



# 2017 Summer Summary

Ann Pickens  
Summer Camp Director

# Overview

Camp Winnataska Board of Directors,

Winnataska had an extraordinarily successful season in 2017. The identity of our camp comes from a strong sense of tradition, a commitment to excellence in Christian camping, and the development of an exciting environment. My hope is that every camper who walked through our gates left with a renewed sense of being and purpose in the world.

I would like to thank the board for your hard work this year. Our summer program would never be successful without your support and encouragement. I am consistently amazed at how Winnataska succeeds due to the contributions from various corners of the camp family. I firmly believe that we offer a unique experience when compared with other summer camps, and that is due in large part to the rooted in the community that we have created over the past 100 years.

It is my intention to return to Camp Winnataska for the Summer of 2018. Tricia Brice has also agreed to return as Program Director. I have thoroughly enjoyed the past two years serving as the Summer Camp Director and look forward to helping share Winnataska with a new set of campers as we celebrate 100 years of camping excellence!

Follow the Glean,

*Ann Pickens*  
Summer Camp Director



# Staff

Camp's summer college staff is the heartbeat of Winnataska. This year we had sixteen Comanches and ten Blackfeet. This staff was exceptionally hard working and was characterized by an ability to continually go above and beyond expectations.

## Achievements, successes, goals accomplished:

- ✦ One of the largest changes in this year's staff was the increase from six to ten Blackfeet. The returning Blackfeet all mentioned this as a game changer in their ability to be efficient with group projects. This shift allowed them to split the work and accomplish more.
- ✦ This staff seemed to be one of Camp's most cohesive staffs, they worked well together and created very little conflict.
- ✦ We reworked several of the "Special Operations" staff jobs into the cleaning and maintenance schedules so that staff would be in program areas more frequently. This resulted in more cohesive program areas.
- ✦ Tricia and I intentionally try to create an environment where the staff feels valued. Many staff members mentioned in their exit interviews that they appreciate the responsibility they are given in creating the Winnataska experience.
- ✦ Staff members were frequently noted in camper and parent surveys as a strength at Winnataska.



## Issues, concerns, problems to be addressed:

- ✦ Overlapping trainings, partially due to weather, forced many staff members to be certified in one area. We had set the goal of having everyone proficient in two program areas. This created an issue when injuries or scheduling demanded a staff shift.
- ✦ The balance between maintenance and camper focused activities continues to be a challenge.
- ✦ Staff sets the tone for leaders, staff having phones at program gives leaders a mixed signal.

## Recommendations:

1. Program specific staff trainings for next year beginning in February.
2. **Retooling hut staff to address better mentoring of leaders and supervision of campers.** This would create a need to rotate staff throughout the summer to truly living in the cabins. The weekly hut staff would also take the cleaning/maintenance duties for that week, allowing the total number of staff members assigned to each program to decrease slightly.
3. **Staff phones should not leave living quarters;** staff would follow the leader rules when they are on hut staff. Camp can purchase MP3 players for the programs that need music.
4. It looks like we might have more than 10 quality applicants next year for the Blackfoot position, based on the size of the Blackfoot hut and dynamics of the group I think we should keep the number at 12 or below.

# Leaders

During the summer of 2017, over 180 leaders volunteered their time to be a leader at camp. Leaders are the primary caregivers for our campers and as such are the key to a successful summer.

## Achievements, successes, goals accomplished:

- ✦ We had an increase in boy leaders this year, partly due to targeted recruiting. This eased some stress in cabin supervision when compared to past seasons.
- ✦ We hosted two separate Leadership training weekends this year, one weekend focused on returning leaders while the second was geared for new leaders. Specialized training allowed us to build on skills as needed for returning leaders and more efficiently communicate with new leaders.
- ✦ Focusing on text messaging as the primary form of communication with leaders created more rapid responses.
- ✦ In several instances this summer fast action from leaders, activating various emergency procedures, ensured camper safety.



## Issues, concerns, problems to be addressed:

- ✦ High school students lack an element of foresight that is necessary in providing total camper supervision. We had multiple instances this summer when leaders were present during bad behavior yet did not step in and address the situation.
- ✦ Cell phones in the cabin are becoming a larger issue as coverage continues to increase at Winnataska. This summer we had a leader violate our policy by posting to social media directly from the cabin. Campers report that leaders spend a significant amount of time on their phones while in the cabins.
- ✦ With schedules that seem to be becoming busier, leaders have a hard time attending training weekends.

