

To: Pocantico Hills Board of Education  
From: David Levine, Director PHDC  
Date: November 2, 2009  
Subject: Final Camp Report- 2009

The year 2009 was difficult for families, businesses and communities all across the country. The camping industry suffered as enrollments were down and many camps were forced to close. There were quite a number of camps that had a 50% reduction in campers. **However, even in this poor economic climate, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to inform the Board of Education and the Superintendent that Pocantico Hills Day Camp had revenues of \$314,441.50 and expenses of \$295,311.28 which resulted in a PROFIT of \$19, 130.22.**

This profit came about because of a number of procedures that were put into place prior to and during the camp season. These included:

1. Budget- I worked closely with Jay Scotto-Friedman to put together and adhere to the line by line budget that we established in October, 2008.
2. Monitoring of expenses- I carefully monitored the expenses of each specialty area to insure savings.
3. Salaries- I stayed within the budgeted amount of salaries by altering camp assignments.
4. Non Residents- In the past, non residents were told to go to the website to find out about the camp. I decided a more personal approach was needed to attract non residents so I arranged to tour the building and campsite with all interested families. As a result of this, we enrolled 9 more non resident campers then the previous year.
5. Flexibility- Payments were difficult for many families this year. Under normal circumstances, we expect to be paid in full by June, but this was not always possible given the unemployment in the nation. We showed flexibility by working with families and in some cases stretching out the payments.
6. Extensions- We had quite a number of campers sign up for 3 weeks and then extend for the entire summer. This is attributable to the staff who are caring, fun loving and excited to be in camp. They insure that the campers have a great summer.

So what was the summer like in 2009? Here is a brief analysis and some recommendations for 2010.

The 2009 day camp season officially began on Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> as approximately 300 smiling campers arrived on the hallowed grounds of the Pocantico School. The staff of over 100 greeted the campers and the program got underway immediately with swim testing and the varied activities that have made PHDC such an exciting place.

Assistant Director Laura Hansen and I worked throughout the year to enhance the program but also to insure that the traditions that made PHDC so successful for the past 50 years were continued. Swimming, athletics, wilderness, fun factory, studio, home economics, wood shop, nature, trips, overnights, Color War, Las Vegas Day, camp fair, egg drop day, crazytime, etc, were all included in the program and provided the campers with an opportunity to experience a

wide range of activities. In order to provide the children with even greater opportunities to have fun we also introduced a number of new programs. These included:

1. Computer instruction- This was provided for Grades K-2 by Ms. Marples a regular teacher at the Pocantico School. The curriculum concentrated on literacy but also provided the children with the opportunity to play educational games.
2. Pre and post camp care- We offered pre camp care from 8:00-9:00 and post camp care from 3:00-5:00. Fifteen children enrolled in the program which included swimming, home economics, fun factory, playground, etc. The feedback from parents was very positive.
3. Film making- This was offered by PHDC for the first time. Grade 2 made their own film while all other campers learned the skills necessary to make a film.
4. PHDC hats and shorts- These items were offered for sale and the response was very good.
5. Project Adventure- Teens spent 2 full days off camp participating in numerous outdoor adventure skill activities.
6. 4 year old program- For the first time we enrolled children age 4 to our Pre K group. Ten new campers registered at PHDC. These campers will form the basis of the program for the next 10 years.

In addition, a number of programs and events that we initially started in 2008 were continued and also were very successful. These included guitar instruction, jazz band, Las Vegas Day, Counselor/Camper Choice and the 3 week camp sessions. These programs will be continued and enhanced in 2010.

In this era of economic hardship and camp competition, it is necessary to constantly add programs and events so the children can have the best summer possible. I would like to make a number of changes and additions in 2010 to insure that PHDC remains the fabulous camp that it has been for the past 50 years. Some of the projected changes include:

1. Trips- I am in the process of adding additional trips for all grades. Some of these trips will be a combination of fun and education. I have already made visits to a number of facilities which can accommodate our campers. Some of these trips will include picnics, animals, nature, nutrition, etc.
2. Bike trip- The bike trip which has always been the main theme for the teens will continue. Planning is already underway to make changes to this trip which will make the trip safer and more exciting. The weather has been a factor on these trips for the past 3 years. It has caused difficult conditions and additional stress for staff, campers and parents. With this in mind Dr. Smith and I have come up with a plan to almost totally eliminate the weather as a factor on this 5 day trip. Once the camp dates are set by the Board, I will be able to outline the exact format of the trip. I can assure you that the trip will include biking, hiking, swimming, athletic competition and planned night activities. I can also state that the money issues that have been a point of contention in the past will be very limited.

