

# Camping Programs Offered by Not for Profit Agencies: Can They Survive?

## Final Report

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## Introduction

The organized camping industry is facing numerous challenges with the approaching millennium. The traditions of camping remain strong, but issues must be addressed if camping programs in the not for profit sector are to flourish in the coming years. As organized camping becomes more market conscious, questions arise as to who will be able to go to camp, at what cost, under what external controls, and within what expectations for services and outcomes. Not for profit camps have served thousands of children, adults, and families over the years. These agencies have often provided the only opportunities that some young people have to attend camp. These not for profit agencies, however, are under increased pressures to scrutinize the scope of their services concerning appropriateness, commitment, and economic viability.

The purpose of this study was to examine influences on not for profit agencies involved in camping programs to determine critical trends and issues related to organized camping. The American Camping Association Not for Profit Forum and Council funded this project. We examined the following broad questions:

- How is camping currently perceived and supported by not for profit agencies?
- What societal issues are affecting camping programs within not for profit camps?
- What are the critical external and internal constraints on current camping programs?
- What are the short term and long term issues for not for profit camping leaders to address?

For purposes of this study, trends were defined as tendencies, drifts, or changes. Issues were the problems identified due to the changing trends. Trends may or may not result in concomitant issues. Although the two concepts overlap to a great extent, we attempted to address both as they pertained to the field of organized camping within the non-profit sector.

## Methods

This project included three stages of data collection. First, we conducted a literature review and interviews with selected experts in not for profit camping agencies. The information gathered in this stage served as a general foundation for the study. The literature established several general baseline perspectives about issues facing non-profit organizations while the expert panel provided direct reflections about the issues important to non-profit camps. A list of references used in the literature review can be found in Appendix A. A list of the 11 experts whom we contacted can be found in Appendix B. The questions asked in the telephone interviews with the experts are in Appendix C.

The literature review and interviews with experts resulted in the development of a questionnaire that was the focus of the second stage of data collection. The purpose of this survey was to acquire information directly from camping professionals and their agency executives about potential trends and issues. The survey focused specifically on information about the mission of the organization and its relationship to camping (13 questions), strategic management issues (26 questions), and perceptions regarding the priority of critical issues for their organizations (18 questions). One open-ended question asked respondents to identify the biggest challenge they thought would be faced by not for profit camps in the future. The last section of the survey focused on demographic information tailored toward either the camping professional or the agency executive. Camping professional demographics included information such as job title, type of agency, age, gender, education level, years in camping as well as their current position, years with the present organization, types of camps operated, and accreditation information. Executives were asked similar personal information such as age, gender, education, type of agency, years in current position, and years with the current not for profit organization. The executives were also asked about their past involvement with organized camping and several questions about accreditation. (See Appendix D for both forms of the questionnaire.)

Most of the survey items were designed as statements that were evaluated on a 5 point Likert scale. The sections that dealt with mission and strategic management issues were rated as 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree and the section concerning critical issues addressed by the camp program were designated as 1= no priority to 5= critical priority. We analyzed the open-ended question concerning the biggest challenge faced by not for profit camps by a content analysis procedure that resulted in an enumeration of key issues.

The questionnaire was mailed in the late Fall of 1998 to a random selection of camping professionals (N=100) and their agency executives (N=100) from the American Camping Association Not for Profit Council national membership list. Camping professionals received two questionnaires and were asked to complete one and give one to their agency executive. Eighty-five surveys were returned with 55% from camping professionals and 45% from agency executives. The data were coded and statistically analyzed using SPSS with descriptive statistics, t-tests, chi-squares, and analysis of variance statistics.

The descriptive statistics provided the basis for the final stage of data collection that involved focus group sessions conducted at the 1999 ACA Conference held in March in Chicago, Illinois. We provided a summary of the data collected from the mailed questionnaires to all focus group members (see Appendix E). Five focus groups were conducted by the researchers with at least two of the project staff facilitating each group. A purposive sample was selected from individuals at kindred group meetings (i.e., Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the USA, YMCA) at the conference and from other not for profit camp professionals in attendance who were willing to participate. We invited individuals to sign up for a convenient time to participate. A total of 29 individuals participated in the five focus group sessions representing YMCA (9), Boy Scouts (5), Girls Scouts (8), private not for profit foundations or other groups (7). Each focus group met for about 75 minutes in a meeting room at the conference hotel. The groups were taped with verbatim transcriptions done. We used a process of constant comparison to develop themes from the groups. The three researchers read the transcripts independently, met to discuss emerging themes, wrote an initial draft identifying thematic issues. The researchers then used the results combined with the literature review and the questionnaire data to draw conclusions and recommendations that may be helpful to the ACA Not For Profit Forum and Council.

## Literature Review and Expert Interviews

To best appreciate the issues related to trends and issues for not-for-profit camps, a general understanding of the non-profit environment is necessary. The background information in this review is not meant to be an exhaustive search of the literature but an informative basis from which to build the foundation for this study. As with any attempt to talk about the future, the exact prediction is not necessarily as important as understanding the roots of the issues and the potential options that exist. Since the only sure trend in the future is change, the ability to remain flexible and adaptable to situations is of paramount concern. This literature review will provide a context for this study by providing a brief historical perspective to the emergence of non-profit social reform organizations, current issues facing non-profit agencies and organizations, social demographic information, and future trends from the camping literature.

### Historical Background

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, the charitable organization society (COS) movement was a strong voice in society reflecting the concerns to emerge during the Progressive Era of 1890 to 1915. The majority of these organizations were concerned with issues of poverty and injustice and bringing these problems into society's consciousness. Just as today, the issues of poverty particularly of children, social injustice due to race, gender, and immigrant status as well as concern over alcohol and drug abuse were paramount (Lundblad, 1995). Coinciding with this movement was the settlement house movement promoted by such women as Jane Addams which drew heavily on the cultural values of "personal service" by settlement house workers in poor neighborhoods in which they provided services (Henderson, 1982; Lundblad, 1995). Within the first two decades of the century, these two movements combined to form the profession of social work.

Jane Addams is representative of many of the social reformers instrumental in the formation of charitable non-profit organizations. She was unparalleled as a social reformer who captured the dreams, ideals, imagination, and sometimes hatred of the people. She promoted and celebrated cultural differences rather than the "melting pot" concept. She did not view Hull House as a charity but rather as a living, dynamic educational process where her belief in social ethics was promoted by an obligation to social action and reform learned through direct daily interaction among workers and participants. Addams was a strong proponent of public funds for social ills and spent a great deal of time fund-raising from the private sector. Her belief was that the goal for charitable organizations and the settlement houses should be to move beyond just relief and prevention to raising life to its highest potential. She put this belief into action in the many programs offered at Hull House. She believed firmly in the values of recreation and play and felt that the true culture and democracy could be learned through play (Henderson, 1982). Her recreation offerings included the development of the first public playgrounds in Chicago, camps for children, cultural programs for families, and self-expression recreation activities for all adults and children in the neighborhoods. She recognized the need for competent leaders and realized that successful groups commanded the services of resourceful and devoted leaders

(Henderson, 1982). She hoped to use recreation as the transforming power of people but recognized that this hope was within the participants, not the leaders.

The demise of the Progressive Era in the 1920s put the settlement house movement into a slow decline along with many other charitable organizations that tended to the needs of the poor (Lundblad, 1995). The general public became indifferent to poor people or ignored them completely (Trattner, 1989). The development of the social work profession also was a strong influence as it moved toward a philosophy of individual adjustment rather than social reform. Along with this individual adjustment, growing specialization in social work, the increasing bureaucratization, and the desire for professional status all lead to a decreased interest in social reform in the US society (Chambers, 1963). Not until the 1960s did social reform re-emerge as a vital concern to the American public. Since that time, not-for-profit organizations have continued to be created to address the needs of youth and families particularly from resource-poor neighborhoods in a way to address the continuing problems of discrimination, poverty, and violence that results in a basic de-valuing of human life.

There have been "Jane Addams" within many of the non-profit organization and agencies and just as the settlement house movement had its primary goals, many other organizations evolved during this same time and remain visible today. Regardless of whether the focus is on the Scouts, the YMCA/YWCA, the Boys or Girls Clubs, Campfire, specialized groups like Easter Seals, private foundations like the Fresh Air Fund camps, or religiously-based organizations like Salvation Army, these non-profits grew out of the desire to help meet the needs of under-served and neglected segments of our society, especially through outdoor experiences and camping programs. This commitment to these undervalued and often invisible segments of our communities remains the focus of such groups still today.

### **Current Issues and Trends**

When reviewing the literature about current issues of concern to non-profit organizations, several areas of importance became apparent. The six major areas that will likely influence non-profit organizations and their camping programs are: funding patterns, management practices, marketing techniques, technological impacts, organizational issues, and staff considerations.

#### **Funding**

Charitable donations have undergone dramatic evolution in the past 50 years and this trend suggests that challenges exist for corporate social responsibility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After WWII, veterans dominated corporations and during the 1950s and 1960s, the belief was that what was good for the company was good for the country and vice versa (Khasru, 1998). Most corporations donated to programs near their corporate headquarters, and often served the interest of the CEO and their families. However, with capital markets becoming a dominant force in the global economy, the paradigm of giving has shifted. Companies now support programs that promote their commercial interests. They also have moved away from the "silent"

donations toward taking credit for their contributions and even helping to market and promote programs.

Beginning in the 1980s, giving and volunteering in American began to decline (Coolidge, 1995). In light of the increased competition for charitable dollars, leaders of non-profits need to become astute in fund-raising concepts and strategies. Some experts suggest that good non-profit managers need to pay particular attention to the attitudes and actions of non-profit donors and volunteers. These individuals can have a high leverage impact on institutional goals and accomplishments (Stubbs, 1998). They are often concerned about the success of the programs they support and want to see their success quantified (Khasru, 1998). As suggested by Ms. Frances Hesselbein, President of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, "It's a fact that donors no longer reward good intentions. They reward good results" (Coolidge, 1995). These results often rest on sound evaluations of programs and are often critical to continued support by the funders. Donors are also interested in institutional leadership and responsible use of funds.

As suggested in some of the literature, the only reliable source of future income for non-profits is private giving (Coolidge, 1995; Penuel, 1997; Stubbs, 1998). While the United Way has historically been instrumental in funding nonprofit programs, some concerns have been expressed about its dominance and effectiveness of meeting the needs of nonprofit groups (Cristy, 1997; Manning, 1997). While not down-playing the role of the United Way and other similar funding sources, individuals are still the biggest contributors to non-profits both in terms of volunteers and actual donations of resources. Fundraising experts urge nonprofit organizations to develop an organizational culture and structure that encourages and rewards philanthropy. Management needs to recognize and build on the key reasons why people give donations (Panas, 1984):

- ◆ Belief in the mission (in the business of changing or saving lives)
- ◆ Respect for the leadership (Board and top staff)
- ◆ Confidence in the financial strength and stability of the organization

As a result of corporations and individual donors becoming less willing to contribute time and resources to non-profits, future fundraising trends emphasize renewing ties and support with current and past donors rather than seeking new donors (Hartsook, 1997; Heap, 1998). Among the trends to consider are the changing attitudes toward concern for institutional leadership, responsible use of funds, and the growing importance and success of direct mail campaigns (Stubbs, 1998).

