

## **Mission Statement**

Happy Hollow Children's Camp, Inc. provides residential camping activities in order to encourage the social, mental, spiritual and physical growth of children through the challenges of outdoor living and learning. Happy Hollow serves school-age children primarily from central Indiana with major emphasis on children who are economically disadvantaged, have special medical needs, or are members of educational school groups

## **Agency Information**

In 1951, Indianapolis civic leaders undertook the mission of sending inner city boys and girls, ages eight (8) to fourteen (14), to the fresh air, outdoor adventure and unique physical challenges of residential summer camp, at little or no cost to the campers. Using a challenge grant from the Lilly Endowment and the money raised to match it, they bought 776 hilly acres near Nashville, Indiana, on which they built cabins and created a twenty –acre lake. In 1954, the first small group of boys and girls were transported by van to the camp facility in Brown County for a week of summer camp. Over the years, Happy Hollow has grown in area and in size, camp activities and the number of children attending camp each year. In 2004, forty-six (46) acres of land was acquired, bringing the camp's total acreage to 822, on which 617 campers enjoyed the great outdoors, while playing, laughing and learning during a week of summer camp, far more children than could be transported by van.

Happy Hollow offers several programs for children from Indianapolis and the surrounding counties. Summer camp programs are available for children from low-income homes as well as children who are living with asthma, Muscular Dystrophy or burns. School groups visit Happy Hollow to learn about the outdoors, whether attending a program in the Nature Center or learning team-building skills using the high-ropes course. Also, families visit Happy Hollow each Fall for the annual Fall Family Festival during which they learn new skills while enjoying and exploring the outdoors.

Among the camp's many accomplishments, the following are the greatest sources of pride:

- There have only been four (4) Camp Directors in the history of Happy Hollow Children's Camp, Inc., allowing the camp to provide consistent, high-quality programming.
- Happy Hollow has maintained strong relationships with other community organizations including the American Lung Association of Indiana, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Inc., and the People's Burn Foundation of Indiana, Inc. these relationships allow Happy Hollow to provide a life-enriching summer camp experience to children with special medical needs.
- Happy Hollow has been diligent in keeping camp expenses low. In the past ten (10) years, the annual budget expenses has only increased by twenty percent (20%), a two percent (2%) average yearly increase, while camper enrollment has increased by thirty -three percent (33%) during the same period, affording Happy Hollow the ability to keep the cost to each family to a minimum.
- Since 2000, over seventy-five (75) individuals, foundations and corporations, including United Way of Central Indiana, have invested over \$2.2 million in

capital funds for camp renovations and improvements, proving that the Indianapolis community still supports the ideals the founders of Happy Hollow worked so hard to implement.

Happy Hollow Children's Camp, Inc. offers the City Camp program for children ages eight (8) to fourteen (14) who are from economically disadvantaged homes. Any child living in the United Way of Central Indiana service who is eligible to participate in his or her school's free or reduced lunch program is eligible to attend City Camp. Children with special circumstance are evaluated on an individual basis. Happy Hollow strives to make City Camp affordable and available to those who need it most. In 2004, the approximate cost per camper per week was \$490.00. Each child's family was asked to contribute only \$45.00, a minimal fee compared to the average rate for one week of residential camp at similar facilities in Indiana.

City Camp was offered for five (5) one-week sessions, serving a total of 422 children during the summer of 2004. There were 198 females and 224 males in attendance. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of those children are Marion County residents. Of the 422 campers, ninety-six percent (96%) qualified for the free or reduced lunch program at their schools and sixty-four percent (64%) of children lived in a single parent household. Happy Hollow takes pride in the diversity of our campers. In 2004, fifty-nine percent (59%) were African-American, thirty-five percent (35%) were white, three percent (3%) were biracial, two percent (2%) were Hispanic and one percent (1%) were Native American.

In 2005, Happy Hollow will offer five (5) one-week sessions of City Camp beginning the week of June 12, 2005 and ending the week of July 29, 2005. City Camp can accommodate up to 110 children each week, and we hope to have funding to offer each of the 550 spaces to a needy child. To better reflect the diversity of our community, Happy Hollow plans to work with the Hispanic Center of Indianapolis to actively recruit more Hispanic campers, particularly those from underserved areas in the community. The City Camp information and application packet will be available to potential campers in February 2005. These packets will be distributed to schools, social service agencies and community groups in the United Way of Central Indiana service area.