## Recommendations:

- Hut staff needs to be present in cabins every time campers are there.** This job will rotate between staff members and should be accompanied by extra pay. While assigned to hut staff, Comanches and Blackfeet will be in the huts as full-time leaders. They will eat and attend night activities with their cabin. During program each day they will have a set of responsibilities unique to hut staff.
- Offer a CPR course at camp multiple times during the spring. We always have leaders who are scrambling to find CPR courses at the last minute.
- Emphasize recruiting boy leaders through high schools and churches, using camp alumni and friends as a resource. Many of our best male leaders come as recommendations from camp alumni. This targeting recruiting has helped in the past few summers, but we need to stay vigilant.
- Leaders do not need to have cell phones in the hut.** Most camps have developed a phone system where leaders have access to their phones during off periods, but are not allowed to have their phones present in the huts. The first year of the program will be a culture change, but is in the best interest of the campers.

# Parents and Campers

Winnataska hosted over 1,400 campers this summer. Most of our campers hailed from Birmingham, although a large number came from Huntsville and the greater Atlanta area as well. Parent interaction begins months before summer arrives; much of the parents' camp experience revolves around our online presence and registration experience.

## Achievements, successes, goals accomplished:

- ★ Fully adding the medical component to the online system has done away with most paperwork and increased the efficiency of the Health Hut. Nurses were able to chart directly into the system, which then allows nursing and program staff to access camper history and incidents with ease.
- ★ A new camper email system reduced parent frustration. Daily photos were also reorganized allowing access to archival photos in the same location as new daily photos. The daily pictures continue to be one of the most valuable ways to communicate with parents.
- ★ The mail system, currently housed near the camp store allows for the smoothest and fastest care package and mail process we have had. The system has also cut the sorting time during the week down to less than 10 minutes each day as opposed to hours it was taking a few summers ago.
- ★ We removed between 4 and 8 of the oldest boy campers from the Seminole hut each week to help with the large age gap that often is created in that hut. This did result in fewer instances of older campers created awkward situations for younger campers.
- ★ Winnataska's new website launched at the close of the summer season. The modern look and streamlined content has helped with parent communication. Parent access to registration, email, and photos are now all in one convenient location.

## Parent Survey Results:

	EXCELLENT!	GOOD	OK	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DON'T KNOW OR N/A	TOTAL
Website	72.37% 55	23.68% 18	2.63% 2	1.32% 1	0.00% 0	76
Online Registration Process	75.00% 57	21.05% 16	2.63% 2	1.32% 1	0.00% 0	76
Check-in/Check-out Procedures	81.58% 62	14.47% 11	2.63% 2	1.32% 1	0.00% 0	76
Camp Care Packages	67.11% 51	18.42% 14	2.63% 2	0.00% 0	11.84% 9	76
Value for the money	78.95% 60	17.11% 13	1.32% 1	2.63% 2	0.00% 0	76
Convenient summer schedule	78.95% 60	18.42% 14	2.63% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	76
Safety and security	75.00% 57	22.37% 17	1.32% 1	1.32% 1	0.00% 0	76

## Issues, concerns, problems to be addressed:

- ✦ Male camper discipline problems continue to be an issue. This summer we had problems both with leaders being unaware of what was happening in the hut, as well as taking appropriate action when they were aware of poor behavior. Campers also discovered that the bathhouse was an opportunity to interact between age groups without much leader supervision. Many director sets do not bring a male director with them, this restricts the ability of the directors to walk in to cabins unannounced.
- ✦ Campers bringing cell phones to camp creates privacy concerns for other campers. A few parents each week flagrantly ignore the no cell phone rule.
- ✦ Having oldest male campers stay in Pueblo worked great, however it required moving beds in and out of Seminole to prepare for Girls camp in the middle of the summer, due to the need for rails on the beds in Pueblo.
- ✦ Tattered storm curtains are an eyesore and are failing to serve their purpose. Dollie Brice tested out new material in Navajo; these curtains look great.



