

An experience at Camp Gray: Priceless

By Chris "Topher" Aderhold
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REEDSBURG — Camp Gray, the Catholic summer camp and year-round retreat center of the Diocese of Madison, has been the stomping ground of faith, friends, and fun since 1953.

Like the old saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Campers that come to Camp Gray have an opportunity to experience traditional camp fun, make dozens of new friends, learn from faith-filled young adults, and grow closer to the Lord — which are all things that have not changed in our nearly 60 years.

The price of a session of summer camp, unfortunately, is one of the few things that has changed over the course of our long history. Even still, when investing in the future of your child, we hope you'll agree that Camp Gray is quite a steal.

Concerns about cost

In speaking with dozens of camp families and reading hundreds of parent evaluations, a common theme we hear is the concern regarding the price of a session of summer camp. This, no doubt, keeps families from sending their children to camp.

This concern is somewhat timeless, but it seems to be even more of a concern in recent years. It is no secret that for many of us, the challenges in our economy have forced us to reassess our spending.

It is our hope that in thinking about the value of an experience at Camp Gray, our families will be able to keep this in the budget.

In these challenging economic times, Jeff and Rebecca Hoeben — co-directors at Camp Gray — and the Camp Gray Board of Directors have done everything they can to limit expenses in order maintain the rates between summer camp 2010 and 2011.

"When we sat down with our Board of Directors last fall, we made it a priority to keep rates the same as last summer, and we're thrilled that we've been able to make that happen," says Jeff Hoeben.

What makes it worthwhile

Still, we understand that the price of a session of summer camp is a relevant issue for many, so allow me to break down the return on your investment of a session of summer camp at Camp Gray.

What is it about a week of summer camp at Camp Gray that makes it so worthwhile?

You could begin by calculating the value of a session of summer camp by looking at the quantifiable things that kids get during their time at Camp Gray. These things include (but are definitely not limited to) three full meals, and a scrumptious snack between breakfast and lunch each day.

Our parents tell us that this is quite a value, especially for the kids like this parent wrote about on an evaluation, "My kids



In what has been called "the best picture of the summer," campers and counselors at Camp Gray are reflected in Lake Jake at Camp Gray. (Contributed photo)

loved [the food]! Even my picky eater ate things he won't try at home. Can I get your cook to come to my house?!"

Also included are a five-night stay in a nice, rustic camp cabin, and the opportunity to be challenged in new ways through activities like archery, fishing, arts 'n crafts, horseback riding, mountain biking, or canoeing.

The intangible pieces

However, an experience at Camp Gray is bigger than just a list of quantifiable things. It's the intangible pieces of summer camp that make Camp Gray such a phenomenal value — the opportunity to be in a place where you can be yourself, make new friends, and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Now, perhaps your children can get this experience at other places or camps. But the last and most important thing that we offer is what sets Camp Gray apart, and really makes it so valuable.

That is — being in a place where the Catholic faith is the number one priority and being at a place where kids have the opportunity to look up to amazing, faith-filled, and inspiring young adults. Our staff prove to kids that it is cool to love God and each other, fun to pray, and that it is worth

striving for holiness. This is precisely what makes camp so valuable, or invaluable.

How do you put a value on an opportunity to learn, to grow, and to have a tremendous amount of fun? How do you put a value on an experience that could impact someone's life forever?

Parents say it's a great value

Unfortunately, we have to in order to run camp. But obviously we think Camp Gray is a great value, so don't take our word for it.

We talked to Bob Kappel, to hear from a camper parent's perspective about the value of camp. He says, "I'd send my kids to Camp Gray even if the price was twice as much!"

Kappel, a resident of nearby Baraboo, is a father of five, so we won't hold him to spending double. But we are grateful that he is willing and able to send his kids to camp.

Says Kappel, "For my wife Janet and I, the key is, first off, how much our kids enjoy their time at Camp Gray. In our opinion, there isn't a more faith enriching experience for kids to experience.

"Plus, they're away from parents, which is a great learning opportunity. Also, it's such a safe environment, because the camp puts such an emphasis on safety. It's memories



A camper proudly displays the fish he caught at Camp Gray. (Contributed photo)

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Faith plays an integral role at Camp Gray. (Contributed photo)

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that kids are building, that they'll never forget. I'll never forget my experiences as a Boy Scout camper, but I wish I had more of a faith type experience like Camp Gray."

