

**Developing & Maintaining a Successful Camp Alumni Program
People, Processes & Tools**

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Introduction of Katie Trippi (Camp Echo) & Stuart Weinberg (Consultant/FOK Director)

- Personal history/background
- Camp history
- "Tale of Two Approaches" ... differences and similarities in our alumni programs

Philosophical Grounding for Successful Alumni Relations & Development Work

- Must be open to connecting with alumni, not just for \$\$, but their ability to support camp by:
 - Promoting camp to new families
 - Volunteering
 - Donating professional services
 - Returning as staff or Adult Program participants
- Must be patient and stay committed - It won't all happen overnight!
- Must be ready to respond to communication from alums
- Must think like a small college or university, not a local YMCA branch program
- Be willing to follow all leads to find additional alumni
- Must have the following in place before anything else can move forward:
 - Strong Program (or progress being made on rebuilding a strong program)
 - Stewardship/Integrity - - if you don't have the respect of your camp community, what can you do to rebuild it?
 - Camp Leadership must be open to making alums feel welcome

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Powerpoint presentation from Stuart Weinberg available at: <http://www.campalum.com>

Look for the '[ACA Nashville 2008](#)' link under **PRESENTATIONS**
Use username: **camp** and password: **alumni**

Nuts & Bolts

- If I could only do a few things, what would be most important?
Remember! It doesn't have to be fancy. Start with simple stuff!
 - Hard copy newsletter sent consistently year to year (could be one page letter once or twice a year from Director)
 - Need to keep sending good news about camp to constituents
 - Include news from alums
 - E-mail list: periodic news about camp, other alums, area happenings
 - Web site
 - One-way communication
 - Alumni update section to tell Camp what they are doing
 - Interactive (Stuart's program)
 - Alumni connection spot
 - Add links to alumni businesses and personal websites on your camp website
 - Updated photos of camp so they can see the Camp even when they can't visit in person
 - Online donations
 - Newsletters posted online
 - Program registration information online
 - Annual Fund Drive
 - Their colleges are asking. Why aren't we?
 - Great way to build volunteer program & develop potential board members
 - Builds excitement about camp
- What else is critical, even if I'm only doing a few things?
 - Data collection
 - Work with your camp registrar
 - