

Practical Steps to Starting a Remarkable Music Program for Your Camp

Case Study: Camp Wayne for Girls

Camp Wayne for Girls is located in Preston Park, PA. It is owned and directed by Noel Corpuel, who is the second generation of Corpuels to run the camp since its inception in 1921. His daughter and son-in-law, Adena and Matt Brown are now the third generation of the family directing the camp. Camp Wayne for Girls considers itself to be a traditional resident camp, and it offers a wide variety of programming to its campers.

The camp incorporates the creative arts into its daily programming. There are many events that happen throughout the summer that involve the campers singing. The camp alma mater was written by a counselor and originally sung at Color War Big Sing. All of the girls know the song and sing it together every Friday night. Music and song are a part of the camp culture.

In the summer of 2011, Camp Wayne expanded their instrumental music program. They taught acoustic guitar for many years and last summer with the launch of their Rock Band program, they began to offer lessons on electric guitar, bass, keyboards and drums. The campers were also able to form Bands where they would then collectively choose a name for their band, what song they wanted to learn, work with a vocal coach, jam together, and rehearse to perform at the camp's Waynestock Festival. They had 17 bands perform at the outdoor concert. Additionally, they did a photo shoot for each band and hung up posters around campus a few days before, and this gave the campers an introduction to marketing and promotion skills.

In order to set-up this program, Camp Wayne took these steps:

1. They researched and surveyed their camper and parent population to determine the interest.
2. They intentionally planned how the music activities would fit into their schedule and what they wanted the outcome of the activity to be.
3. Two new staff members were hired specifically to run the music program and teach voice lessons.
4. They cleared an existing space and utilized it to be the music room, as well as building storage closets for the instruments and gear.
5. With the help and guidance of the newly hired staff persons, they invested in the gear and instruments that were appropriate for their needs.
6. They intentionally created performance opportunities for the campers to help keep them inspired and motivated.

An Interview with Adena Brown, Director of Camp Wayne for Girls

What music activities did you have previous to the summer of 2011?

We offered acoustic guitar lessons.

What percentage of campers would you say participated in the music program in 2011?

I would say it was at about 50% of all of the campers that participated in the music program.

What do you perceive the benefits of having this program to be?

Adding something brand new to the daily program was exciting in of itself, but it also gave us a new evening activity. Music is universal and those who didn't choose to play enjoyed listening to it. It added a lot of energy and it was very impressive to the tours that we gave to potential families as we walked through the camp. They were particularly impressed with how kids who never played before were now members of a band. Also, kids who take lessons at home were thrilled to be able to put their talents to use. Those who are not athletic were able to shine as they showed off their skills. It also gave the girls another opportunity to sing. Some kids might not have gotten a singing part in a show, but they were able to sing in the band, and even if they weren't the lead, we added backup parts so that we could include as many campers as possible.

Are there any specific examples of a single camper being affected by participating in a band that come to mind for you? A success story?

A handful of parents emailed me before camp to tell me how happy they were that we were adding this program because their daughter played or sang at home. There's one girl who lost her father a few years ago. She isn't very athletic and never stood out at camp in any particular activity. She plays the drums at home and was really good. It was great seeing her up on stage in her glory!

What was the process that you went through when finding and hiring your music staff person?

We lucked out on this one! We simply put the word out, and it turns out that our current Chef knew two people from his other camp that were looking for a change. We could not have gotten this program off the ground if it weren't for them.

What advice can you give to a camp (day or resident) that wants to start a music program?

Invest in the right people. Even if you have to pay more the first year to kick-start your program it's totally worth it. Make it know to your families that you're starting this program, because in our case, some of the parents were so excited that they even offered to help. You never know what kind of connections people have.