

MOUNTAIN WISDOM MESSENGER WINTER 2008

Director's Message

By Hawkeye Jay

I am proud to announce the formation of a new program here at Mountain Wisdom, the Rites Of Passage Experience: Girls To Women (ROPE). This is very exciting; we will now be serving girls and boys to have an even broader influence on our youth. Of course the BROP and NOWAC programs will continue to also be a part of the 2009 Mountain Wisdom camps.

This newsletter is a wonderful gift that keeps us all connected. We are all unique individuals expressing ourselves in our shared surroundings. Humans are social animals operating best in families and communities. Many animals thrive best in tribes, packs or pods. Dolphins are social mammals traveling in groups of 2 – 6 called pods and visit among other groups in the community. Bonds between dolphins can last for years. Even one-celled organisms expand and have an impact on micro systems. Much of the animal and plant world live in a symbiotic relationship where two or more live in close association that is mutually beneficial to all.

At our wilderness camps campers and staff create an environment of support, fun, challenge, leadership and acceptance that is long lasting. We know what it is to work as a team and look out for one another and how to make choices that serve others and ourselves. This experience and feeling makes an impression that we take back to our communities.

As we prepare for 2009 summer camps, it is evident that we need your continued support. Much like the symbiotic relationship we strive to create at camp we also strive to create this relationship with our volunteers and supporters. By contributing your time and money to Mountain Wisdom, Inc., you are participating in young people's lives that will impact and benefit all of us. Be a part of the Mountain Wisdom, Inc. team. Contact us to discuss the many ways to help and commit at the level that works for you. Now is the time; this is the place.

Perhaps the greatest joy we can experience is our sense of unity with all life. I live with a thankful heart for you and all the participants of these camps that have taught me so much.

Peace and Love for the Holidays and the New Year,
Hawkeye Jay

A Week in the Wilderness

By Cook Perry

What is a seventy-six year old man doing in the wilderness with a bunch of boys and men at least twenty years his junior? He is continuing his life-long dedication to the process of helping boys in their development in to responsible men.

I pasted up two pictures at the cook-tent: one of a three-year-old camper and one of a preteen hiker. They were of my son, one of the counselors at camp, at his first Boy Scout trip with me and then on the Appalachian Trail. Even as a student at the University of California at Los Angeles, I was an assistant scoutmaster. I continued as a scoutmaster and explorer advisor while at Emory University.

Having formed a men's support group during the 70s and 80s in Atlanta, I learned how important the man-boy mentoring is in nurturing self-reliance and responsibility in boys. Men have important stories to tell about their relations with their fathers.

At the recent Boys' Rites of Passage camp I watched dedicated men acting as mentors, models, teachers and guides. And I saw the boys respond with responsibility, curiosity and leadership. No, one week in the woods is not enough. Nevertheless, it is a great step along the way to manhood.

Trey Mountain Hike

By Gilbert Treadwell

Wednesday at BROP camp is the day we hike to the Appalachian Trail (AT) and Trey Mountain. After breakfast we gathered our equipment: daypack, lunch, water, first aid, rain gear, boots, 2 pair of socks etc. Twelve campers and four staff headed out. The BROP base camp elevation is about 3000 ft. Trey Mountain is about 4400 ft. That is quite an elevation change. We made our way to the Appalachian Trail by bushwhacking, which is hiking without a trail. As we crawled under laurel thickets, crossed streams and made our way up the steep fern cove, no complaining did I hear. Adon, carrying a pack almost as big as he is, was scampering right behind me, wanting to go faster. (Continued on page 2)

BROP, NOWAC, ROPE 2009!

What is ROPE? Rites Of Passage Experience: Girls To Women! This is a new Mountain Wisdom program for young women. Mountain Wisdom Inc. is proud to announce the inaugural ROPE program.

The ROPE program will take place on June 14 - 20 2009, Sunday to Saturday. Susan Miller- McGowan and a team of dedicated women will lead this program to empower young women in to adulthood.

Of course the BROP and NOWAC programs will continue to be a staple of Mountain Wisdom. The BROP and NOWAC programs will take place on July 12 - 18 2009 Sunday to Saturday. Many new adventures and challenges will be available to the new and returning participants for 2009. We look forward to reconnecting with the past years participants and meeting new young men.

Making Choices – Lessons Learned

By Joel Holtzman

I know all y'all learned something at camp this year. Building a primitive or tarp shelter was a lot of fun and it also taught us some lessons about the choices we make. When we set up camp on the first day you learned that pitching a tent on top of deadfall or rocks would not be comfortable to sleep on. We learned that some tents without a tarp stretched over the top would leak in heavy constant rainfall.

We also learned something about personal space. Everyone has an invisible barrier or boundary around him or her that can be abused, violated or taken advantage of. This includes your mom and dad, brothers and sisters and schoolmates. None of us like to be poked at, made fun of or physically pushed around. We learned that consequences are the results of our own choices. Those choices can be thoughtful or thoughtless.

Building tarp shelters and respecting personal space can teach the same lessons. Make your bed and lie in it means living with the choices you make. If you choose to pitch your tent with no thought to making it water proof, then you will have to put up with a wet sleeping bag if it rains. If you choose to take advantage of someone else's personal space, then you will have to put up with an unpleasant and negative reaction from that person. Anyone remember doing push-ups?

We also learned that choices could have positive consequences. Remember during camp that if you helped clean the dinning area after meals without being asked, Mr. Holloway would reward you with a piece of chocolate. You can make thoughtful choices at home too. When mom or dad asks you to put your dirty dishes in the dishwasher or pick up your shoes and dirty clothes from the living room floor the thoughtful thing is to do it. The smart thing to do would be to complete your chores without being asked.

