

ACA Accreditation Means Wander Follows "Best Practices"

Wander Wisconsin has been accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA) since 2001 and is up for reaccreditation in 2010.

"We knew it represented 'best practices' throughout the camp community so that's why we wanted to attain that standard," said Jason Anderson, Division Director. **"We have the only programs in the Madison area that are ACA accredited."**

Wisconsin Youth Company's AFTER SCHOOL summer day camp is also ACA accredited.

ACA accreditation means the program is rated on more than 300 standards in categories such as health

and wellness, transportation, human resources, operational management, trip and travel, aquatics, site and food services and program design and activities.

"We've scored in the high 90 percent for each standard every time we've been checked," said Anderson.



The program goes through accreditation every three years. Prior to its first accreditation in 2001 Anderson attended a half day standards course to learn about the process. He goes to a refresher class prior to

each reaccreditation. "Being accredited shows parents that we're committed to program quality as well as safety," said Anderson.

The accreditation process takes place in two phases. The first phase involves accreditation visitors coming to the Wander office and checking all written materials.

"It's not enough for us to just say we have our vans safety inspected," said Anderson. "We must show them the certificate of inspection from the auto dealer."

Phase two involves a site inspection when the program is in operation.

"They actually come and observe all the details of

camp in operation," said Anderson, "even to the point of opening up the first aid kit to see that everything is there."

Anderson, Wander Wisconsin Program Director Cheri Wilson, and trip leaders attend the ACA Mid States Camp Conference each spring.

"That helps us connect to the larger community of camp professionals," said Anderson.

He noted that the ACA website is a good resource for parents with lots of information about youth development, not just camping. Visit www.campparents.org.



www.wanderwisconsin.org

Unique adventures and camping experiences for youth.



Wander Wisconsin is a program of Wisconsin Youth Company
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Whereabouts

A seasonal newsletter from Wander Wisconsin

FALL 2009

Camp Experience Gives Kids Something Special

In an economy that is forcing most families to look closely at their budgets, it can seem extravagant to send a child to camp. But kids get something special from camp.

"Camp is a really important experience for kids," said Cheri Wilson, Wander Wisconsin Program Director. "It's a place where they can be themselves."

Camp is that special combination of fun and nature and meeting new people that doesn't seem to happen the same way in other kinds of child and youth-oriented environments.

"Kids can meet others who have no preconceived ideas about who they are, whether

they are part of the popular crowd or not," Wilson said.

Another big part of camp is the staff. "These are people who are passionate about teaching and nurturing children," said Wilson.

There are also rituals at camp that help give campers a sense of belonging to the group. Wilson mentioned long time Wander Trip Leader Josh Ludke's favorite ritual with campers: "The Wander Wisconsin Super Secret Marshmallow Ceremony."

The ritual begins with campers sticking a marshmallow on their foreheads. The rest, of course, is "super secret."

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Learning a new skill like paddling a canoe is part of the fun of going to camp.

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Middle School Youth Can Attend Fall Campout

Wander Wisconsin's annual fall campout at Lions Camp, Rosholt, WI is inviting middle school youth to attend for the first



At the fall campout there is time for sitting by the lake with your friends.

time. In the past the campout has only been for ages eight to 12. It will be October 28-30.

"We had some 12 year olds attend last year and request to come back," said Cheri Wilson, Wander Wisconsin Program Director. "So we decided to arrange programming for older kids."

Wilson said the campout could accommodate nine girls and nine boys who are in sixth to eighth grade.

The older children will stay

in separate cabins and will have their own activities.

"The middle school kids get to do the low ropes course and ride bikes," said Wilson.

Off road bikes and tandems will be available for the group to use on the trails at the camp.

Younger children ages eight to 11 can also attend.

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Fall Campout
Registration Deadline
Extended to
October 23.

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Director's Column:

Another Summer of Kids Discovering Themselves and the Outdoors



As I look out my window and see the brilliant colors of fall, I take a moment to reflect on another great Wander Wisconsin summer. Wander campers canoed, kayaked, white water rafted, hiked, fished, rock climbed, swam in lakes and rivers, dug in the sand, dirt, mud and river banks, sat under the

stars, explored a wild cave, discovered area nature centers, built campfires, set up tents, cooked outside, created small communities, made new friends, played games, roasted thousands of marshmallows and challenged themselves in countless different ways.