### Management Issues

In recent years, management experts, educators, and human development specialists have been concerned with the possibilities of non-profits becoming structured as "learning organizations" based on innovation and knowledge-building (Keating, 1996; Penuel, 1997; Senge, 1990; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994). Management of this type of organization is more than learning from experiences- it is the continual reforming of processes and practices to realize more effectively the vision shared by the managers and the members of

the organization. Organizational learning within nonprofit groups has been driven by the recent decline in funding (Penuel, 1997). Funders have begun to require providers to become "learning organizations" that have to use outcome-based investment processes that are monitored and evaluated. The effects of outcome-based management in an organization are often dramatic: direct service workers have to re-tool their own jobs to include program monitoring; success of program delivery measured in the past by numbers of participants and a sense of a job well done has to be revised; staff have to clarify their vision of how participants function better because of the agency's services; and staff have to rethink their relationship to funding sources and other agencies to explore collaborative projects (Penuel, 1997). Most indications suggest that the focus on outcomes, monitoring, and evaluation as an outgrowth of organizational learning will continue to influence the management, funding, and accountability of nonprofit organizations.

Organizational changes such as those brought on by outcome performance raise challenges for top leadership. Rather than create and manage programs and services, more and more executive staff finds their attention being drawn to external forces that affect their organizations. They must become more involved with the competition for funds, volunteer leadership, government and community relations, budget cuts, and re-organization (Heap, 1998). When choosing top executive staff, individuals who are knowledgeable about funding sources and who understand that the mission and "products" are about services and causes that aid people and communities offer the best leadership potential (Heap, 1998). In fact, over the past several years, many non-profit agencies have resorted to using a non-profit executive search consulting service to help find the best possible executives.

All organizations have to be managed for success. However, unlike profit-oriented business, non-profits do not have the same emphasis on the financial bottom line. Rather, their bottom line could be stated as "What difference will I make?". This gets translated for vital and strong non-profits into a focus on mission clarity, leadership effectiveness and accountability in accomplishments and community needs met, and responsible financial performance (Stubbs, 1998). Managers are required to have organizational practices that reflect their knowledge, responsibility, and vision. Key leadership (both volunteer and professional) must clarify the mission, establish an institutional agenda focused on the highest needs and objectives of that mission, and design fund raising strategies that match donor interests with the top priorities. As suggested by Stubbs (1998), the strategies that link organizational practices with effective management would be:

- ◆ Planning leads from a clear mission
- ◆ Agenda focuses on priorities
- ◆ Recruitment seeks quality leadership
- ◆ Fund raising organized for intended purposes
- ◆ Goals fulfill mission
- ◆ Responsiveness reflects community expectations

In the future, corporations may actually look to nonprofit organizations for management guidance (Coolidge, 1995). For example, corporations may need to manage the work force the way today's non-profits manage volunteers- by leading workers not containing them. Successful organizations in the future will likely exhibit three characteristics: mission focused, values based, and demographics driven. In the future, corporation and non-profits will likely work together in partnership opportunities (Coolidge, 1995; Palmerby, 1996). This shift toward organizational partnerships will demand that non-profits look for common goals with other organizations and businesses rather than strictly seeking money or contributions.

The result of many of these changes will be an increasing need for strategic management. While strategic management is not new, the emphasis within non-profit organizations may become even more critical. Generally, non-profits have not appreciated the value of strategic planning, have been fearful of major staffing changes, disliked the lack of short term results, and feared that strategic plans would quickly become obsolete (Harrison, 1995). However, to remain competitive in the business world, non-profits will need to more fully utilize effective strategic management processes.

A final aspect of leadership important to non-profits is the management of volunteers. For many charitable organizations, the role of the volunteers in program delivery as well as fund-raising is critical. Managers need to know how to share the vision of the organization with the volunteer in a way that builds a passion and commitment in that volunteer. Often, these volunteers are the ones to bring visibility to the work of the organization, acquire gifts and donations, and convey to the community the accountability of the organization. These volunteers need recognition for their accomplishments and support. Pryor (1995) suggested that at its very best, board/staff leadership partnerships operate with "passion linked with strategy" to achieve the highest levels of performance and commitment. Successful organizations learn how to engage their volunteers and develop a passion for the mission and obtaining the resources to support that mission (Stubbs, 1998).

### Marketing

The third trend is concerned with marketing in non-profit organizations. Marketing issues actually grow out of the trends related to funding and leadership. Marketing strategies can become essential components for "telling your agency's story". In the past, non-profits often viewed marketing in a fairly narrow perspective that focused on participant recruitment. Non-profit organizations of the future will no longer be able to market in a haphazard manner. With over 600,000 charitable organizations trying to make up for cuts in local services to some of our most under-served populations, marketing will also become a way of competing for funding dollars while remaining accountable to our participants, funders, and communities. Many corporate givers are tying their philanthropy to marketing activity as well as exclusive arrangements. In the past the recipients of our marketing efforts have been our customers- in the future, our "customers" are likely to also become the donors (Nucifora, 1998).

The key to this new way of marketing to potential donors is to manage the one-to-one relationship. Will the giving generate publicity? Will it associate the donor with a good name? Are opportunities available for employee involvement? Is there an opportunity for exclusive moments of use or program for the donor's customers? Will the charitable act create a base of future customers?

As previously mentioned, more competitive funding opportunities and a changing style of effective management results in more attention to the linkages between mission, leadership, and giving. With effective marketing, non-profits will be able to demonstrate accountability to the funding groups as well as the community at large. The problem of people not understanding what the agency does and feeling invisibility to the community is a critical need that can be addressed through a comprehensive and thoughtful marketing plan.

### Impact of Technology

The impact of technology is difficult to project in the future. Change has occurred at rapid rates that often challenge individuals' and organizations' ability to remain current. However, many non-profits have lagged behind the business sector in embracing technological advances and have often adopted a "business as usual" attitude. This disregard for technology will not be acceptable in the future if non-profits are to remain competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The workplace of the millennium will pose increased challenges to the non-profit manager that will include mastering electronically linked work sites and workers, employee and managers needing to develop specialized communication skills, electronic systems rather than manager "advising" the worker, and a de-centering of the physical location of the worksite (Barner, 1996). Obvious impacts can already be seen with the growing ease of access to huge sources of data and information. Most non-profits have already realized the benefits and challenges of the virtual organization with electronically linked work sites accessed through email, the internet, digitized resources, satellite and cellular links, and other forms of computerized monitoring (Barner, 1996).

While non-profits have traditionally lagged behind the business sector in embracing technology, they seem to have realized the benefits of the Internet and electronic forms of communication (Farrar, 1997). Not only are electronic links useful for communication but the Internet has become a huge library of resources. Many funding sources can be found on the Internet as well as information specific to non-profit organizations. For example, a look at the web page for the United Way Agency Services (<http://npo.net/nponet/wkshpdes.htm>) provides a host of links including information on fiscal management, advice to first time supervisors, information on proposal preparation, managing a new agency, business writing, how to plan special events (also in Spanish), and significant changes in organizational culture. In the future the use of electronic resources will be assumed and likely a key to successful operations.

The ease of electronic data storage and retrieval could have a "down side" for some agencies as well because there will be fewer ways to hide information that in the past could get lost in bureaucratic processes (Collins, 1999). With increased scrutiny of the non-profit sector's

share of the national economy and concerns over tax-exempt status, the web could become a very effective monitoring tool in the future. For example, Philanthropic Research Inc. has a web site called GuideStar that contains key financial information on thousands of charities. Its goal in cooperation with the IRS is to put the complete 990s on the web or CD-ROM and have them available to anyone interested in the data (Collins, 1999). The world of the future with its new disclosure rules combined with new technological advances will make non-profit information immediately accessible.

### Organizational Issues

While most organizational issues for non-profits in the future will be addressed through the management of the agency, several issues discussed in the literature deserve specific attention. These issues are specific to non-profit organizations and may in turn impact the camping programs of these agencies. These issues are points to be noted by non-profit managers and considered if applicable to their organization.

The first issue is the current discussion about the tax-exempt status of non-profits. In light of some recent scandals and discoveries about the way in which some no-profits work, legislative bodies at the state and federal level are considering the fundamental and irreducible qualities that are inherent to tax-exempt organizations (Collins, 1997; Hawks, 1997). The repercussion is a closer scrutiny of what non-profits say they do and what they actually do in reality. Within the past several years, issues such as competition of non-profits with a taxable business, the proposed elimination of property tax exemptions for secular non-profits and churches with camp and retreat properties in Colorado, or the ineligibility of non-profits for federal loans, grants, or awards of non-profits engaged in lobbying activities have raised a good deal of concern within the non-profit sector (Mukherjee, 1997; Rabey, 1996; Trageser, 1999). The concern seems valid and a call for organizations to carefully monitor their adherence to the exempt criteria but to also remain vigilante about proposed legislative changes that could dramatically change the nature of non-profit organizations and their program services.

Another potential concern is the potential for exposure to liability risk to members of non-profit boards (Munn, 1995). The 1997 Volunteer Protection Act was an attempt to lessen this risk of personal liability. The hope is that volunteers will continue to be willing to serve on these boards with the added protection and that agencies will not have such high insurance costs in order to cover their boards (Bailey, 1998). This means that the definition of "volunteer" as an individual performing services without receipt of compensation (other than reasonable expense compensation) or any other thing of value in lieu of compensation in excess of \$500 per year will need to be followed carefully by any 501 (c) (3) (Bailey, 1998). However, broad exceptions exist in the statute and the new law lacks court interpretation. Therefore, this issue is a good reminder that volunteers who serve on boards have many of the same legal duties applicable to them in their role with non-profits as do members of for-profit boards. Training of volunteers in these board roles may become more crucial if the agency wants to encourage them to carry out their responsibilities with diligence and care.

Low salaries associated with the non-profit sector is another organizational issue that could easily be addressed within discussions of management or staff. The concern is one of critical importance to many people in non-profit organizations where the low wages of both professional and non-professional positions make quality people a difficult commodity to acquire. Some non-profits have experienced concern over such issues as increased minimum wage, growing interest in compensation packages, and financial rewards (Bailey, 1996; Laabs, 1998). Many non-profits are finding themselves dealing with employee compensation programs such as banded salary structures, pay-the-person concepts, group and team incentives, and 360 degree feedback systems that have normally been used in the for-profit sector. These financial reward programs often focus on traditional corporate concerns such as performance and productivity because the non-profit organizations are finding themselves in similar financial and competitive pressures where compensation incentives seem to offer potential solutions (Bailey, 1996). Alternative ways of compensating workers other than through the traditional focus on salary continue to challenge professionals in the non-profit sector.

