

Camp Herrlich Long Form Story

Who:

Camp Herrlich is a not for profit children's camp with a long standing tradition and history in the Camp world. This tradition started at Mt. Temper, a camp site in upstate New York and then continued at the current, Camp Herrlich, site. We are an interconnected Camp Family, from the Herrlich Family who owned the original farm where the camp is located now to the Haar and Norris families who brought their dream from Mt. Tremper Camp to Camp Herrlich and to the Gentile family, our volunteer board, and our dedicated staff who have taken that dream and grown it to what it is today. We are a network of people who truly believe that Camp Changes Lives and who work tirelessly to bring as many people to Camp Herrlich as we can.

We have people from all walks of life on our board and on our staff and we serve people from all over the world with our programs.

What:

School Age Child Care Programs

The School Age Child Care Programs at Camp Herrlich serve the children and families in our local community by providing a safe, enriching, structured environment for students to attend before and after school. Due to the nature of the families in our community and the cost of living, many of our local students have two working parents. The programs were started not only to address the needs of those families who need childcare before and after school hours, but also to provide a truly enriching, camp-like environment for those children to be in while their parents are working.

Camp Herrlich was approached by Carmel Central School District, our home district, about 14 years ago to address the needs of working parents who need childcare after school hours. Because of our excellent reputation and presence in the community, the district knew that we would be able to provide quality care and programming for their students. The organization went through the process of getting licensed through the Office of Children and Family Services and opened up the Camp After School Program at Camp Herrlich which served students from our three local elementary schools and one middle school.

Within a year, Camp Herrlich staff had applied for and obtained a grant from the Advantage After School Program funds. With those funds, we were able to increase our enrollment and expand from one site to three. We began programs in the Kent Elementary School and the Matthew Paterson Elementary School while maintaining the program at Camp itself to serve the children from George Fischer Middle School.

About 10 years ago, we surveyed the families in the district and learned that they needed quality child care for before school hours as well. Therefore, we started our Before School programs at our elementary school locations. Despite losing the Advantage funds, we have been able to keep our fees competitive and maintain enrollment through our quality programming and excellent staff. Our reputation of excellence spread through the community, and just this year we were asked to open another site in a neighboring school district's elementary school - Pawling Elementary.

We work in close collaboration with the schools themselves, having at least weekly conversations with the school principals and daily contact with the school staff in order to communicate about the children in our program. We want to be as consistent as possible for the children throughout the day, so we communicate with their teachers and mental health

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professionals to use the same reinforcers, assist them in any areas they are struggling, and best help them academically, socially, and emotionally.

We also collaborate with the parents, working on a whole-child approach to working with our students. Our site directors and staff communicate daily with each parent, sharing good news and any “needs improvement” moments. We are an inclusionary program, we welcome children of all kinds, ranging from the “typical” to children with ADHD and children on the autism spectrum. Our low student to staff ratio and our stimulating environment makes our programs a great place for all children to be.

Through the years, we have grown and expanded the range of what we offer to children and families, all the while surveying our students and their parents on what is important to them and keeping our rates low. We provide the following innovative programming to our students through our excellent staff and partnerships within our community:

- Character education through day to day activities, conflict resolution, and special guest speakers. We partner with local organizations and individuals who can work with our children. Some of these partnerships include the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Putnam County, the Kent and Carmel Police and their K-9 Unit, United Martial Arts Centers of Carmel and their Bully-Proof presentation, local veterinarians, and local dentists, among others.
- Physical activity and healthy eating workshops to help prevent obesity. Cornell Cooperative Extension is our most recent partner to provide a workshop on all the ways you can use a pumpkin and the importance of having enough fruits and vegetables in your diet. Our students get the opportunity to play in the gyms at the schools and outside at the schools and at Camp, both through structured and unstructured activities. Many of our staff members are also trained in team building activities and will incorporate them into the activity time to help build the sense of community among the children in the program. We have also joined the Live Health Putnam coalition in order to better make connections with our fellow community agencies so we can best serve our students and campers.
- Crafts and other fine-motor activities such as legos, pretend play with dolls and other toys, and cards and board games. The crafts usually reflect special theme days and holidays and many become gifts for the children to give to their families.
- Community service projects help give our students a chance to think outside of themselves. We do at least two community service projects per year. Last Fall’s project was “plow packs” - bags full of snack items, water bottles, magazines, and other treats for our local highway department workers to use while they were out plowing during last year’s difficult winter. The students collected the items and put the packs together themselves. We made over 150 bags for the workers at the highway departments.
- Homework help, including partnering older students with younger students so that they can not only help but also be empowered and in a leadership role.
- Within the last few years, the principals at our elementary school sites expressed to us that they were looking for more enrichment opportunities for the students in the schools. We worked together to develop ideas for enrichment clubs such as acting, soccer, culinary creations, and weird science that take place within our school age child care structure. These enrichment clubs are open to children who are already registered in our programs and children who are not but would like to participate.