Growing in their faith

The Kappels first heard about Camp Gray from fellow parishioners at their parish in Baraboo, St. Joseph. "We started sending our oldest child, Lucas, when he was going into fourth grade. That was six years ago. Our second oldest, Noah, has been going now for a couple years, and our other three will be going once they're old enough, as well," said Bob Kappel.

Regardless of the age of your camper, there is something for everyone at Camp Gray. And, the Catholic faith plays an integral role in everything we do.

"We had such a positive experience with Lucas that first summer. He was a bit hesitant to attend his first summer, but when we picked him up at the end of the week, he was crying because he didn't want to leave. I knew then that camp had left its mark on him, and was something special, because he had never acted like that before about anything.

"Couple that with us having the opportunity to get to know the directors and staff so well — we saw how much they all loved the Lord. Everybody at camp, from top to bottom, loves the Lord with all their heart and soul, and the

kids really soak that up. We want our kids to have that kind of passion and love for the Lord.

"We felt that time away from home, in the presence of fun and faith-filled young adults, would be extremely beneficial for Lucas. I'm thrilled to say that our expectations were exceeded tremendously.

At Camp Gray, our staff takes seriously the position we are in to be positive, faith-filled examples to hundreds of campers each summer.

When you send your children to Camp Gray, you send them to a place to have fun, you send them to a place to form long lasting friendships, and you send them to a place where they learn about the Lord and are encouraged to grow in their faith. A week at Camp Gray is investing in the life of your camper.

How to sign up

There are still spaces available this summer, but don't wait too long, as sessions are filling up fast. Visit www.campgray.com to read more detailed information on the summer programs, to view a regularly-updated session chart, or to register online. Call 608-356-8200 or e-mail bigfun@campgray.com with any questions, or to receive a brochure by mail.

Camp Gray, located between Baraboo and Wisconsin Dells, is owned by the Catholic Diocese of Madison and is funded by the generous support of our patrons and donors. It is fully accredited by the American Camp Association. In addition to summer camp, Camp Gray also facilitates Confirmation retreats, teambuilding initiatives, and environmental stewardship and leadership retreats throughout the school year.

Watertown students celebrate Mardi Gras



Seventh grade students at St. Henry Catholic School, Watertown, celebrated Mardi Gras by making special outfits (above). They also helped their kindergarten "study buddies" create masks and hats in celebration of Mardi Gras (left). (Contributed photos)

Edgewood High School plans open house

MADISON — Edgewood High School (EHS) will hold an open house on Wednesday, March 30, at 6 p.m.

There are three ways to register: go to the "Explore Edgewood" link at www.edgewoodhs.org or e-mail admissions@edgewood.k12.wi.us or call 608-257-1023, ext. 134.

Open house attendees will hear about EHS' exemplary academics,

95 percent activities/athletics participation rate, model program that integrates and builds bonds within the freshmen class, and \$600,000 in available financial aid.

Transfer students are welcome. Complete information about Edgewood High School is also available at www.edgewoodhs.org

Edgewood educates the whole student for a lifetime of learning,

service, and personal responsibility. The EHS curriculum emphasizes truth, compassion, justice, partnership, and community.

Forty-two percent of EHS students receive financial aid, 25 percent benefit from programs for students with learning challenges, virtually 100 percent graduate, and 96 percent go on to post-secondary education.

Janesville band members earn honors

JANESVILLE — Seventh and eighth grade students from the Janesville Catholic Saints Band recently earned top honors and medals in the annual Solo and Ensemble contest in Clinton.

Each student performed a solo or duet for a judge who evaluated their performance and scored them in accordance with Wisconsin School Music Association criteria.

Earning a score of "1" (excellent) were Mark Fiore, snare drum solo; Taylor Hagemann and Julia Leach,

clarinet/saxophone duet. Receiving the top score of "1 star" (superior) were Erik Tabaka, trombone solo; John Tordoff, clarinet solo; and Sean Seichter with John Tordoff in a cornet/saxophone duet.

The Catholic Saints Band consists of fourth through eighth grade students from St. John Vianney, St. Patrick, and St. William Catholic Schools in Janesville, and is in its 32nd year as a joint program among the schools. The program is directed by Catherine Mumma.



Students in the Catholic Saints Band in Janesville who received excellent and superior scores are, from left, front row: Julia Leach, John Tordoff, and Mark Fiore; back row: Taylor Hagemann, Sean Seichter, and Eric Tabaka. (Contributed photo)