staff feeling undervalued. This problem can be addressed by camps implementing various staff appreciation efforts and programs. Making Mensches: A Periodic Table lists the Middot (values) of Areyvut - Community Mindedness and Achrayut - Social Responsibility as important Jewish values. These are particularly relevant to this issue because the summer camp experience begins with staff. When staff feel appreciated, the resulting boost in morale benefits the camp community as a whole.

This bank is meant to serve as an ever-growing resource for camp professionals to find ways to show staff that they matter.

If you have any ideas to add, please email jill@jewishcamp.org.

When implementing any form of staff appreciation, it's important to lay a foundation for how staff appreciation is approached at camp:

- Be consistent
- Have clear guidelines for how staff can earn specific "rewards"
- Be receptive to feedback
 - Try to be specific when asking for feedback (e.g. "What changes could we make to the Saturday schedule?" as opposed to "What would you change about camp?")
- Be transparent
- Preparation = appreciation
 - When staff are prepared for challenges they may face, it can help reduce stress
- Treat staff like adults
- The ideas in this bank are split up based on ease of implementation and cost level. Note that some are based on physical items, whereas some are more about training or interpersonal interactions.

SMALL

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL/LOW COST

- Individualized Shabbat-o-Grams from Unit Heads (or other staff)
- Staff are each assigned someone to watch for impressive things they do throughout the week and then recognize that person's hard work at the last staff meeting of the week
- "Golden fanny pack" given to one staff member at lunch every day and the person who wears it before leaves a note in the fanny pack, before passing it on again
- Small treats
- Staff-ter hours programming (activities for after campers are in bed)
- Recognize specialist counselors/specialty areas of the week
- Create space for staff to talk to leadership with the expectation of confidentiality
- Listen to staff needs with campers

MEDIUM

SYSTEMS TO BE IMPLEMENTED/LOW-MEDIUM COST

- ❑ Staff oneg on Shabbat (celebrations/special meal)
- ❑ Special meals/dessert for staff
- ❑ Silent disco
- ❑ Extra time off for staff
- ❑ Staff feedback sessions (kvetch & kvell) throughout the summer
- ❑ Train unit heads in positive reinforcement
- ❑ Open specialty activities (ropes, lake, art room, etc.) for “staff only” hours
- ❑ Staff week programming to find out how staff like to be appreciated

LARGE

STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO BE MADE/MEDIUM-HIGH COST

- ❑ Advanced certification courses that are completely paid for
- ❑ “Winter lending” of equipment and gear that would otherwise be unused (only for staff who intend to return)
- ❑ Staff mental health specialist
- ❑ Staff lounge/space just for staff
 - FOR SUMMER 2021, if staff days off are on-camp, have a separate space available for staff on days/nights off vs routine time off

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[How to Keep Staff Engaged All Summer Long: Jewish Camp - Hack-a-Thon The Staff Experience](#)

SET: Strategies for Effective Teamwork, Dr. Daniel Shore: <http://effectiveteam.work/>
(trainings, research, coaching)

[ACA Blog: What You Don't Know Can't Help You - The Value in Asking Your Staff](#)

[Mah Tov: A Strategy That Asks Us To Get Off the Path of Underinvesting in Our Workforce](#) by Mark Young