3. Art- Depending on the rooms that are available for the camp over the summer, I am considering adding Art as an option for Grades 3-Teens.
4. Education- There is no doubt that camp is supposed to be a fun experience. However, there is a need to continue some form of education over the summer months so thinking and creating are not stagnant. With this in mind, I am considering a reading program for Grades PreK-2. This could be done during the counselor choice period or introduced as a separate period. Since almost all of our Head Counselors are in the field of education, this is something that can be accomplished.
5. Tennis- I would like to see an expansion of our tennis program. I will be working with Dr. Smith to see if this can be accomplished.
6. Jazz Band- The band under the direction of musician Conor Lyons performed a number of musical pieces at the camp show. Previously we accepted only campers from Grades 3-Teens in the band. I would like to see that expanded to include any camper who has musical ability.
7. Studio- The staff in studio did a fabulous job last summer. I would like to explore the possibility of offering dance as an option during crazytime.
8. Camp Newsletter- The first camp newsletter has been sent to all parents. I will be posting a monthly update letter on the camp website. Staying in touch with parents is a way of retaining campers.
9. Camp Video- One of the highlights of the final day of camp is viewing the camp video. Peter Rubeo does an excellent job shooting and editing the video. This resulted in sales of approximately 30 videos to campers.
10. Parent Meeting- We will continue the practice of inviting parents to a pre camp meeting to officially present the program and answer all questions.
11. 4 year old program- Next year we will put the 4 year old children in a separate room from the Pre K campers and have a separate staff for these young campers. They will follow the same program as the other Pre K campers. These campers form the foundation for the future and this program should be continued.
12. Guitar Instruction- I would like to see this program expanded to include more campers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order for us to plan adequately and to insure a successful camp program I would like the Board to consider the following proposals.

1. Camp Dates- Monday, June 28- Friday, August 6. No camp on Monday July 5, 2010.
2. Camp Rates- These rates have to be decided on immediately. I would like to send out the camp information to parents before January 2010. Rates should remain the same.
3. Activity Fees- I recommend an increase in the activity fees. Pre K-Grade 2- \$50, Grades 3-4- \$140, Grade 5- \$140, Grade 6- \$175.
4. Sessions- Retain the 2 three week sessions.

5. Teens- Must register for the full 6 week program and participate in a minimum of 6 mandatory training sessions or be denied the right to go on the bike trip.
6. Teen Staff- The teen staff in consultation with the Camp Director should have the right to deny the bike trip with cause to any camper who either does not qualify or has not exhibited behavior worthy of the trust and cooperation needed for this type of trip.
7. \*\*\*\***REGISTRATION**- We need to continue the registration dates that were established last year in order to allow proper planning. May 1 should again be the deadline for submitting enrollment forms. Anyone registering after May 1 would be subject to the same late fees as last year which was \$50 for residents, \$100 for non residents.
8. Payments- Full payment must be made by June 1. Any payments received after that date should be subject to a late processing fee of \$50.
9. Camp Video- I recommend that we send a camp video to all parents requesting information on the camp.

Health Issues- We were very fortunate last year to have no major injuries, no 911 calls, and no ambulances for campers or staff. I attribute this to our caring and diligent staff and especially to the effort and care given by Nurse Lynne to all our campers.

In conclusion, there are a number of people that deserve special recognition for their support and efforts in making PHDC such a wonderful place for the children. This camp cannot run without the cooperation and team work of everyone. Thanks to Dr. Smith, Jay Scotto-Friedman and Stan Steele for your guidance and leadership in helping me solve all the problems that arise. I thank the entire administrative staff including Gina, Mary, JoAnn, Olive, Jane, Linda, Sally who always assist me with anything that I need. A very special thanks to the custodial staff. No one should underestimate the amount of time and work they do to contribute to the success of this organization. I would also like to recognize Kelly who did such a fabulous job running the kitchen, ordering the food for the trips, getting the drinks and snacks, etc. Thanks to Mike and the pool staff who ran a safe and exciting program.

Finally, everyone should be aware that we have a very close group working together in the camp office. Nurse Lynne Jackson is a dedicated, caring professional who makes the children feel comfortable and treats them like they are part of her family. Camp Secretary Sharon Rubeo is a tireless, efficient worker who maintains all the camp records, handles all the camp phone calls and is a major contributor to the success of this camp. Finally, finally, my special thanks to Assistant Director Laura Hansen who is the spirit of the camp and arranges all the special activities which makes Friday such an exciting day.

I am looking forward to 2010 and I anticipate that this will be another great summer.  
Happy Camping.