### Staff

The workforce is changing and will continue to rapidly change within the next fifteen years. The diversity of the workforce may be one of the best measures of this changing environment. Within the next few years, 85% of the new employees entering the workforce will be women and minorities (Barner, 1996). The workers who will be most valued in the future may be those individuals who can thrive within a diversified work team and who are managed by an administrator sensitive to perspectives that may vary by gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and age (Barner, 1996). For example, age is an interesting variable within the potential workforce of most non-profits. The median age of a US worker is on the rise with the projected median being 45 by 2000 and over 15% of the workforce being over the age of 55 by 2005 (Barner, 1996). As Baby-boomers in the workforce age and move into retirement, the mass exodus from the work force will likely be one of the single most important policy challenges to face the country in the next 30 years (Johnson, 1998). The need for workers may go unmet in some areas while greater benefits may be seen for employing older workers as well as understanding the needs of older clientele (Barner, 1996). Another solution may be to have fewer permanent employees and more “just-in-time” workers, short-term project workers, or teams of specialists assembled quickly to address tasks and issues as they arise (Martin, 1997; Jennings, 1997). The successful workers may be the ones who remain flexible and involved with continuing education so they can stay marketable within this new work environment.

### The Changing Society

All of us are aware of the changing face of our society. Most of us know about the “baby boomer” generation and Generation X, the changing nature of the family, the ever-widening gap between the “have and the have nots”, the questioning of traditional values, changing gender roles, and the visibility of violence. As professionals in organizations that have tried to meet the needs of many of these under-served groups, the issues facing these groups are often apparent. However,

familiarity with the continual changing social environment is imperative for many non-profit providers if they are to remain proactive and effective.

The following sections will deal with several aspects of the changing society that particularly relate to children and families. The information is taken from government documents based upon the latest statistics that address issues such as family and neighborhood information, economic security, health-related issues, social development, and education. The primary source of data (unless otherwise specified) in the following sections is Trends in the Well-being of America's Children and Youth: 1998 (Child Trends, Inc.) that is available from the Internet (<http://aspe.hhs.gov>) or the Department of Health and Human Services for free.

### Family and Neighborhood Information

Family structure is often one of the factors that contributes to a child's well-being. Between 1970 and 1997, the proportion of children in two-parent families decreased from 85% to 68%. Of these families in 1997, 24% lived with the mother only, 4% with the father only, and 4% with neither parent (although half of these children lived with one or more grandparents). While negative associations do exist for children in single parent families, the great majority of these children do well with differences between well-being of children from divorced and intact families appearing to be small (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). The decline in two-parent families is found for black, white, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American children although it is somewhat steeper for black children. In 1990, Asian children were the most likely to live in two-parent families (84%) followed by whites (82%), Hispanics (71%), Native Americans (64%) and blacks (47%). Over 37% of all families lived below the poverty level while over half of the female headed single-parent families lived below the poverty level. The more educated the parents, the more likely they were to maintain two parent families. For example, for families where the highest level of parent education was a high school degree, 67% of these families were two parent families; for families where the highest level of education by a parent was four or more years of college, 90% of these families were two parent families.

A concern has existed for children born to single women because some data suggest that these children are more likely to grow up poor and become single parents themselves (Ventura, 1995). A considerable increase has been seen in the percentage of births to unmarried women from 1960 (5%) to 1994 (33%) before stabilizing in 1996 (32%). Of these births to single women, it is interesting to note that only 31% of non-marital births were to teenagers. In 1995, Asian and white women had the lowest percentage of births to single women at 16% and 25% respectively followed by Hispanics at 41%, and American Indian and black women with 57% and 70% respectively. However, these same data indicate that whites have resumed an upward trend.

Children also seem to be growing up in less stable environments. One of the indicators of this trend is how recently a child has moved. Frequent moves are associated with negative outcomes such as dropping out of high school, delinquency, depression, and teen births. Some researchers suggest that a lack of foundation in a local community may be an underlying cause

to these problems (Wood, Halfon, Scarlata, Newacheck, & Nessim, 1993). However, the data suggest that children are actually moving less than in the past. For example, in 1960 twenty-one per cent of the children had moved within the past year while in 1996, only 18% had moved. Of the children who had moved, the largest percentage was Hispanic (23%).

Neighborhood quality has also been shown to contribute to the well-being of children. Residence in a low-income neighborhood has been shown to have negative effects on early childhood development even after controlling for relevant personal and family background characteristics. In 1990, one in 20 children lived in very poor neighborhoods that were defined as such when over 40% of the residents were from poor families. Black children (19%) were the most likely to live in these neighborhoods, followed by Hispanic (11%) and white children (1%). Children in single-parent families were much more likely to live in these neighborhoods (13%) as were poor children (18%).

Median incomes are a good way to assess the economic well-being of a family. This statistic allows the researcher to measure the ability of a family at the midpoint of the income distribution to purchase goods and services required to raise children. However, income fails to capture some other important resources such as health benefits from employers or to assess changes in the distribution of income across families. Therefore, several economic pictures will be described. Between 1975 and 1996, the median income has narrowly fluctuated around the \$40,000 mark (in 1996 dollars). However, a detailed look at the data shows some interesting discrepancies. For example, the median income of female-headed families in 1996 was \$16,389 compared to \$26,500 for male-headed families, and \$51,768 for married couple families. When analyzed by race and ethnicity, the medians are substantially higher for white families. For example, in 1996 the median income for white families was \$44,527 as compared to \$22,912 for black families and \$24,619 for Hispanic families. Some of this difference can be attributed to the fact that more black and Hispanic families tend to be headed by single women. As discussed in a preceding section, 53% of black children, 29% of Hispanic children, and 18% of white children were being raised in female-headed households in 1996.

The number of families with all parents involved in the labor force has continued to grow over the past two decades as more women have entered the labor force and as the number of single parent families has grown. For example, from 1985 to 1997, the percentage of children who have all resident parents involved in the labor force increased from 59% to 68% while the rate for single mother families was 72% and 88% for single father families. Over 71% of all children between 6-17 years old have all resident parents in the labor force. When analyzed by race and ethnicity, black children have the highest rate of parental involvement in the labor force followed closely by whites, then Hispanics (71%, 68%, and 54% respectively).

The growing involvement of mothers in the work force has been a growing source of financial resources for families and is often the only source of income in female-headed families. Maternal employment has steadily grown from 53% in 1980 to 66% in 1996 with rates for white, black, and Hispanic mothers varying (67%, 63%, 49%, respectively). Seventy-one

percent of all employed mothers worked full-time with 66% of all employed mothers with children under age 3 working full-time and 74% of those with children between 6-17. Black mothers who were employed were more likely to work full-time (83%) than white mothers (69%) or Hispanic mothers (76%).

### Health Conditions

Several health issues have been identified as concerns about children in our society. One of the first areas to be addressed is the prevalence of over-weight in children and adolescents. This concern has risen as more medical data link being over-weight with hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. The rate of being over-weight has risen for children 6-11 from 5% in 1963 to 14% in 1994 with similar findings for children 12-17 (12%). Most of this increase has happened for both groups since 1980. Even though weight issues seem to be a greater concern among girls, the data show that only 13% of the girls 6-11 and 11% of the girls 12-17 are over-weight compared to boys (15% and 13%, respectively). When analyzed by race, no real differences existed between black and white boys. However, black girls in both age groupings tended to be about 6 percentage points higher than white girls.

The 1996 Report from the Surgeon General indicated that over 60% of Americans do not exercise regularly despite the known benefits of physical activity (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 1996). The data concerning youth involvement in physical activity through sports and exercise have remained fairly consistent since 1976. In 1996, 54% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 52% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 45% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders indicated they participated in sports or exercise almost every day. This pattern of decreasing activity with age was consistent in other areas of physical activity for teens. The data also indicated that males across all age groups consistently had 16-26% higher rates of involvement in exercise or sport than girls. Black and white students have about the same rates of participation until 12<sup>th</sup> grade when black students appear to exercise less.

Child neglect and abuse are also growing concerns in our society. Almost 1 million cases were documented in 1995 with estimates as high as 2.5 million when undocumented cases were considered. The trend seems to be increasing, and the rate rose by 18% from 1990 to 1996. While the actual percentage of neglect and abuse for white children is 55% compared to 27% for black children and 10% for Hispanic children, the numbers may mask the problem for black children when one considers that they only constitute 16% of all children under the age of 18. As one might suspect, girls are at slightly greater risk (53%) as are children aged 6-12 (39% of all victims). As a possible response to abuse or other stress, 24% of all children in grades 9-12 had seriously considered suicide during the past 12 months while 1 in 11 of them had actually attempted suicide during that previous year. White and Hispanic youth are more likely to consider suicide (25% each) and these females are much more likely to have serious thoughts of suicide (30% and 18% respectively). However, the actual rates of suicide, particularly among 15-19 year olds, are four times higher for males than females.

### Social Development

A snapshot of the social and personal life of high school students can provide a sense of priorities for the future as well as the positive and negative influences as the child transitions into adulthood. The importance of select life goals has remained fairly consistent from 1976 to 1996. For example, having a good marriage and family life and being successful in their work have been cited as extremely important by about 80% and 66% of the high school seniors, respectively. Having lots of money and making a contribution to society were the next likely goals (20% and 30%) followed by goals to work to correct social and economic inequalities (12%) and becoming a leader in the community (15%). Black high school students attached more importance than did white students to being successful at work, having lots of money, and correcting social and economic inequalities. Little differences were found by gender except that females placed more importance on having a good marriage and family life and felt having a lot of money was less important than other goals.

The amount of TV watching has been shown to influence a child's academic attainment. For example, children in grades 4, 8 and 11 who watch 5+ hours of television per day have substantially lower test scores on average than other children (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1993). Yet, large numbers of children watch substantial amounts of TV. For example, 18% of all 9 year old students watch 6+ hours of television a day but this rate declines as they age until only 7% watch that much TV when they are 17 years old. This rate has actually declined since 1986 when 31% of all 9 year olds watched 6+ hours of TV a day. Larger proportions of boys who are 9 and 13 watch TV than do girls. Black students watch more TV than do whites as evidenced by the 9 year old group where 39% of the black children watched 6+ hours compared to the 13% white and 21% Hispanic students. Only 7% of the students who attended a private school watched that amount of TV compared to 19% who attended public school. In general, as parents' educational level increased, the amount of TV watching decreased. For example, in 1996 18% of the 13 year olds whose parents had less than a high school education watched 6+ hours of TV compared to 13% of the students whose parents had graduated from high school and the 10% whose parents had graduated from college.

