<u>Parent Letter and Camp Policies Regarding the Internet and Other Technologies</u>

Dear Parents,

We take the safety and well-being of our campers—your children—very seriously. After all, giving your children over to the care of other people is perhaps the greatest act of trust in which you as a parent can engage. We aim to do everything we humanly can to earn and keep that trust. We also know we cannot do this without your help. We are writing to invoke the *partnership* we feel we have with you to help us make sure your children have the safest, most wholesome experience with us possible.

Given certain developments in our culture, including the increased use of the Internet, cell phones and text messaging, we appeal to you as parents—our partners—to help us maintain as safe an environment for your children at camp as we can. Please read our letter carefully so you may understand the challenges facing us regarding the continued safety and health of our camp community. Then, take time to review and then read to your child the enclosed policies regarding the Internet, social networking sites and exchanging contact information with their counselors. As always, we urge you to call us if you have any questions, concerns or ideas about any of these issues.

Cell Phones

As you know we have a "no-cell phone" policy at camp. Aside from the fact that cell phones are expensive and can get lost or stolen and that the physical camp environment is not kind to such items, there is a fundamental problem with campers having cell phones at camp, and that is trust. When children come to camp they—and you—are making a leap of faith, transferring their primary care from you as their parents to us and their counselors. This is one of the growth-producing, yet challenging aspects of camp. As children learn to trust other caring adults, they grow and learn, little by little, to solve some of their own challenges. We believe this emerging independence is one of the greatest benefits of camp. Contacting you by phone essentially means they have not made this transition. It prevents us from getting to problems that may arise and addressing them quickly. Sending a cell phone to camp is like saying to your child that you as the parent haven't truly come to peace with the notion of them being in our care.

We agree to tell you if your child is experiencing an unusual challenge with their adjustment to camp. *You can help* by talking with you child *before they leave for camp* and telling them that there is always someone they can reach out to, whether it is their counselor, a trusted facilitator, an activity leader, the Head Counselor or even the Director or camp health care provider. We are all here to help; however, if you don't trust us, your children certainly won't.

Digital Recordings

Another drawback of many cell phones these days is the built-in camera feature. It has happened at some camps around the country that children have secretly taken digital recordings of other campers or staff during changing or showering times and later uploaded those images onto the Internet. To lessen the possibility of this happening, we have decided to *ban all digital cameras and suggest that if your child wants pictures from camp, that they bring a disposable film camera.* We take photographs during the summer, which are available for viewing on a secure (password required) section of our website; we also usually make a DVD of the pictures for campers to have at no charge. Please help us maintain a safe environment by explaining this to your child (see our accompanying note). You should know that *any camper that takes a*

compromising recording of another camper or staff member and uploads it on the Internet or makes it public in any way may be subject to dismissal from camp or may not be allowed to return. If the law is broken, the appropriate authorities will be notified.

Cyber-Bullying and Harassment

It has happened at camps around the country that a few campers have sent rude, demeaning, intimidating or vulgar e-mails or IMs to other campers or have created false screen names to harass members of the camp community or spread false and damaging information about them. To be sure most Internet communication is fun, positive and one important way campers stay in touch with their friends. Our "Policy for Campers," which we are asking you to read over and then read with your child, covers our response to this problem. In addition, *we have outlined the steps you or your child should take should they receive an abusive, demeaning or otherwise threatening or inappropriate Internet communication.* Being familiar with these steps is part of the overall safety and healthy practice you should have in place with your child if they are online, regardless of whether they attend camp or not. Sharing them with you is pat of our partnership with you in your effort to protect your children whether they are at camp or not.

Your Kids & Our Staff after Camp

Our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and appropriate young adults we can hire—counselors who are best suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is part of this pledge. That said, our staff work with your children in the context of a visible, well-scrutinized environment that has many built-in checks and balances, and are supervised by senior staff guided by strict policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to co-workers and campers. By hiring them, we do not recommend them as baby-sitters, nannies or child companions outside of camp. *In general we discourage our staff from having contact with your children after camp since we cannot supervise it. We hire our staff for the camp season. We do not take responsibility for their behavior off-season.* As a parent you are, of course, free to make your own choice in this matter. While we cannot keep you from allowing your child to visit with one of our staff members, in so doing you take full responsibility. We also know that many children exchange contact information (e.g., e-mail address, profile names, cell phone numbers) with counselors without our or your specific awareness or permission. *If you are comfortable with your child having online or other contact with one of our staff members, you must give express, written permission for your child to exchange such contact information and take the responsibility to oversee any contact that results.*

Working Together to Keep Your Children Safe

The world is changing rapidly and though there are many positive, exciting ways for youngsters to enjoy the Internet and other technology, as advocates for children we want to work with you as parents to keep their experiences safe, healthy and positive. That is why we have taken the time to write these policies, include some resources for you and urge you to talk with your children—both about camp and about the Internet in general.