## Recommendations:

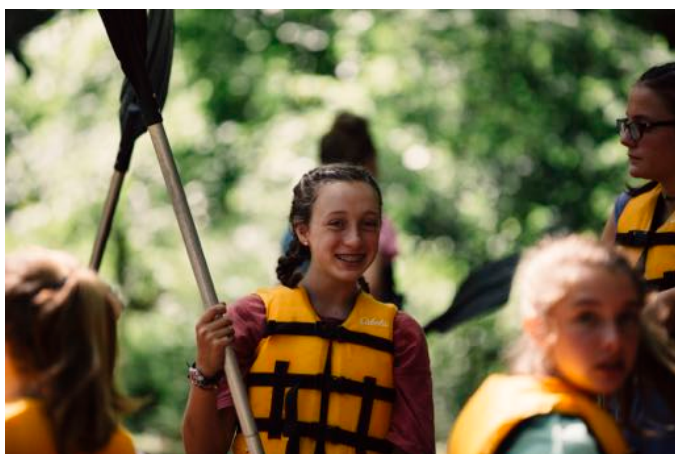
1. In addition to changes in camper supervision, we should also institute a uniform discipline policy week to week. Weekly directors handle basic camper discipline, while that needs to continue to be our practice we need to develop a system for documenting discipline issues and create set guidelines for when camper parents should be contacted.
  2. Every set of Weekly Directors needs to have a male as part of the team. If a team does not have someone to ask, we need to work as a group to make sure each week is covered.
3. **We should enforce a zero-tolerance policy for campers' cell phones.** Our policy has stated for several years that we can send campers home for having cell phones, but always opted to warn the camper and simply confiscate the cell phone. We need to make this new policy very clear in Spring communications and in person during camper drop off.
  4. **Hut schedules need to include a designated shower time for each cabin.** This will eliminate some potential for bullying issues between age groups and help with traffic flow issues.
  5. Put rails on the Pueblo beds. If we are going to house campers there we need to permanently adjust furniture to reflect that, rather than having to disassemble beds multiple times a summer.
  6. Replace storm curtains in the 5 remaining huts. This is an easy step to help make our current facilities look so much better.

# Program Areas

The staff worked hard to keep the campers happy while learning new things. Each day, the huts rotated through 7 periods. Each Program Specialist felt that they were able to build upon the successes of past years and in addition, add some new and exciting activities to keep campers engaged.

## Achievements, successes, goals accomplished:

- ✦ Outdoors worked hard to make the camp-out memorable, building on the success from last summer. The addition of inflatables on Grace Lake added to camp out fun and allowed the middle huts have a destination for a half-day adventure and long canoe trip.
- ✦ Crafts created a schedule with multiple crafts each day this summer; the result was more campers engaged for the entire time they were at the craft hut. New jewelry crafts were well received by female campers.
- ✦ Ropes had successful summer. The staff focused on teaching team building and communication with every age of camper.
- ✦ Shooting sports excelled this summer at scaffolding their activities, slowly building and adding skills as the week progressed.



## Issues, concerns, problems to be addressed:

- ✦ Male campers continue to finish planned crafts early and many do not show interest in additional projects.
- ✦ Older campers would like more of a challenge or additional activities in several program areas.
- ✦ Outdoors continues to rank low on camper surveys. The mud course in Outdoors is beginning to bore campers who have attended for multiple years, it is not exciting for many prior campers.

## Recommendations:

1. Purchase stem kits and projects for male huts' crafts. The addition of robotics or engineering kits would fit neatly into the structure of the craft program and appeal to many campers who currently are disengaged in this program.
2. **Add paintball guns.** Paintball could be integrated into shootings sports for the middle and possible oldest cabins at least once a week or as an option during several other more advanced options such as longer horseback rides and paddling trips.
3. **Create "ninja warrior" style elements for the mud course.** This would refresh the mud course and help build excitement in the Outdoors program.
4. Establish a safe route to the top portion of Winnataska's property. Much of our planning is hemmed in due to the fact that some great areas to camp are unsafe to reach due to Camp Winnataska Road splitting the property. In the long-term plan I want to keep reiterating the need for a safe route to that property.
5. Offer more camper choices. I do think exposure to all the activities is very worthwhile, but I also think that campers need to be able to choose some of their activities. I know we have tried this in the past with little success, but we need to continue to research how other camps accomplish this.

# Night Activities

For many campers, night activities are the most exciting part of camp. Night activities are some of our longest traditions and provide unique memories for our campers.

## Achievements, successes, goals accomplished:

- ✦ Holiday night was able to run more smoothly this year with the addition of rented lights for the open area between the dining hall and craft hut.
- ✦ During a Girls week that included rain every single day, we still were able to hold Indian Night outside with the flexibility of Mainside and Chico directors.

## Issues, concerns, problems to be addressed:

- ✦ The stage in the Gyvilion takes up valuable floor space during night activities or rainy-day situations when the whole camp is in one place.

## Recommendations:

- 1. Adjust the stage location in the Gyvilion.**  
We could cut a notch in the current stage for the middle post so that we can push the stage back, or decrease the depth of the entire stage so as to not impede as much floor space and traffic.
- 2. The open field where the gym stood needs to be utilized.** Most people agree having the open green space has been a lovely addition to camp, we need to capitalize on it by flattening out the space to make it truly useable. The central location would create a wonderful field for games. The addition of permanent lights would make it a key piece of night activities and allow for more creativity in our night