### **Program Outline**

Each Sunday of the City Camp program, the children gather in downtown Indianapolis for check-in and are then transported by school bus to the 822-acre camp facility in Brown County. When they arrive at camp, the children are divided by age into cabin groups, with approximately seven (7) campers per cabin. Each cabin is supervised by well-trained counselors and program staff who assist campers in unpacking and getting settled. Guided by the cabin counselor, campers decide as a cabin group which program activities they will attend during the week.

Some of the most popular activities include:

Arts & Crafts	Kayaking
Hands-on nature activities	Fishing

Mountain Biking	Sports
Horseback Riding	Archery
Swimming (lessons & free swim)	Gardening
Canoeing	High Ropes
Campouts	Skits

There are twenty-five (25) program area choices and only fourteen (14) time slots to fill so campers must work together to determine how they wish to spend their week. Cabin counselors make out the schedule, provide leadership, and help campers get to program areas safely and on time. As particular needs arise, cabin counselors might also assist campers with health concerns and personal hygiene issues, camper relations, camp chores and other responsibilities. Campers are supervised twenty-four (24) hours a day until they return to Indianapolis and are released to their parent or guardian.

### **City Camp Staff**

Long-time staff members Executive Director, Bernie Schrader and Assistant Director, Tammy Nordhoff recruit, hire, train and supervise thirty-five (35) college-age counselors and program area staff, many of whom return for more than one summer of service. The City Camp staff members are chosen based on their commitment to children, their willingness to be positive role models, and their appreciation of the outdoors. Prior to the beginning of camp, each staff member receives ten (10) days of comprehensive training, including certification in first aid and CPR. City Camp staff members learn new songs, games and activities; rehearse emergency procedures; and practice conflict resolution. They are fully prepared for the camp weeks ahead.

### **Goals**

Communities and parents are looking for safe programs that will aid in the transition of their children into adulthood. City Camp strives to teach camper to:

- Share;
- Use appropriate, respectful language;
- Adhere to rules and policies;
- Help other;
- Take turns;
- Respect other; and
- Practice proper hygiene.

Hopefully, each child will carry values and skills back to his or her home, school and community. These values include respect for oneself and others, as well as respect for personal and community property, and an appreciation of the natural environment.

Additional goals are:

- Learning about and enjoying the outdoors;
- Modeling democratic living;
- Exploring values and meanings;
- Strengthening family values in a cooperative living environment;
- Education participants for safe and healthful living; and
- Developing the unique personality of each child.

## **Collaborations**

Happy Hollow Collaborates with a variety of schools, social service agencies and other not-for-profit organizations to serve the community's underprivileged children. As a member of the United Way of Central Indiana, Happy Hollow works with other member agencies to identify and recruit campers. Other agencies such as the Methodist Pediatric & Adolescent Care Center and the county offices of the Division of Family and Children refer children who would benefit from a camp experience. Key contacts include Indianapolis Public Schools, surrounding township school corporations, Community Centers of Indianapolis, Children's Bureau of Indianapolis and former campers and parents.

Many businesses, individuals and foundations make the Happy Hollow City Camp experience possible by volunteering time and contributing financially to the camp's success. Through collaborations with Clarian Health Partners and other local physicians and medical groups, every child who attends City Camp is offered a free physical and health screen.

In addition to collaborations for City Camp, Happy Hollow works with Muscular Dystrophy Association, Inc., The People's Burn Foundation of Indiana, Inc., and American Lung Association of Indiana to provide a camping experience for children with special medical needs.

## **Objectives and Evaluation**

Happy Hollow continually measures the effectiveness of its programs and the outcomes achieved. Each day of camp, counselors evaluate each camper in the following areas by giving a grade of through E (A=most always, B=usually, C=sometimes, D=not often, E=hardly ever).

### **The Camper**

1. follows camp and cabin rules;
2. is willing to participate in activities;
3. accepts supervision and guidance from adults;
4. demonstrates a respect for others;
5. works well as a team/group;
6. demonstrates self-control; and
7. behaves in an acceptable manner.

Although every camper is different, with individual strengths and weaknesses, each should demonstrate some growth in the seven (7) areas listed above. In a successful City Camp program period, eighty-five percent (85%) of all campers will receive As and Bs in these seven (7) areas.