Individual problem behaviors of adolescents are often telling statistics as are the combinations of risky behaviors (Moore & Gleib, 1994). These risky behaviors have been defined as expelled from school, sexual intercourse, use of illegal drugs, unsupervised use of alcohol, and cigarette smoking. As one might imagine, the number of children never engaging in any risky behaviors declined significantly as they move through adolescence. By 15, slightly more than half have avoided all risky behaviors and 32% have experimented with two or more risks. By 17 the percentage with no risks dropped to 29% and 45% have now engaged in at least two risks. Across the years, more girls report being free of any risk behaviors as do children from two parent families, and children from mid- to high-income families.

The research on teenage drinking indicates the earlier the age of drinking, the more likely an individual may develop an alcohol disorder (Grant & Dawson, 1993). Additionally, youth who binge drink tend to have higher illicit drug use (Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration, 1996). While teenage drinking continues to be a concern, the data suggest some improvement in this area. Regular drinking (having alcohol on more than two occasions in the previous 30 days) dropped from 50% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 1980 to just under 33% in 1996. Binge drinking (having more than five drinks in a row at some point in the previous two weeks) fell from 41% in 1980 for 12<sup>th</sup> graders to 28% in 1993 with a modest rise to 31% in 1997. Both binge drinking and regular drinking increase as the youth move into the upper grade levels. For example 15% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders indicate they binge drink while the figure more than doubles for 12<sup>th</sup> graders (31%) with the largest increase between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade years. Males have higher rates of both forms of drinking than do females. For example, in 1996 36% of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade males drank regularly as compared to 25% of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade females. In the early years, Hispanic youth are more likely to binge drink but by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, white youth have a higher prevalence of binge drinking. Black youth consistently have the lowest prevalence of consumption across all age groups. A worrisome outcome of this drinking is the amount of driving done while under the influence of alcohol. In 1995 42% of all youth in grades 9-12 reported that within the last month they had either driven after drinking or ridden with a driver who had been drinking.

Drug use among teens seems to be making a resurgence. From 1980 until 1992, a steady decline was seen in marijuana use among 12<sup>th</sup> graders (34% and 12% respectively). However, the rate has doubled for 12<sup>th</sup> graders from 1992 until 1997 (12% and 24% respectively). Drug use is also increasing at earlier ages as evidence by the increase in use by 8<sup>th</sup> graders from 3% in 1991 to 10% in 1997. Increases in the use of cocaine and hallucinogens since 1991 is also seen across all grade levels with the increasing use of inhalants most prevalent in 8<sup>th</sup> graders. As with alcohol, drug use by girls is less at all grade levels and the gap increases as the youth get older. Use of illicit drugs by black youth was consistently the lowest across all grades.

Trends over the past several decades indicate that increasing proportions of teens are sexually experienced (defined as having intercourse). Concern over this trend rests with the increased risk of exposure to sexually transmitted disease and the lack of planning that may result in pregnancy. In 1995, 37% of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders reported having had sexual intercourse and rises to 66% by 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Until recently, more males reported having intercourse than females but the 1995 data indicate that gender differences are minimal or nonexistent. The differences by race and ethnicity indicate some significant differences in sexual activity. For example, 49% of both male and female white students reported having their first sexual experience while in high school, compared to 62% and 53% of Hispanic males and females respectively, and 81% and 67% of black males and females. The percentage of teens in grades 9-12 who remain sexually active (defined as sexual intercourse within the past 3 months) has remained steady from 1991 to 1995 at 38%. There is little difference by gender and as one might expect, the percentage of sexually active youth increases with age. Black students (54%) were generally more sexually active than white (35%) or Hispanic youth (39%).

The quality of interaction between youth and their parents seems to influence their ability to handle stress, substance use, sexual activity, and thoughts of suicide (Hawes, 1996; Resnick, 1997). When adolescents are asked about closeness to parents, some surprising results are found. Younger adolescents report feeling very close to their parents than do older adolescents, although the rates vary by whether they are referring to resident or non-resident biological mothers or fathers, resident and non-resident non-biological mothers or fathers. Males tend to feel closer to their parents than do females. For example, 74% and 64% respectively of adolescent males feel very close to their resident biological mothers and fathers compared to 65% and 51% of adolescent girls for the same categories. More black (78%) and Hispanic (74%) youth feel closer to their mothers while only 68% of the white youth report a similar relationship with their mothers. A similar pattern was found related to fathers although less pronounced than for mothers. Generally speaking youth from low income families were more likely than other youth to report feeling very close to their resident parents. For example, youth whose parents earned less than \$10,000 a year were more likely to report very close relationships with the resident biological mother (78%) and father (68%) than were youth whose parents earned between \$25,000 - \$34,999 per year (68% and 59% respectively). Similar patterns were found related to education levels with youth of parents with a high school education or less feeling closer to their parents than youth of more highly educated parents.

The types of interactions parents have with their children is another area of interest. Parents often serve as role models, mentors, teachers, playmates, and confidantes with the positive interaction contributing to positive developmental outcomes for the children (Hawes, 1996). In recent years, added interest has been expressed in the roles of fathers. Data from the National Survey of Families and Households examined the interactions between parents and their children and found such patterns as:

- Over half of the mother (55%) and 42% of the fathers eat dinner with their child every day of the week
- Mothers (17%) and fathers (18%) go on outings with their child several times a week
- Twenty percent of mothers and 12% of fathers work on a project at home with their child almost every day
- The majority of mothers have private conversations with their children with 22% having private talks almost every day and another 31% reporting these talks several times a week while fathers(27%) report private talks several times a week
- Mothers frequently help with homework and reading (40% daily and 29% several times a week) while about 33% of the fathers reported helping several times a week.

However, these data do indicate a significant drop in high levels of parent activity between 1988 and 1995. For example, 62% of the mothers reported eating with their child daily in 1988 compared to the 55% in 1995. When examined by race and ethnicity, interesting differences can be found in each of the categories. For example, white and Hispanic mothers were more likely to eat with their children while black mothers were more likely to help with homework and reading. In general, father involvement in 1995 did not vary by race and ethnicity.

With the concern for violence among children, the prevalence of related behaviors such as weapon carrying among youth is of interest. Carrying a weapon is associated with the most serious forms of violence and increases the risk of death or serious injury if a violent argument occurs (Public Health Reports, 1993). The definition of weapon included knives, razors, clubs, handguns, and other firearms. In 1995, 20% of high school students reported having carried a weapon at least once in the past 30 days. In general, students in the lower grades were more likely to carry weapons. For example, in 1995 23% of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders reported carrying a weapon in the last month compared to 16% of the 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Males are much more likely to carry a weapon than females and this is true across all age groups and racial/ethnic groups. For example, in 1995 31% of males in high school had carried a weapon in the past month compared to 8% of all females in grades 9-12.

For the past three decades, our society has been influenced by the growing numbers of immigrants who come to the US from primarily Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean and who often have difficulty speaking English. In 1995, of the 6.7 million children from 5-17 who spoke a language other than English at home, 2.4 million (36.6%) had difficulty speaking English. Children of Hispanic and “other” ethnic origins are the most likely to have difficulty. For example, in 1995, 31% of all Hispanic children and 14% of “other” races had difficulty with English. Among Hispanic children who come from a home where a language other than English is spoken, 42% of these children have difficulties with English.

### Summary

Hopefully, these statistics have helped to paint a picture of our changing society, particularly when viewed from a youth perspective. The challenges to meet the needs of youth and adults in our communities are often daunting. However, many non-profit organizations have their interests as a focal point for their programs. As camping professionals assess their services and programs, some of these trends and issues will need to be addressed. In fact, camping opportunities may provide an effective way to offer alternatives to youth and their families as they confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Camping Trends**

Based upon the changing nature of the US society, camp professionals may need to consider implications from these societal trends on their programs and services. As suggested in Camping Magazine (Camp Consumers, 1994), campers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be significantly different from our campers today. The article suggests families’ and children’s needs are rapidly changing to reflect societal shifts, so the future for camping may hold new programs, old programs done in new ways, or even new clientele. For example, camps may need to consider the effects of the Baby-boomers. For example, this generation waited longer to have their children, and when they did start families, they were often smaller than past families. It’s projected that the growth in numbers of school-age children will slow during the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the median age of the population will continue to increase. By 2011, the boomers will move into their senior years and become a population bulge for the next twenty years. Camping professionals may need to consider implications for the programs they

offer which could include more senior citizens as potential “campers” or staff. Professionals should also consider the use of camping facilities for short-term use by seniors and the potential to recruit some of these seniors as patron donors for the camping program.

Another societal trend discussed in the previous section detailed the increased diversity of US society. For example, statistics support a growing proportion of the population will be comprised of blacks, Hispanics, and Asian/pacific islanders (Camp Consumers, 1994). Yet, many camping professionals have alluded to a homogeneous (primarily white) camping clientele. Professionals will need to determine if this traditional population is a satisfactory focus, and if not, then consider how best to offer programs that will attract campers from other racial and/or ethnic groups.

Camp professionals indicate that camp enrollment continues to climb and that they are constantly adding new programs and activities at the request of parents or campers, to satisfy diversity needs, and to attract older/younger campers (Summer Camp Survey, 1996). The trend for new programs has been in the areas of adventure/challenge, equine activities, in-line skating, increased emphasis on the arts, and unique innovative programs such as canoe building, astronomy, or circus arts.

Camp continues to be viewed as a way to build a sense of community and contribute to child development. Camp directors and parents believe that camp helps a child develop self-confidence and esteem, a sense of teamwork and cooperation, an appreciation of the outdoors, and new recreational skills. Camp is a place to make new friends and learn to get along with different people (Summer Camp Survey, 1995, 1996).

Long-term issues of concern to non-profit camps seemed to center on staff concerns and pricing issues (Summer Camp Survey, 1996). The need to find staff with special certifications and training is important to all camping professionals but more so for agency, non-profit camp administrators. There is a continual worry that camp is getting too expensive for their clientele and rising costs of operation will become more problematic in the future.

Camping trends are difficult to pinpoint without a consistent database from which to project and a body of literature and research from which to build. One of the most compelling needs in the future may be the baseline research that will become a foundation to support the professional as well as provide direction for future efforts.

## Expert Interviews

The literature review provided the basis from which to design questions for the expert panel of non-profit camping professionals (Appendix C). Eleven individuals were identified as experts in the American Camping Association non-profit camping organizations (Appendix B). These individuals were contacted and interviewed during the summer and fall of 1998. Interviews were conducted either over the phone or on-site by one of the three researchers. Each interview lasted between 30-45 minutes. The following section summarizes the major ideas expressed within these interviews.

Most panel members agreed that the philosophical basis for their organization's mission had changed in the past five years. A renewed focus and importance on mission was emphasized. Additionally, camping seemed to be achieving a new focus and importance within their mission implementation plans. Several of the experts wondered if this focus reflected an increase in the organizations' valuing of camp. When addressing the camping program in particular, the experts felt that camping was quite central to the agencies' missions, goals and objectives. They felt that the broad mission was often visibly carried out through the camping program.