In life, some times standing up for those who can't stand up for themselves is a choice with little reward, but it is the right thing to do. Keep making positive choices; it will make a rewarding difference in your life.

Rites of Passage Experience

By Susan McGowan

Hello! I'd like to introduce myself as a part of the team at Mountain Wisdom. I am Susan McGowan, PhD and I have stepped up to organize and create ROPE (Rites of Passage Experience: Girls to Women). After seeing the work that the men are doing with the BROP over the past several years, I felt that the time was right to create one for girls. I have a passion for healing and transformation, especially for women and children. I worked for the Outdoor Therapeutic Program for the State of GA and gained a deep appreciation for the gift of nature in healing and transforming our children. I support the development of therapeutic camping trips as well as art and music therapy and helped with their Equine program.

I want to create a program that I will be proud for my daughter to experience. With the support of Mountain Wisdom, and the experience they bring from the boys' programs, I feel we can create a program that will bring a beautiful legacy to our daughters as they grow into women.

We have created a dedicated core team, and are steadily working toward creating this camp for June of '09. As with any project of this size, we are always open to volunteers joining us to help. If this vision calls to you, we want to provide the space for you to bring your gifts to this project. Please contact me, Susan McGowan (678) 386-3447 or smiller477@bellsouth.net. I believe that there is a place for anyone who wants to help, so let's see where you belong.

In Service and With Gratitude,
Susan McGowan

The Swimming Hole

By Joel Holtzman

Playing in the water is perhaps one of my most cherished memories of growing up. My buddies and I would gas up the boat and head out for the dam at the end of Silver Lake. Actually this was quite a trip; at least it seemed so, of about 5 mi. through Lake James, Jimmerson Lake and Silver Lake. It was a journey, an adventure extraordinaire! We looked forward with much anticipation to soaring out over the water on a rope swing and plunging 20 ft into the water below.

Watching the young men of BROP transverse a section of boulder strewn slippery rock stream brought back those memories of adventure. The excitement leapt out of Doran and Malik's eyes as they jumped off the rock ledge into what seemed like ice-cold water. Everyone plunged under the water into the 'Hole' formed on the bottom of the stream by the timeless and relentless flow of a small waterfall. Coming up eyes wide, their faces frozen in a joyous expression, frozen as much by the excitement as by the coldness of the water. And then they would do it all over again!

Alex or Kyle would prod and poke under rocks looking for any kind of creature they could catch. A water bug here or a crawdad there – lost in the utter joy of just being and exploring in nature. Chris wandered around searching and scouring the bottom of the crystal clear stream looking for quartzite rock fragments. It seemed as if the quartzite had magical properties that soothed the soul. Robert and Elias just plopped down on a rock in the middle of the stream to absorb the warm rays of the summer sun – like Georgia box turtles. They were lost in thought and contemplation.

After about an hour and a half in Trey Mountain Creek we had to return to camp to prepare for dinner. Of course no one wanted to leave. It was, well, like pulling kids away from fun. We returned to camp and warmed ourselves around the campfire. Memories like these last for a lifetime.

Trey Mountain Hike (continued)

At various times when we stopped to take a rest, I taught the young men how to identify the trees and rocks around them. At one stop I delivered the story of the Appalachian Mountains once being as tall as the Alps; and that they have been worn down through millions of years of weathering. I told the young men how Stone Mountain was formed deep in the Earth and the ground eroded around the mountain exposing it. I explained that this process of geological change was happening all around the world. Like in such places as the Himalayas Mountains, which are still growing as the tectonic plates collide. Some of the young men started looking for rocks to show and have me identify. We talked about the three kinds of rocks, Igneous, Metamorphic and Sedimentary. The rocks we were standing on were Metamorphic. I was glad some of the hikers were as interested as I am in Biology and Geology.

On and up we went. We were treated to some ripe wild blueberries along the way. After about 2 hours, we made it to the AT. The hiking was easier but we still had to climb to the summit of Trey. We stopped for lunch at a shelter along the trail. After lunch we had a lesson in 'Leave No Trace' ethics. "But orange peels are biodegradable." they said. I encouraged the hikers to think about those that follow and to leave no trace of our visit.

On we went to the summit of Trey. We relished our accomplishment and the view. After a short time on top of the mountain it was time to begin our descent to Trey Gap, our pick up point. We were one hour earlier than expected for pickup so we continued to hike down the road. Once our motorized pick up vehicles finally arrived, everyone piled in to the trucks and back to camp we went. Those young men are hikers!

PUBLISHERS VIEW

By Joel Holtzman

Mountain Wisdom Inc. completed another successful camping adventure in 2008. Although the number of young men that participated in this years BROP and NOWAC camps was down a bit this year the process of organizing and implementing the plan remained the same.

The planning for camp 2009 has already begun. Locating funding is a year round process especially for securing foundation or government grant monies and other financial supporters. Finding young men to participate in BROP is an ongoing process, which involves communication between staff and past camp participants, parents, and volunteers.

Creating new avenues for finding financial resources and reaching for a new and larger audience of potential participants is an area in which you could help Mountain Wisdom Inc. grow. Talking with your church, home school or community groups would go a long way to increase Mountain Wisdom's circle of friends. Mountain Wisdom Inc. is more than willing to provide you with assistance, which could include pamphlets, newsletters and organized visits from staff members.

Being a camp councilor has been a very rewarding experience. I see the results of Mountain Wisdom Inc. programming as the young men begin to evolve through out the week. I know the lessons presented have a positive result in each young man's outlook on life. Teaching the young men that consequences are the results of their choices is an eye opening experience for them and me. Setting the parameters and then letting the young men create some of their own fair and appropriate consequences is a valuable camp teaching tool.

I wish to express many thanks to the campers, volunteers, financial backers and staff for yet another successful camping experience.

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