



February 3, 2010

Dear Camp Courage/Camp Erin – St. Louis Volunteer,

Thank you so much for your interest in volunteering for the grieving kids of Camp Courage, Friday, June 4th through Thursday, June 10th, 2010 and/or Camp Erin – St. Louis, Thursday June 10th through Wednesday, June 16th, 2010. Participating in these camps is both a privilege and a blessing. It is a fun, energetic experience where you will witness contagious laughter, newfound friendships, and incredible courage. The kids you meet will inspire, teach, and most of all, love you. They are aware of the time and energy it takes for you to join them at camp. You will feel their appreciation through a sparkling smile that lights up your day, a warm embrace tinged with tears, a hand-made gift created only for you, or a shared story never told. Undoubtedly, you will not leave Camp Courage or Camp Erin – St. Louis the same person you were when you arrived; you will be a better person knowing that you made a difference in the life of a child who needed you the most.

Camp Courage and Camp Erin – St. Louis are overnight camps for kids ages 6-12 and teens 13-18 who are surviving the death of someone significant. The causes of the deaths vary from long term illness, short term illness, accident, suicide, murder and AIDS. The length of time since the death varies as well. Some campers arrive not knowing anyone else while some attend with their siblings. The campers represent families of lower socioeconomic status, as well as families of middle class families. The common thread that runs through each of them is the death of someone they love.

Being in a camp environment as a cabin counselor or helping hand is hard work. **However**, you will most definitely return home feeling more energized than when you left. Your time at this camp will not be filled with sadness, depression, and tears but instead by laughter, hope and newfound friendship. Your mere presence conveys a message to the campers of acceptance and encouragement. That in itself will foster a new understanding that the campers are not alone in their grief, that their grief is OK and survivable, and that there is hope in tomorrow. That is the magic of making a difference in the life of a child who needs your care and support.

Again, the dates for Camp Courage in Candyland, are Sunday, June 6th through Thursday, June 10th for the campers. Cabin Counselors arrive at **6 PM on Friday, June 4th** and return home on Thursday, June 10th. The dates for Camp Erin – St. Louis in Candyland, are Saturday, June 12th through Wednesday, June 16th for campers. Cabin Counselors arrive at **7 PM on Thursday, June 10th** and return home on Wednesday, June 16th. On the last day of camp the counselors will stay until all campers have left and the supply truck has been loaded. Counselors participating in both camps will remain on site in between camps.

The site for Camp Courage and Camp Erin – St. Louis is Sunnyhill Adventures in Dittmer, MO. It takes about 45 minutes to drive to the campsite from St. Louis. It is an easy drive south on Highway 30. Directions are included.

The role of the Cabin Counselor and Helping Hand is different. Cabin Counselors are assigned a cabin of campers along with three to four other counselors. They are responsible for those campers 24 hours a day for all of camp. The counselors accompany the campers to every activity and event. The cabin group can break down into smaller groups and participate in separate activities, but must always be with a counselor. The ratio of Cabin Counselor to camper is 1:3-4.

Helping Hands are not assigned a permanent cabin of campers but remain able to “float” between cabins and activities. For example, on day three, he/she may be asked to “hang with” cabin two but, on day four, may be asked to assist in the Arts and Crafts area. Helping Hands staff focus less on a specific group of campers and more on relating to a greater number of campers. Cabin Counselors grow to know their cabin campers more intimately but meet less of the total number of campers.

Once again, thank you for your compassionate support of grieving boys and girls. We look forward to seeing you at Camp Courage and/or Camp Erin – St. Louis!

Peace,

Becky

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