Several broad organizational goals were discussed during the interviews. The need for increased focus on leadership, including values and diversity, was articulated. Issues of year around schools and its impact on operations were a concern for the future. Property issues were generally viewed as a headache and agencies were looking for innovative methods for managing them. Facilities were also points of concern, particularly when viewed from the perspective of maintenance and upkeep. Areas and facilities were typically seen as on-going battles with fiscal and management implications. Fiscal management also extended into their goal for increased attention to seeking endowments. Most of the panel also believed that increased membership was a top organizational goal for their agencies.

Panel members identified critical social issues that influence campers in non-profit camps. Issues included the diversity of campers and some cultural constraints to reaching them through camping, campers from abusive homes, services for older adults, transportation issues, socioeconomic factors that influence campers, youth from at-risk communities, issues related to HIV-AIDS, concern for career awareness programs, and issues surrounding teen pregnancy. Some of the social issues that influence their staff recruitment centered on the increased demand for background checks and insurance checks of all employees.

The panel generally agreed that camp was able to address critical social issues. Some felt that camp was unique in the way it integrates critical issues into multiple aspects of programming. For other members, critical issues were of paramount importance to be incorporated into and reflected by the camp program.

Challenging strategic management issues reflected some similar issues as the broad organizational goals. They again mentioned maintenance of facilities and property, year around school programs, and endowments as strategic management issues. They also felt that staff salaries were a big concern with finding quality staff with such low wages a continual struggle. The panel members also raised issues related to camp insurance and taxes. The final strategic management issue related to the changing ACA accreditation standards and the need to remain current through strategic management.

Several impacts of strategic management will likely challenge camping professionals in the future. Camps are expected to do more with less. Directors are continually asked to continue service at the same level (or even raise it) with fewer staff and less money. Some felt this trend reflected a need to more frequently revisit the mission and strategic plan to ensure that both were on target with the direction of the organization. Panel members also felt that a definite need for increased staff training existed as a result of management decisions.

Panel members referred to several pressing external constraints to the organization that affect the camping program. Increased competition was a primary concern. The panel felt that children and their parents today have far more choices regarding their leisure time than ever before. Changing demographics was also a concern for camper recruitment. Other members mentioned the constraints brought about by regulations and laws governing non-profits.

Internal constraints to the camping program were also discussed. The allocation of money, salary issues, and facilities were mentioned again as concerns. The effective use of volunteers was mentioned as an internal constraint as was the need for new programs. Lastly, they mentioned the lack of professional staff available for camping programs within non-profit agencies, both at the local and national level.

In summary, the expert panel provided us with issues that often reflected the larger social issues and trends as well as the trends identified within the business literature, but re-focused them into issues relevant to the camping professional. These insights were instrumental throughout the remainder of the study in the design, administration, and interpretation of the mail questionnaire and the focus group discussions.

## National Questionnaire Findings

We built the second phase of the study on the information about issues and trends identified from the literature review and interviews with experts. Some of these issues related directly to the camping industry while other broader issues pertained to not for profit organizations in general.

We analyzed the total data set initially with descriptive statistics to provide a general overview or “picture” of the data. This analysis resulted in averages and standard deviations for each item on the questionnaire and made no distinctions based on job title, agency type, or other demographic variables (See Appendix E). After the initial analysis, additional statistical procedures were used to clarify some of the potential differences in the data.

### Profile of Respondents

A total of 85 questionnaires was returned from the sample of 200 for a 43% response rate. We had 47 (55%) camping professionals and 38 (45%) agency executives return the surveys. Sixty percent of the respondents were women and the average age was 44.5 years old (range from 26 to 65 years). The group was well educated with 37% of the group possessing at least a Masters degree and an additional 22% with some graduate work and 34% with at least a bachelor’s degree. Only 6% had a high school education as their highest level of education.

The respondents who were camping professionals had been involved with camping for an average of over 17.5 years with a range from 3 to 50 years. These professionals had been in their current positions for over 9 years (range from <1 to 32 years) and had been with their current not for profit organization for an average of 13 years (range=1 to 41 years). Eighty-nine percent of the camping professionals worked in accredited camps. When asked what type of camps they operated, they responded: day (63%), trip/travel (51%), retreats (36%), resident (89%), week-ends (60%), family (55%), and specialized (26%). Eighty-five percent said their organization owned their camp property and 92% said their organization believed accreditation was important.

The agency executives had been in their current positions for about 9 years (range =<1 to 30 years) and had been with their current not for profit organization for almost 17 years (range=1 to 43 years). Seventy-two percent of the executives indicated that they had past experience with camping. Almost everyone (95%) felt that accreditation was important for their agency’s camps, but only 45% of the executives were familiar with ACA accreditation.

### Trends and Issues

After the initial descriptive statistics were completed, we compiled a general overview of the data. Since the survey was arranged into three sections that highlighted issues related to mission, strategic management, and critical social concerns, the analysis focused on these areas in the discussion of findings. The results indicated that all respondents agreed most strongly with the following issues (See Appendix E for specific means and standard deviations):

Mission:

- Our camp program reflects our organization's mission
- Camping is integral to our organization
- Our mission reflects changes occurring in society
- Our mission addresses growing diversity of people in society
- We have a mission statement that guides all the activities we do in camping

Strategic Management:

- A big challenge is finding skilled counselors and staff willing to work for our wages
- Maintenance and upkeep of camp facilities are high management priorities
- Dealing with camp and staff diversity is an important issue for us
- We want to increase our number of campers
- We try to price to meet our budget, yet include all children

It may be of interest to note the areas related to mission and strategic management with which the group had the most disagreement were:

Mission:

- Our mission is affected by outside organizations such as United Way, etc.
- Camp is more of an end product of social issues rather than a means for addressing societal issues
- The target population of our organization has changed
- My national office (if applicable) perceives camping as more important today than in the past
- Our participants/campers and camper families perceive camping as more important today than in the past

Strategic Management:

- Land acquisition for camp is a priority
- Parents perceive camp as an unsafe environment more frequently than they did in the past
- We rely heavily on volunteers to run our camp programs
- Our camp responds to the year-round school concept
- Coming up with new activities that appeal to kids who come to camp is easy to do

The critical issues section dealt with how much priority was given to these issues in the camp program beyond staff training. The following list provides the top rated priorities:

- Our camp program stresses to staff their role as positive adult role models
- Our camping program offers opportunities to teach about ethics and values
- Our camping program focuses on building community and doing group work
- Our camping program promotes cross-cultural understanding
- Our camping program addresses behavior issues of children and youth

The critical issues that respondents felt were of little or no priority in their camping programs:

- Our camp acts as an intervention with gang issues

- Our camping program offers programs for older adults
- Our camping program teaches good parenting and child-rearing skills
- Our camping program often acts as an intervention with youth and parents

When reviewing the descriptive information, one general observation became obvious. Even though the means were not unexpected, the standard deviations suggested that respondents varied from the averages noted, especially when the averages seemed to indicate some indecision about agreement with the topics. For example, the first mission question focused on how much the mission reflects local needs as opposed to national mandates. Although the mean was at the midpoint (3.6), the standard deviation was 1.4 indicating that significant variability existed in the responses to that statement even though an average score was determined. A closer look at the data showed that one-third of the group disagreed while about two-thirds agree with the statement. A quick check of the statistics indicated that over two-thirds of the questions showed conflicting opinions in the responses. Therefore, we conducted several additional analyses to determine where the differences in perception might originate.

The first variable that was the likely source of differing views was the job position of the individual as either the camp administrator or the agency executive. T-tests were run on all of the items to determine where the differences in means could be attributed to the job title. Although useful, these analyses did not uncover drastically different opinions on most of the questions. Only two statements about missions were viewed significantly different by job title: “Our mission arises from local needs as opposed to national organizational mandates” and “Camping is integral to our organization.” In both cases, the agency executives agreed more strongly with the statement than did the camping professionals. No significant differences were found on any strategic management issues. Four statements were significantly different on the critical issues statements. The executives gave higher priorities to “Our camping program acts as an intervention with gang issues” and “Our camping program incorporates dealing with prejudice in society” than did the camping administrators. Camping administrators, however, gave higher priorities to “Our camping program stresses to staff their role as positive adult role models” and “Our camping program focuses on building community and doing group work.” These differences were interesting but variability existed in other questions that did not indicate statistical significance when comparing job positions.

Another variable thought to affect the responses was type of not for profit agency represented by the respondents. Originally 19 different not for profit organizations were identified from the questionnaire responses. These organizations were collapsed into five major types of providers based upon representation within our sample: the Girl Scouts (32%), other predominantly youth serving organizations like Boy Scouts, Campfire, Boys and Girls Clubs (13%), the YMCA/YWCAs (11%), private not for profit foundations (27%), and religious not for profit organizations (17%). We used one-way analysis of variance to analyze the means for differences based upon these five group types. A Scheffe post-hoc analysis procedure was also used in any cases with statistically significant differences to determine the specific groups exhibiting the differing opinions.

The findings from these analyses were revealing. In many cases the respondents from the Girl Scouts differed significantly from the other providers although not exclusively (See Appendix E). For example, when analyzing the section addressing the mission, the questions related to “mission coming from the local needs rather than national mandates”, “camping more important today than in the past”, and “campers and families perceiving that camping is more important today” was most different between the private foundations who agreed with the statements (4.2, 3.6, and 3.4 respectively) and the Girl Scouts who disagreed or were unsure (3.0, 2.5, and 2.4 respectively). The Girl Scout group however, more strongly agreed with statements such as their “staff could articulate their mission” and their “mission addresses the growing diversity of society”, especially when compared with the religious not for profit camps (means of 4.1 and 4.8 compared to 3.1 and 3.5). Respondents in religious not for profit camps believed most strongly that their national offices perceived “camping as more important today than in the past” (3.6) while the Girl Scouts disagreed with this idea (2.1).

The strategic management section also had several differences based on organizational perspective. For example, religious not for profit camps disagreed most with the statements that they “managed well the environmental impacts from the camping program” (3.1) and that “land acquisition was a priority” (1.7). Private foundations agreed more than the other groups that they “never seemed to have enough scholarships” (3.9) but did not perceive “a need to increase their camper numbers” (3.6) as much as the Ys (4.6) or the Girl Scouts (4.5).