In addition to the actual programming, we have cultivated a culture of positivity throughout our programming, using the 15 hours per year of required training to train our staff to be pro-active

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problem solvers and set our children up for success through creating a constructive environment at each of our sites and setting high expectations for our staff and students.

Outdoor Education

One of the teachers from a school in the Bronx once told us a story about the standardized tests his students had to take in 4th grade. He said that one of the questions on the test made a reference to “peepers,” the small frogs that live in the trees and make a peeping sound. If you are a kid in the Bronx whose closest experience with nature is the park across the street, who lives in the city where any nature sounds that might exist are swiftly drowned out by the noise of passing cars, sirens, and millions of people living together, you have not a single clue as to what a peeper is. In addition to facing the pressure of standardized tests, you also face not having any context for some of the vocabulary. This teacher brings his fourth grade class to Camp Herrlich every year so they can gain some of the context they need to truly understand and internalize the material they learn in the classroom. Not only can they hear the peepers at Camp, they can see them, catch them, and then let them back out into the forest, all while learning about them in a multi-sensory way.

In addition to the hands-on, curriculum-based learning experience, students come away from our outdoor education programs with a real sense of community and kinship with each other. Our team building component helps the students learn to trust and communicate with each other. The social skills they learn while they are experiencing our outdoor education programming help them work together as a cohesive team throughout the school year. Our adventure component helps students step outside their comfort zones. Our recreation component helps classes celebrate their accomplishments and enjoy each other.

Our outdoor education programs truly help bridge the gaps in the traditional school experience. It is also important to note that all of our programs are inclusionary. We have all kinds of children playing side by side and our staff is well trained to be dynamic problem solvers when it comes to allowing kids to have the best experience they can. Our environment and small staff-to-camper ratio in all of our programs makes them a great place for children with special needs to be. Kids who struggle in the traditional school environment thrive at our Camp programs. We are able to be structured and safe while still being flexible and attuned to the individual needs of each child in our care.

Summer Day Camp

At Camp Herrlich we take pride in creating summer programs that provide campers with years of treasured memories. Many of our campers return year after year and have grown up to become summer camp staff members.

Every session of summer camp is packed with games, swimming, arts & crafts, boating, hiking, fishing, basketball, volleyball, nature discovery, music, adventure courses, archery, and our 400' zipline and three sided, 30' climbing wall! A structured day is combined with freedom of choice to make a fantastic camping experience for children from ages 4 through 14.

Our goals for our campers include social and emotional growth. In our end of summer survey, 95% of parents reported their children showed improvement in their ease of making new friends, 28% reporting “great improvement”. 80% of parents reported that their child showed improvement in confidence, 41% reporting “great improvement”, and 77% of parents reported

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that their child showed improvement in their acceptance of differences, 38% reporting “great improvement”.

Summer Sleepaway Camp

Our summer camp program is designed to provide campers with opportunities to make friends, have fun, and develop a sense of cooperation and independence. Camp Herrlich's 156 acres offers children a wealth of enriching experiences with a variety of activities. Campers will embrace the great outdoors and learn to appreciate and respect all aspects of camp life. There is also time for prayer, growth, competition, education, campfires, songs, theme days and special events.

For many of our campers, their session at Camp Herrlich is the only time they are able to be a kid. Most of our campers come from homes below the poverty line, many are from single parent or grandparent homes, most have siblings, and most have to wear the mantle of an adult throughout the year - getting themselves and their younger siblings to school, working after school jobs if they are old enough, and dealing with problems that are beyond their years. We hear time and time again that Camp is a place where they can just be a kid. We value that and take that responsibility very seriously. Our staff gets specifically trained to understand where our sleepaway campers come from and understand why camp is so important for them.

Our sleep away camp program is an intense session. Under the supervision of our staff, children live together, work together, play together, and live their lives together 24 hours a day for the 12 days they are with us. For some, it is a completely new experience. Many have never been away from home before, especially not for 12 days. They must embrace learning how to compromise, communicate, and solve problems in a positive and constructive manner. Our family-style dining helps encourage our campers to use manners and get to know each other and their counselors over a meal. Healthy choices are served at meals, to help our children be as healthy as they can be while they are with us. They also learn how to choose healthy options when they go home. We have constructed fitness trails right into the woods, so that children can participate in exercise throughout the course of their day. Even though their parents may be nervous, we know that the kids go home excited about our programming and their experience, and more confident for having been with us.