I was recently asked why I thought camp was so important for kids. Camp provides children with opportunities to have new experiences which lead to greater self confidence, engaged learning, a sense of independence and character-building. When I was in sixth grade I went away to camp for the first time. I had spent entire summers away from home with my grandmother, but there was something different about being away at camp without any family. What I remember most was trying archery for the first time and the camaraderie I felt with my fellow camp buddies. Archery was much harder than I had thought it would be and I wasn't very good at it. With the patient guidance of

the camp counselor and encouragement from my cabin mates, I not only hit the hay bale, but actually hit the target! This sounds like such an insignificant event that happened so long ago and yet so many years later I can still feel what it felt like to be at camp and to hit that target. Around that same time is when I began to tent camp. Camping, cooking and sleeping outdoors felt natural and I felt a great sense of freedom, which is actually how it still feels today when I camp. Camping for me now, with my kids is also a great stress reliever for all three of us. We shed all the day to day pressures and tension to become immersed in our natural surroundings. I find camping engages more conversation, that face to face kind that seems to be disappearing in this age of technology and instant messaging. It is my favorite summer activity, to get un-plugged and get outside in the woods or in our canoe.

The camp experience creates communities where children can learn real life skills, connect with the outdoors, develop self-esteem, and create lifelong memories and friendships. Wander Wisconsin is dedicated to providing children with a positive and meaningful camp experience!

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.
~William Shakespeare

Cheri Wilson



Why Camp Experience Is Important

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Wilson said a ritual like that frees children to relax and be silly because everyone else including the adult in charge is being silly too.

Then there's the opportunities for growth that can only come with an away-from-home, overnight camp experience.

Three different parents of campers from three different overnight trips had this to say:

"My child felt independent as he went off on a new adventure."

"My child gained confidence

in his abilities in camping, canoeing, and taking care of himself."

"My child is now confident about being away from home."

Camp becomes an opportunity for campers to explore and challenge themselves and build self-esteem according to Wilson. While young people can do those same things on a soccer field or at a chess club there's just something different about doing those things in nature.

"Something very special happens," said Wilson.

"Friendships are deeper because they work together on challenges like getting the tent up or cooking dinner."

Wilson sees the camp experience as one that offers many opportunities for young people to succeed.

"They can challenge themselves over and over again in so many ways," she said, "and what they achieve can be big steps, small steps, even life changes."

That makes a week at camp seem less of a luxury and more of a vital growth experience.



Camp teaching kids to work together and that builds strong friendships.

Hayride, Campfire Planned for Wander Families

A fall hayride and campfire is planned for all Wander Wisconsin families at Elver Park on Saturday, November 21, 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. The event is a chance for Wander campers and their families to get together and have some fun outdoors.

Elver Park is across the street

and about a block south of the Wisconsin Youth Company administrative offices at 1201 McKenna Blvd., Madison.

Families can enjoy a hayride through the park then join in a campfire for S' Mores and hot chocolate. Wander trip leaders will be there to visit

with families.

There is no charge for the event but please register by November 20. Call Cheri Wilson at 608-276-9782, ext. 24 or email cwilson@wisconsinyouthcompany.org.



These campers took part in a hayride at the fall campout last year.

Winter Break Program Plans Include Fun in the Snow

Depending on weather and snow amounts Wander Wisconsin will offer a three-day winter break program which may include sledding, cross country skiing or snow shoeing. The program is planned for December 21-23.

"We want to do some fun winter activities outdoors," said Cheri Wilson, program director for Wander Wisconsin.

Even if the weather doesn't cooperate Wilson said they

will have a program but just do different activities.

"Last year it was so cold the day we were supposed to go to Christmas Mountain we went to the Kalahari indoor water park instead," said Wilson.

But the next day was still too cold to spend much time outdoors so the group had to settle for some indoor activities and a shorter expedition to Elver Park hill which is just a block from the

Wander office on McKenna Blvd. This year Wilson is looking into cross country skiing or snow shoeing at Blue Mound State Park. If it can be arranged kids may get a chance to try ice fishing on Lake Monona. One of the days will also include a visit to an indoor water park.

Parents can sign their kids up for one, two or three days.

"We wanted to offer more flexibility to families around the holidays," said Wilson.

The program can accommodate up to 13 kids, ages eight to 12, each day and will run from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Prices and registration materials will be available in November. Check the website, www.wanderwisconsin.org, for the latest information.

Fall Campout to Include Middle School Kids

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They will get to try fishing and archery, make crafts and can take part in a pond exploration class using Lion's Lake. Both age groups will join together for family style meals and for S' Mores and games around the campfire. Cost of the campout is \$160 for ages eight to 11 and \$170 for sixth to eighth graders.

Registered campers may check in beginning at 4 p.m., Wednesday, October 28 at the Wisconsin Youth Company administrative offices, 1201 McKenna Blvd., Madison. Buses leave at 5:15 p.m. and return Friday, October 30, 5 p.m.

Staffing for the campout is not yet complete but summer trip leaders Josh Ludke and Jesse Davis will attend as will

Middle School U and day camp biking instructor Patrick Garvey. Space is available for up to 60 in the younger group. Registration is available online at www.wanderwisconsin.org. For more information contact Cheri Wilson, 608-276-9782, ext. 24 or email cwilson@wisconsinyouthcompany.org.



Middle school kids can attend the fall campout this year.