The last section to be analyzed by the types of organizations was the critical issues addressed by the camp program. We found several differences on the ratings based on organizational type. Although none of the programs prioritized “stressing positive sexual behavior issues for boys and girls,” the religious not for profit camps rated that issue higher (2.9) than the other types of organizations. Another issue that was not highly prioritized was “offering programs for older adults” but the not for profit foundations prioritized this issue higher than the other groups (2.2). When asked if “inclusion and disability issues” were a priority, not for profit foundations (3.6) and Girl Scouts (3.2) rated this issue higher than did the other youth serving organizations (2.2), the Ys (2.4), and religious not for profit camps (2.9). The Girl Scouts placed a high priority (4.4) on camps promoting “cross cultural understanding” while the group of other youth serving organizations and religious not for profit camps prioritized that issue lower (2.9 and 3.0 respectively). The Girl Scouts also prioritized their “recognizing and responding to changing family structures” (4.0) more so than religious not for profit camps (2.8) and placed a high priority on “teaching ethics and values” (4.4) in camp.

### **Overall Issue Rankings**

The last analysis completed was the overall ranking of issues from the entire survey (see Appendix E). In rank order, the respondents felt that:

- a high to critical priority was placed on the need for camp programs to stress to staff their role as positive adult role models
- camp programs reflect their organization’s mission

- a big challenge is finding skilled counselors and staff willing to work for our wages
- camping is integral to the organization
- the organization's mission reflects changes occurring in society.

It was noteworthy that three of the top five issues went back to the mission of the organization and the role that camping played related to mission.

The final question on the survey was an open-ended question that asked the respondents to write down the biggest challenges that face not for profit camps. A compilation of these responses indicated that staffing issues and financial issues were the greatest concerns (37% and 38%, respectively) followed by the need for better public awareness and visibility for camping (i.e. relevancy, organizational priority, increasing competition, changing public perception, legislation, evaluation) (19%), and camper issues (need to increase numbers and organizational membership base) (5%). When we viewed each of the types of groups, an interesting picture emerged. The Girls Scouts felt the greatest challenges were finances (36%), staffing (32%), visibility and awareness (27%), and campers (5%). Other youth-serving organizations like the Boy Scouts, Campfire, and 4-H felt that the challenges were exactly split between staffing, public awareness, and finances (33% each). The YM/YWCAs believed they are most challenged by staffing and finances (38% each), followed by public awareness and camper issues (13% each). Private not for profit foundations indicated that their greatest challenges were for staffing (44%), finances (39%), and public awareness (17%). Religious not for profit camps indicated their concerns were for staffing and finances (46%) and camper issues (9%).

## Focus Group Summary

As previously mentioned, the focus groups were designed to help interpret and validate the findings from the mailed survey. Individuals in the focus groups were free to respond and comment based on their personal experiences and perceptions. The discussions in the focus groups saw some consensus and some disparity in opinions (See Appendix F for a list of participants). Some of the differences in opinions related to the different types of agencies as noted in the questionnaire analyses. The differences in types of not for profit agencies could be explained to some extent by whether the focus was entirely on young people or whether the agency also served adults and family groups. The amount of specialization within the agency and the camp (e.g., serving particular people with disabilities or particular age groups) also had some impact on how camp staff approached their work. Whether the not for profit camp drew from a membership base or was open to the public also seemed to influence the discussion.

Since the questions asked in the focus group related to the outcomes of the survey, many of the issues were extensions of the questionnaire. On the other hand, the researchers were interested in whether any new ideas emerged and what strategies the participants had for addressing the issues that emerged (See Appendix G for transcripts from the five focus groups). The major issues identified centered on the three aspects of the questionnaire: mission, strategic management, and critical social issues. (The numbers in parenthesis indicate the date/time of the focus group.)

### Mission

Most participants agreed that the success of not for profit camping related to “stay[ing] with your mission” (3/5) and being “mission driven” (3/3/9am). Being able to articulate the mission to all people involved with camping was important. Audiences mentioned included parents, paid staff and counselors, volunteers, camp boards, agency executives, other agency staff, and the public at large. The role of the camping mission within the larger organization was a salient component mentioned.

Several people noted the need to examine the mission regularly. In not for profit organizations, the agency board may have a lot to say about mission, but the staff must keep it in front of everyone. One individual described how the board had been addressing the mission during the past ten years and once the focus became less on “bringing kids into the outdoors and more on building independence and promoting growth, things really took off” (3/5).

Participants discussed whether the mission of camping had really changed over the years. Some felt that due to changing populations, they were doing camping differently. Others felt that camp organizations had been doing the same things for 100 years but now we are packaging them differently (3/3/9am).

Most participants agreed that the mission provided the focus for the camp program. One person stated: “We really had to set our focus, set our priorities for whom we were going to serve, whom we wanted to see come into our facility” (3/5).

Tied to mission was the aspect of how those not for profit camps who had national organizations worked. It seems a shift has occurred over the years in the amount of support coming from national offices for camping programs. In general, less leadership was perceived to come from national offices now, but most of the discussants did not see this change as a problem. One person believed that more focus was on outdoor programs today than before (3/3/11am). Another person stated, “we are part of the national organization with a local emphasis” (3/4). Another person representing a national office indicated:

It’s usually a well-known secret that the best source of change is the local area where its happening and the national organization is sometimes the last one to catch on and implement the plan. Usually the field is ahead of what is going on. They [local camps] have to be innovative and creative to make it happen. And you try to be flexible enough on the national level to allow them to do this. What I think happens is a very diverse program (3/3/9am).

This view was echoed with a notion that most local camp directors felt they had the framework of the national organization, but were free to move and be flexible to local needs. The guidelines provided by the national organizations were not very strict and enabled local units to set their own goals (3/3/1:30pm). It seems to be a circular relationship for membership organizations in that national organizations drive policies, but membership drives what national does (3/3/1:30pm).

## **Campers**

Campers, whether they are children or adults, people with or without disabilities, boys or girls, or representatives of diverse ethnic groups and races are the reason that camps exist. Ironically, except in the discussion of critical issues pertaining to particular needs of campers, campers were not the focal point of most of the focus group discussions. Camper needs, camper interests, financial assistance, number of campers, and the diversities of campers, however, were issues that were mentioned.

Whether young people still want to go to camp and what they want when they do go to camp was a discussion topic. A few participants felt that within membership organizations, sometimes children had to be convinced that they wanted to go to camp. Others, however, mentioned that camping was integral.

The emerging awareness of ethnic and racial diversity in the country also presents some interesting challenges. Some populations such as African Americans and Latino Americans do not have a tradition of going to camp. Convincing parents of the value of camp for their children is not always easy (3/4). One individual mentioned that agencies will have to address “getting credibility in the community and in the neighborhoods first, before they’ll ever come to camp” (3/3/9am). The educational process of helping people see the value of camping will be essential, especially in these communities with little or no history of “camp culture”.

Not for profit camps serve a wide variety of income levels. Historically, not for profit agencies have addressed the needs of many young people who have been under-served. Financial assistance for campers is an area that continues to require attention. One person mentioned a concern that some parents have expressed regarding the “problems” that sometimes happen with “scholarship” children (3/3/1:30pm). Not for profit camp leaders will need to recognize these concerns and their underlying stereotypic assumptions in the future and develop strategies to alleviate these perceptions.

A challenge to camp directors going into the next millenium will be making camp programming relevant to campers. Respondents had several suggestions. Campers need structure, but they also need choices. The activities must be age appropriate and camp programmers must offer an opportunity for progression. This progression might be day camping to resident camping or might relate to the progression of activities offered within the camp program (3/3/1:30pm). The focus on high adventure programs may be a way to initially interest campers. Once campers try outdoor activities, we may be able to get them interested in a broader array of opportunities (3/3/11am). Getting children away from the TV and computer is becoming a greater challenge to camp professionals.

One of the identified needs that campers have is for adult role models (3/3/11am). Finding staff who are positive role models and who can be mentors for young people are critical needs that many young people have, particularly for those children growing up in single parent families. Camp can provide an opportunity for young people to process and learn appropriate social skills like anger management and dealing with diversity, but campers will need staff who can model these behaviors and help them understand the meanings of their actions. Focus group participants mentioned that young people have many other issues that might be addressed at camp such as eating disorders. Whatever the issue, campers need models to help them cope with a variety of problems that exist both at camp and at home.

Increasing the number of campers was an issue for some people but not for others. Camps obviously want to be at capacity. Most camp directors indicated, however, that they are not serving all of the agency’s membership and did not have the capacity to do so (3/3/11am). Only one person mentioned the concern that if camps attracted too many campers, they might not be able to serve them (3/4). Too many children did not seem to be a concern for most camp professionals.

The impact of year around schools on campers and staff was mentioned in a couple of the focus groups. Overall, not for profit camp leaders did not see year around schools as a big problem in most locales. A couple of individuals did comment on the shorter summer season and the impact of a shorter camping season but this problem did not seem to be widespread. Developing year round programs to increase the number of campers was a bigger issue in one of the groups (3/3/1:30pm). Year-round camp programs seemed to be a way to counteract any potential problems that year around schools might present.

### **Not for Profit Camping as a Business**

Several participants agreed that no matter how great your mission is, you have to be financially viable or you will not succeed. One participant said:

...you can have an excellent mission statement but if you can't finance your camp you're going to be out of business anyway. So, I don't know what comes first, the chicken or the egg (3/3/9am).

Further showing this relationship between mission (values) and financing was this statement:

...if camps close within the for profit sector, that is probably a business decision. It is a business issue. But when you close camps within the not for profit sector then there is something more drastic...it is also a value issue (3/4).

The notion of a not for profit camp is really a misnomer (3/3/1:30pm). Respondents indicated you still have to pay the bills and make enough money to sustain the organization. One person indicated that being financially sound makes it easier to get your board backing (3/3/1:30pm). To be financially sound, however, usually means that the board backs you, so the issue has a dual perspective. The amount of funding for camps that covered direct and indirect costs seemed highly variable as the focus group participants described their situations and the issues that they addressed.

One of the disadvantages of being a not for profit camp is that most camps cannot or do not charge fees to cover all of the costs of camp. Many camps try to cover all direct costs (i.e., staff salaries, food, program expenses, etc.) but this is not always possible. A challenge that will continue into the future is how camp organizations will keep camper fees low, yet remain financially solvent.

One of the advantages of being a non-profit camp is the variety of funding possibilities that may exist through donations, fundraising, government assistance, and grants. Obviously raising money takes time and energy that could be put elsewhere, but it may be a common requirement of non-profit camp professionals in the future. Less United Way support for camping exists in many communities. Creative fundraising through using camp boards, development offices, and other avenues may be important in the future. Capital campaigns for camps were also an idea posed in the focus group discussions (3/3/1:30pm). One individual suggested that we have just not asked enough people to help with camp. This person suggested that people who have gone to camp believe in it and are willing to give money (3/3/11am). The establishment of endowment funds might need to be a more viable option in the future.

Camper fees was an issue with mixed opinions mentioned in the groups. For its value, camp may be one of the least expensive options available, but parents are not always aware of the value of the experience (3/3/11am). It seems that different non-profit camps have varied views on this topic. Some camps keep the fees low and go out to raise money elsewhere to meet the budget. Other camps have used sliding fee scales (3/3/9am; 3/3/11am). Still other camps set a fee that offsets all costs and then offer scholarships. One of the problems with offering scholarships is that some middle class families do not want to ask for them (3/3/11am). One person pointed out the irony of middle class parents not being afraid to seek college scholarships for their children, but how they were reluctant to seek camp assistance.