We have begun to incorporate technology in a positive way. Not to take the place of face-to-face communication, but to grow literacy skills and communication with parents. Through technology, we built community with campers in the United Kingdom at another summer program. We believe that when used correctly, technology can enhance the lives of our campers.

The evening programs we offer our sleep away campers build their sense of teamwork and community even more. Fashion shows, campfires, all camp relay races, dance parties and murder mysteries not only challenge our campers to win points for their team, but also challenge our campers to learn more about themselves, the environment, and the staff members. These activities help broaden campers' horizons and expand the possibilities they can see for their lives.

When:

Founded in 1922, Camp Herrlich has been providing quality programming for almost 100 years. Mount Tremper Outdoor Ministries, Inc. was incorporated in 1971 by our founder, Harold Haar, for the purpose of running a children's camp for the benefit of disadvantaged children and an

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outdoor environmental education center at Mount Tremper Camp in upstate New York. This facility encompassed some three hundred acres in the Catskill Mountains, complete with forest, streams, cabins and a four story flagstone lodge, originally constructed in the 1920's as a Catholic monastery. For more than ten years, the Mount Tremper family of staff and friends gave of their time, talent and treasure to foster and grow this outdoor ministry. Thousands of children and adults spent time at Mount Tremper. Today, we still experience hundreds of people from that time who stop by and help us in one way or another. They send their children to camp, contribute their time at our work weekends or give to our scholarship funds or annual fund. In 1977, based on our successes at Mount Tremper, we were invited to manage and run Camp Wilbur Herrlich in Patterson, New York where we have been ever since.

We are a year-round facility and run programs in all seasons both at our site and off-site at the local elementary schools.

Where:

Camp Herrlich is 156 acres in Putnam County, NY. The property encompasses fields, forests, streams, a lake, and a pond. We have two villages with 8 cabins in each, Schweiger Hall which is our kitchen, dining hall, and dormitories, the K. Fredericks Building which serves as health center, staff, housing, and after school building, and various other program spaces.

We are an hour or so from New York City, making travel easy for our sleep away campers, school groups, church and retreat groups, staff from the United States, and international staff.

Why:

Our program builds character. When a child climbs to the top of our high wall and rings the bell, it helps them get out of their comfort zone and learn something about themselves through the physical and psychological accomplishments. Our high and low ropes programs allow children to step outside their comfort zones and learn more about communication, adventure, and teambuilding. We want our campers to take the skills they learn at camp and use them in the "real world". We want our staff to discover their passions and take the skills they learned here at camp and use them in their future careers.

We have something for everyone and we want all our campers and staff to find their place here in the Herrlich family. From arts and music, to dance workshops, to sports and games, to swimming, to archery, to climbing, and many other activities, we allow kids to find their passion and feel like they are good at the things that we offer here.

We know that when kids feel important, they are more likely to behave better and interact in a more positive way with their peers and their counselors. Therefore, we strive to make each child feel important through finding out what matters to them. Even if a child is struggling in a certain area, their counselors are trained to show them that you can learn through failure as much as you can learn through success. Failures are treated as learning experiences, and not something to worry about for a long time. Kids are able to learn about themselves and what they can overcome through our programming, each other, and the help of our staff.

In addition to the fun activities, character education, and team building that we provide, we also strive to help prevent summer learning loss. Our nature program, our music program, our arts and crafts program, and our day to day hiking, fishing, and frog catching programs all incorporate learning about science, the environment, the arts, and literacy. We also have a large

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library of books that are available to the kids at all times. Our campers are welcome to keep books that they love.

We also develop community partnerships. We have partnered with our local mental health services agencies, health department, Cornell cooperative extension, authors, libraries, animal rescues, humane societies, and community action programs. We also partner with HG Fairfield Center for arts and the environment to offer a filmmaking program that not only allows campers to tap into their inner creativity, but also builds their literacy skills story through storytelling and their technology skills through the use of our cameras computers microphones and other videography equipment.

We know you can never fully understand what is going on in the life of a child when they are not with you. Therefore we try to treat all campers with equal respect and how they need to be treated. Once you are a part of the Herrlich family, you are always a part of the Herrlich family. Many of our campers grow to become counselors in training, then junior counselors, then senior counselors, then potentially even specialists and program staff in charge of leading the campers through their camp experience. Many of our staff go on to careers in education, the camp industry, or social work because of the experiences they had here at Camp Herrlich.

We strive for integrity in all that we do, constantly seeking feedback from campers, staff, parents, and community members. As “the camp that cares” our first question is always “how can we help?”