Both campers and counselors complete program effectiveness evaluations. Instructors in each program area obtain the following information:

- the number of campers who participated in the activity;
- the number of campers who understood and followed the rules of the activity;

- the number of campers who retained general facts of the program area visited (i.e.: explain a food chain, name the parts of a horse, describe how to change a bicycle tire); and
- additional comments regarding the program

Programs are evaluated for effectiveness throughout the summer. Success is achieved when ninety-five percent (95%) of campers understand and follow the rules of the activity, and eighty-five percent (85%) can reiterate general facts of the program area.

Further, on the last day of the camp week, campers have an opportunity to evaluate and discuss which programs they liked and disliked. Parents are encouraged to complete an overall evaluation of their child's Happy Hollow experience. This information is used to evaluate each aspect of City Camp, including programming areas, which allows for continual restructuring and growth. Ongoing research and collaboration with other professionals and youth-related organizations promote updates to the evaluation process, allowing Happy Hollow to better meet the needs of the campers and the expectations of their parents and guardians.

For more than thirty (30) years, the American Camp Association (ACA) has accredited Happy Hollow Children's Camp, Inc. The ACA accreditation standards establish guidelines for policies, procedures and practices for camps such as Happy Hollow. In order to maintain accreditation, Happy Hollow must demonstrate its ongoing commitment to the rigorous standards set by ACA. This accreditation process also gives families confidence when selecting a camp program for their children, ensuring quality programming and qualified staff in a safe, well-supervised environment.

### **Summary**

City Camp is a week when children of different backgrounds live together as a community. While campers work to build skills of self-sufficiency, they also learn to work together to accomplish common goals. Through teambuilding exercise and program areas such as the high ropes course, campers learn to support one another and develop a healthy reliance on fellow cabin mates. Through their successful participation in new activities, City Campers gain self-confidence and knowledge that they can make positive decisions, overcome obstacles and accomplish their goals, long after they return to their communities.

The top three (3) beneficial aspects of City Camp are:

- Camping helps raise the self-esteem of boys and girls who too often may feel isolated due to poverty or other life circumstances beyond their control.
- Children who show growth and development in the areas of self-confidence, personal responsibility, social skills, community awareness and program skills will be more successful at home and at school.
- Through counselor modeling, campers receive positive reinforcement in the areas of citizenship and environmental stewardship.

The top three (3) potential concerns or obstacles for City Camp are:

- Financial support is increasingly difficult to secure. With so many worthy programs seeking assistance, foundations and individual donors are often forced to decrease the amount given to one organization in order to support others.  
**Response:** Happy Hollow will continue to research new sources of funding and will strive to increase the net profits from each annual fundraiser, including the annual Auction and Dinner and the Fall Family Festival.
- Communication with families is difficult since the target population is transient in nature.  
**Response:** Happy Hollow has hired a staff member to recruit campers and maintain contact with the families throughout the year. Contact will include mailings, phone calls, school visits and invitations to special events.
- Finding highly-qualified, caring counselors and program staff is a constant challenge.  
**Response:** The Executive Director and Assistant Director will increase visits to college campuses and camp fairs to reach a broader group of candidates.

### **Finances**

Here at Happy Hollow Children's Camp we are proud of the fact that we can continue to meet the needs of the community by providing high-quality summer camp programming to economically disadvantaged children at minimal cost to the families. While similar residential camps in the area reserve a limited number of spaces for "scholarship" campers, Happy Hollow offers a camp experience to those children who need it most, regardless of the family's ability to pay.

Currently, Happy Hollow is supported by United Way of Central Indiana, over twenty-five (25) charitable foundations such as the Indianapolis Foundation, Irwin Financial Foundation, PACERS Foundation, Nicholas H. Noyes, Jr., Memorial Foundation Inc., Lilly Endowment Foundation, The Clowes Fund, Nina Mason Pulliam Foundation and numerous individual donors. The Board of Directors is seeking support of endowments as well as individual planned giving. Additionally, the staff of Happy Hollow continually researches new sources of funding.

The support from the United Way of Central Indiana is not only financial, but Happy Hollow maintains a volunteer base of community leaders who assist with governing, fundraising and marketing as well as helping at camp during the City Camp program.

Happy Hollow Children's Camp, Inc., will continue to offer City Camp as long as the need exists and financial support is available. Through mailings, annual fundraisers, planned giving programs and endowments, Happy Hollow strives to maintain a solid, long-term financial base to ensure the availability of City Camp well into the future.