Almost all participants agreed that they had great difficulty in financing their total camp operation with camper fees alone. However, each organization seems to have a different approach, particularly in terms of capitalization of properties and covering other expenses. One person shared that camper fees covered operations but the larger agency covered all facility and administrative fees. Other participants said they as camp directors were more and more responsible for all their expenses and revenues. One director suggested the need to go to more year around programs where rental fees could subsidize facilities and to better use facilities to make money rather than having them sit idle (3/3/11am). Several respondents mentioned most camps have to be self-sustaining and that money has to come from somewhere. Even if an agency heavily subsidizes the camp, that agency has to raise the money somehow. Partnering with other groups was mentioned as another way to get some of the work done at camp. One person mentioned using military personnel to do some of the work on the camp site (3/4). Having a strong volunteer board was also suggested as a partial solution (3/3/1:30pm). Getting volunteers on your board who can raise money can be essential whether it is money for camperships or capital improvements. Helping board members learn that a not for profit camp has to raise money is a challenge. Some agencies have an agency board that may have fundraising responsibilities for the camp or that task might be given to a separate board.

Camp leaders in the future cannot discount the business management side of camping. One person summarized this idea best by saying,

So we need to make sure that we can learn how to do those business plans. To do those management studies. To take that enthusiasm and apply it toward our mission and say this is who we are (3/4).

### **Recruiting and Supervising Quality Staff**

The focus group participants mentioned staff issues frequently. Several focus group participants thought it was the most important issue that most camps have really not addressed well. One person indicated that staffing has been an issue for 20-30 years and we still do not have an adequate handle on it (3/3/1:30pm). Another person indicated that with the low unemployment rate in the United States, people have many more options for summer jobs (3/3/11am). One participant indicated that we have undersold the value of camp work (3/3/11am). Staff who served in the summer programs was of primary importance but within not for profit camps, using volunteers effectively and getting year around staff were also important considerations. Attracting quality staff, training them to deal with campers, and paying them what they are worth were issues most frequently mentioned. Even though volunteers are not paid, the focus groups acknowledged that they represent the camp and require similar intensity in recruitment and training.

Participants indicated several ways that they have tried to attract quality staff. It should be pointed out that camp directors are not looking for numerous staff but the focus was on “quality” (3/4). A couple of directors said they wanted to find individuals who have a passion, “something in their hearts, something that drives them” (3/4).

Using international staff was one possibility that had worked well in some camps and not so well in others. The use of some international staff has highlighted cultural diversity in camps, but in other situations cultural differences are sometimes a problem with international staff. International staff are generally more expensive to use.

Some agencies have tried to make full time jobs out of a combination of summer jobs and after school programs (3/3/1:30pm). Others have been trying to do more year around camping so that more full-time staff are used throughout the year (3/3/1:30pm). Working with universities to attract staff and provide internship type of opportunities was another way to acquire staff (3/3/9am). Getting “work study” money might also be an option for camps (3/4). A couple of the participants were optimistic about a new type of college student where “there is a rejection of purely capitalist [mentality]” (3/5). The use of “older” (retired) staff has also worked well in some camps (3/3/9am). Sometimes the payment of health insurance for staff is a carrot that may attract and keep individuals (3/3/9am). Another person mentioned the value of getting their good staff to identify their friends to actively recruit. An idea was mentioned to give a “finder's fee” for staff who were able to recruit other staff. A couple of focus group members mentioned that the issue was not only convincing young people that they ought to work at camp but also convincing their parents that working at camp for the summer is a “real” job (3/3/9am).

The CIT program has traditionally been a way to get staff by “growing your own.” This approach has worked well in some agency camps, but it may have some drawbacks in that new ideas may be slow in coming to some camps. Planting seeds with young campers, however, about how someday they might want to be camp staff may be a useful undertaking (3/3/11am).

Recruiting anyone besides “white” staff was mentioned as an issue. With growing diversity of camp populations, having staff representing the diversity of campers is an issue that no one seemed to know how to address adequately. Perhaps “growing your own” staff from the campers is a viable option for the future, albeit a slower answer to a growing need.

Training staff to do a good job was perceived as a challenge for the future. One person remarked that young people today do not have the “social skills” of past staffs. They are technically well trained but are not used to “dealing and adapting to situations” (3/4). A couple of the participants remarked about how much time they spend in providing basic skills such as problem solving applied to the camp setting (3/3/11am). Some staff come to camp thinking they are going to be like campers, so the challenge becomes how to help them learn how to be responsible adults. The influence that staff have as role models was mentioned by many of the participants in the focus groups. How to get staff to be positive role models had a lot to do with the selection of the staff and the training done. Seeing working at a camp as a “real job”(3/5) was a challenge that related to other issues of accountability within the camp. Another issue mentioned was the lack of outdoor skills that some staff have (3/3/11am). A challenge is to train staff in outdoor skills with a focus on environmental consciousness.

Several focus groups discussed compensating staff. A tension has always existed between being able to find good summer staff and paying them what they are worth. The reality is that some young people cannot afford to work at camp. “Tuition has been outpacing inflation for a while” remarked one participant (3/5). Another participant stated, “Our staff on a whole regardless of what ethnicity they are, tend to be middle to upper class because mom and dad are paying a portion, if not all, of college” (3/3/9am). The competition for these staff is with higher paying jobs, such as McDonalds, that probably do not provide nearly enough intrinsic outcomes or future related job skills. The pay and the hours, however, have more appeal for some potential staff members. Several of the camp directors agreed that in the future, salaries will have to increase if camp agencies are going to get and retain good staff (3/3/9am). One individual suggested that perhaps not for profit camps will have to look at supplemental means to raise staff salaries and go out and seek that money, rather than folding it into the cost of camp.

The use of volunteers in not for profit camps was an issue mentioned by some focus group participants. Some camps seemed to rely heavily on volunteer staff and task forces, while others did not use them at all. Differences also existed regarding the pros and cons of using volunteers. Some individuals felt that the interest in volunteering has become greater thanks to service learning opportunities in universities. One person indicated that getting volunteers was easy, “all they need to do is be asked” (3/4). Volunteers also serve different purposes in camps. Some volunteers are ones that a director can call on when she/he needs help. Others work for a week or more at one time. Getting volunteers through universities was mentioned as a useful approach (3/4). Regardless of how volunteers are recruited or what they do, they require the same training and supervision as do paid staff. They also represent the camp just as visibly as paid staff.

Retaining staff from year to year was also an issue. The lack of “loyalty” that exists in society was lamented by one individual (3/3/9am). Giving staff an opportunity to experience the intrinsic outcomes and letting them take “ownership” in the program may be helpful for retention.

Two of the focus groups mentioned finding full time staff for not for profit camps as an issue. Salaries for these professionals are an issue as are the long work hours. Getting good maintenance people or caretakers was also mentioned as a challenge.

### **Accountability and Benefits of Camping**

Not for profit camps are influenced by many outside forces. Not the least of these forces is the need to be accountable to the public and to funding organizations. United Way has been the partial funder of some not for profit camp programs resulting in various stages of support or lack of support for camp. Several of the camp directors agreed that we need more data to support the value of camping for individuals. Most camps have not put “emphasis into helping to show how we make a difference in children’s lives” (3/4). One of the possibilities suggested by several camp directors was the use of the Search Institute’s Asset Model (3/5). Camp directors wanted examples of evaluation tools that can be used in their camps.

One of the issues that was brought up was just exactly what role camps play in positive youth development. One person stated we need “hard and fast data to be able to support [the value of camping]” (3/4). Another person indicated that parents are interested “not just that my child is going to be safe and they are going to have a good time, but what else are you going to do for them?” (3/4). Young people have a good time and you see smiles but “that is not tangible evidence, not enough to really satisfy funders” (3/4). One individual indicated that what we need to do is “raise people’s awareness about what it is we really do--not just say we’re having a good time, although that is important” (3/4). Several participants agreed that camp is important because it develops “life skills” (3/3/11 am). We need to identify what those life skills are and then show in whatever available forms how those skills are addressed in camps. Further, it may be beneficial to see if there are ways that these skills carry over when campers return home (3/3/11 am).

Another discussion point focused on the opportunities that camp has to offer that may not be available elsewhere in a child’s world in school or at home. Is there something unique about camp? If so, how do we articulate that value (3/3/1:30pm)?

Although “hard statistics” are useful, a couple of the participants emphasized the need to “tell our story” about the successes that occur in camp. One participant who worked with people with disabilities said:

...it’s easy to tell that story. You can see big changes. Whereas with what you call normal youth, you can’t put that story down quite as quickly. But we know it happens. I know that has helped our program and our camp immensely--being able to tell the stories and then generalize it to the rest of the population (3/5).

The focus group participants seemed to optimistic that it was possible to show how camp “does kids a world of good” (ACA slogan). Camp programs may contribute to youth development through unique ways. Finding those unique ways may be an important challenge. One person asked an important question: “How can you develop your [camp] programs so that you can see results?” (3/4). They also mentioned that other quantitative measures exist such as the number of campers served, the number of volunteer hours, and grant money and donations received.

## **Visibility and Marketing**

Visibility and accountability are closely related. Focus group participants offered several suggestions regarding how camps might be become more visible in not for profit agencies and in society at large.

Some participants felt that camping was an integral part of the larger not for profit agency to which they belonged. Others felt they struggled for recognition regarding their importance. A Girl Scout camp director described the tension that seemed to exist with the way that girl scouting has attempted to dispel the idea that “we’re not just cookies and camping” and then how she attempts to say, “well, we are camping!” (3/3/9am). Several respondents felt that more resources were put into the camping programs today than in the past (3/4). The situation seemed to be highly local

regarding how camping fit within an agency. It was evident that camp executives have a continual internal marketing job to address in making sure that other staff in a larger agency know what camping is about and why it is valuable. Other staff (e.g., Girl Scout field staff and YMCA program leaders) in agencies may be some of the best ambassadors for camp IF they know what camping is about and why it is important (3/4). The local agency executive was also viewed to be an integral force regarding how camping was perceived within a local organization (3/3/1:30pm).

Visibility to the larger society was also an issue. Some not for profit agencies have a long history and tradition with whom people identify (3/4). The name recognition of an organization such as Campfire might be a natural draw to some camping programs. One of the suggestions was that camp align itself much more with education to show that camping is another educational opportunity available in the community.

