

The Swimming Program

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Most of the nations camping authorities I am sure would agree that learning experiences must be the outgrowth of any camp in order to be truly called a camp. Keeping this in mind, a purely recreational swimming program without the learning of swimming skills is not regarded as a good, worthwhile camping experience. This segment of the camp program will cause a lot of enthusiasm when the swimming skills are taught in an interesting way. The effect of the temperature of the water and air on the class, plus the attitude of the individuals has to always be kept in mind by the instructor. If this is not kept in mind, participation problems soon arise.

Time Element Involved In Teaching Skills

The Christian camp has a somewhat unique problem that most camps do not have. This problem is that of the time element involved in teaching skills. It has been my experience at MCYC that the majority of the campers stay only one week. This fact has caused me to concentrate mainly on the ones who are very weak swimmers and the non-swimmers. Campers where the boys and girls stay for a period of four to six consecutive weeks can provide much more concentrated teaching in all phases of swimming.

American Red Cross Program

The American Red Cross program is used at MCYC. After teaching and a thorough testing of the individuals involved, cards are presented to the ones passing the tests. This is done during an evening when the various camping awards are handed out in front of the entire camp.

Safety First'

Safety first has to be the main motto in the swimming program, The loss of one life, especially at a Christian camp, would have a deadly effect on the total camp program. For this reason, every possible avenue of safety is followed at MCYC. The "buddy system" as set forth in the American Red Cross Water Safety Manual works well with any number of swimmers. This is the procedure of assigning a buddy to each swimmer so that each can watch the other during the time they are at the waterfront.

Every ten minutes or so the class is whistled out of the water to stand holding up their buddy's hand. A quick look will tell you if anyone is missing. This procedure is irritating to many swimmers for a while but they are usually understanding. The "tag board" can also be used as a safety procedure. A numbered board is used and as the campers prepare to swim, they can turn their assigned number over. Tags are turned back when they leave the swimming area.

Swimming at MCYC

Swimming at MCYC is conducted on an inland lake. The morning classes are taught in four periods with ten to fifteen campers in each class. A separate period in the morning is available for the staff and their children. In the afternoon, there are two periods for all campers. The girls swim for one hour while the boys are having their required rest period. Then the boys swim while the girls rest.

Due to a basic fear of water, especially natural lake water, some campers try to avoid the various swimming classes with different types of excuses. To counteract this, we require an excuse from the nurse as the only means of not swimming. Even then, the campers are required to be at the beach area unless they are sick. This gives them the benefit of the sun and the association with the other campers.

Creating Interest In the Swim Program

Interest in the swim program can be brought about by the use of water safety films and guest speakers. As an example, we had a skin diver come to the camp and demonstrate the underwater equipment he used. He also showed an underwater film of a trip into the Brahma Islands. The film was in color and showed the beautiful, colored, tropical fish and coral formations. We could truly see God's hand in the wonderful underwater world.

Added interest has been brought about by letting some take early morning dips or a boat ride. Warm clothing or gathering around a campfire is necessary afterwards.

Let me stress that in all of the swimming classes the boys and girls are kept separated. The reasons against mixed swimming are obvious, so I will not touch on them at this time.

In closing, may I state that as a personal opinion, camping is not complete without a good instructive swimming program. When skills can be learned in order to help save someone's life, the time and money allotted seem to be very small.