Marketing camping is an ongoing issue. One participant described two concepts of marketing:

You either push or pull. You're either out there asking folks what they want and giving it to them. Or you're out there telling folks, "here's what we already have. You need this. With the influx of a lot of marketing gurus in the last ten years, you've had folks saying, "No, we need to go ask kids, ask the parents what they want." In that transition, camping has maybe lost some of its identity or some of its connections to its roots...(3/3/9am)

How camp contributes to the greater community is clearly important. Young people and adults who attend our camps have a range of issues that are important to them. The role that camp has in addressing these issues beyond providing campers with a safe and fun experience is an important issue to continue to discuss.

Collaboration and partnerships were potential areas that several of the camp participants mentioned. Those partnerships are both within larger agencies and with the greater camp community. Because camping is a relatively small industry, working together through organizations such as ACA may be more important than ever in the future. Working with larger organizations nationally is also another means for gaining visibility.

## **Regulatory Issues**

Government regulation was another issue mentioned from time to time. The issue of how camp relates to child care was brought up concerning some of the regulations that might be placed on camps in the future. This legislative issue will need to be followed more closely in the future on a national and state level.

Risk management was also mentioned once (3/3/1:30pm). It seems that many of the issues surrounding risk management have been addressed, but it is still something that must not be forgotten. The cost of insurance driving what happens in camp was also mentioned.

The future of the not for profit status was discussed briefly (3/3/1:30pm). The fine line between for profit and not for profit will likely continue to be an issue in the future. Defending this status may have great implications for future fund raising activities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The value of this study is that a baseline has been established around the issues that seem to most relevant to camping professionals in not for profit agencies as we move into the 21st century. While differences do exist about the importance and relevancy of some of the issues, the commonalties are also apparent. We have organized this final section by analyzing the data from the three phases of the project, then proposed conclusions with concomitant recommendations based on the most salient trends and issues confronting non-profit camps. Specific strategies based on the recommendations will need to be developed by individual agencies and camps. These suggestions provide some long term trends and issues (10-15 years), but they will only be reached with day by day, week by week, year by year changes.

We have organized these conclusions and trends by the three categories of mission, strategic management, and critical issues. For each category, we have identified key trends, relevant issues for camps arising from these trends, and recommendations based on the focus of that category. As we found, overlap exists among these three categories. Further, readers are encouraged to peruse this entire report for more specific detail about the recommendations.

### Mission

**Trend #1:** *All successful not for profit organizations acknowledge the importance of mission statements.*

**Issues for Not for Profit Camps:**

- How is the camp mission a roadmap for addressing today's societal needs
- How does the camp mission must fit the not for profit agency mission as well as the national agency's mission (if applicable)
- Making camp programs mission driven with the mission driving strategic management.
- Determining how the type of not for profit organization (e.g., nationally affiliated or local) influences the way that issues related to mission, strategic management, and prioritization of critical issues are addressed

**Trend #2:** *Camps have contributions to make in addressing societal problems.*

**Issues for Not for Profit Camps:**

- Showing how integral camps are to some not for profit organizations, even though some camp leaders feel that less support exists from the agency, the national office, parents, and campers themselves than in the past.
- Addressing the "image problem" where the public may not understand the value of camping programs.
- Determining how and why camping programs make a difference in people's lives and how to articulate the results and outcomes of camping programs

**Recommendations regarding Mission:**

- Camp staff should articulate “early and often” the role they play if they are a part of a larger agency. This role may be traditionally central (e.g., Girl Scouts) but must be continually articulated to agency executives, staff, parents, campers, funders, and the community at large.
- All staff members must take every opportunity to tell the value of camping so that it is perceived as an important youth development activity to build assets in young people and adults.
- Camping programs from agencies with national organizations must function as autonomous units with a broad flexible mission that allows the local unit to tailor their programs to fit their immediate needs and still remain within the national mandate.
- Each camp program must determine what they can uniquely provide to meet the needs of the agency and the local community. Although camping programs do share some common concerns, procedures, and organizational climates, they also have individual differences and needs that must be determined for a particular locale.
- Camp leaders must regularly review and re-evaluate the mission to determine what goals and objectives need to be implemented to address the mission.
- Camps must articulate the outcomes they wish to serve and then develop a program with inputs and activities to address the intended outcomes. Evaluation should also relate to what the intentions of particular camp program are. Each camp may vary in specific outcomes that may occur.
- The measurement of outcomes of camping must be a priority of ACA, national agencies, and local camping units. Data to determine the impact of camps on human development is a priority.

#### Strategic Management

**Trend #3:** *Not for profit organizations face fiscal challenges related to their mandate and role.*

#### **Issues for Not for profit Camps:**

- How to address social issues with adequate funding
- Finding funding sources
- Keeping the tax exempt status

**Trend #4:** *Leadership in any organization is key.*

#### **Issues for Not for profit Camps:**

- How to get quality full and part-time paid staff
- Working effectively with not for profit boards and volunteers

**Trend #5:** *Many youth services exist along with youth who have many needs.*

#### **Issues for Not for profit Camps:**

- How to effectively market outdoor programs to campers as well as to funding agencies
- Showing accountability to public and to funders
- Identifying the unique contribution camping programs make in meeting the needs of youth

**Trend #6:** *Not for profit organizations must be efficient in providing services.*

#### **Issues for Not for profit Camps:**

- Using technology to the fullest
- Capitalizing facilities

- Expanding year round facility use

**Recommendations for Camps :**

- Staff (full time as well as seasonal) salaries and compensation packages need to be competitive with other available jobs to attract and retain the best employees.
- Efforts must be renewed to recruit staff that represent the diversity of the campers participating or that a camp desires to have participate in camp programs. Staff (full time and part-time) will likely come from a diverse workforce in the future.
- Funding, especially for maintenance and upkeep of camp facilities, is a priority that must be addressed by camps.
- Every camp executive and board must weigh keeping costs at a reasonable level to allow kids the opportunity to experience camp and still have an adequate budget to reach the camp goals.
- The mission of the camp and the need for an adequate budget cannot be separated. In addition, the mission must be applied to the operation of the facility and the priorities established for any given camp. The evaluation plan should also relate to the mission.
- Camp organizations need to determine the percentage of costs that will be covered by fees and what costs will be covered from other sources.
- Many potential funding sources exist for not for profit camps (grants, government assistance, donations, endowment funds, etc.) that must be examined. It takes time, energy, and a concerted plan on the part of the agency to procure these funds.
- Fund-raising for camping programs must be done for an intended, articulated purpose.
- Staff training will be critical in the future. A well-conceived training plan that addresses social and well as technical skills will be necessary. Money invested in training will likely have long term benefits.
- Volunteers working in not for profit camps require applied personnel management strategies. They should be treated similarly to paid staff except without the salary compensation.
- A potential shortage of full time staff can be addressed by assuring that quality staff do not burn out or are unable to have a desired quality of life when they are working at camps.
- Year around schools are not an issue for most not for profit camps but the use and upkeep of facilities year around is an issue that must be addressed.
- A long-range maintenance plan should be developed at each camp facility.
- A marketing plan should be based on being responsive to community needs, but also be realistic in terms of what camps can provide.
- Marketing for not for profit camps includes not only to campers, but also to funders.
- Camps must monitor state and national legislation that affects regulatory issues as well as not for profit status issues.
- Camps must seek partnerships within their local communities for program development as well as funding possibilities.

Critical Issues

**Trend #7:** *The demographics of American society are changing.*

**Issues for Not for profit Camps:**

- Getting campers and staff that reflect local and national diversity
- Resolving the problems with gaps that occur in income in our society
- Using camp as a means for addressing youth development issues

- Getting leaders that can serve as positive adult role models

**Trend #8:** *Accountability is critical in all social organizations.*

**Issues for Not for profit Camps :**

- Determining what goals and objectives camping accomplishes

**Recommendations for Camps :**

- Camp staff need to examine fee structures to make sure that some campers are not being eliminated from camp. In not for profit camps, the balancing of young people from all income levels ought to be considered.
- Staff in camps need to examine cultural values that may preclude people from participating in camp programs
- The focus on increasing camp numbers must also examine how to make camps inclusive as well as how many campers can be reasonably served without sacrificing a quality experience.
- Staff who can serve as positive role models must be hired, but they also must be trained in what it means to be a positive role model.
- Camp programs must address a variety of opportunities and skill levels.
- Youth have many choices with what to do with their lives. In choosing to come to camp, they should know what they could expect.
- Camp programs attempt to address ethics and values, but what these values are have not been clearly articulated by staffs as they attempt to work with young people in camps.
- A camp cannot be everything to everybody, nor can all activities be addressed. Therefore, each camp must determine what camper needs they can address and what groups to target in their recruitment efforts.
- Camp directors will need to be sensitive to diversity issues such as disability and income status if recruitment efforts are to be effective.
- A focus on recruiting campers who represent diverse groups must be done in collaboration with the agency at large and its recruitment efforts to obtain members for all agency programs.

## Summary

In response to the broad question asked in the title of this report, “Can not for profit camps survive?” the answer is a resounding “yes.” Not for profit camping will survive into the new century and into the new millennium. Big challenges exist, however, that camp leaders must address. Camp leaders may have to focus their energies in new ways, be more cognizant of the influence of changing social patterns, and adapt to a work environment more similar to the corporate world. Camp professionals will be asked to do more with less, wear more “hats,” and still provide the stable camp programs that are often the most visible articulation of the agency’s mission and goals. When not for profit camp directors are asked “What difference do you make?” they will have to show outcomes and results based on providing effective leadership, clarity of vision, and fiscal responsibility to demonstrate accountability and commitment of to the agency, the campers, and the local community.

## Appendix A

### References

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## Appendix B

### List of Camping Experts Interviewed

Joe Bruno	National Office, Girl Scouts of the United States
Eugene Clark	New Hampshire YMCA
Dennis Elliot	Ohio State 4-H
Vance Gilmore	
Kate Hoppe	Pines of Carolina Girl Scouts
Donna Nye	National Office of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America
Barry Royce	New York City Boys' Clubs
Jeff Smith	North Carolina Easter Seals
Robert Tellen	National Office of the YMCA of the USA
Suz Welch	Iowa Campfire
Ed Woodlock	National Office, Boy Scouts of America

## Appendix C

### Expert Panel Phone Interview Questions

1.a. In what ways (if any) has the philosophical basis for organization (mission) changed in the past 5 years?

b. What are the broad goals of the organization for the next 5 years (and decided by whom)?

c. How does camping fit into the agency's mission and objectives?

2.a. What are the critical social issues identified by your agency that wish to address? (some suggested youth-at-risk, families, diversity issues, socio-economic issues of participants and/or community, changing demographics, etc)

b. What is the relationship of these issues to camping as seen by your agency?

3.a. What challenging strategic management issues are going to be faced by your organization? (suggested personnel issues, insurance/liability, year around operations, fiscal issues, technology, changing program focus, etc)

b. What impact will these challenges have on the camp (or vice versa)?

4.a. What are the pressing external constraints faced by camping programs in your agency?

b. What are the pressing internal (within-organizational) constraints to camping?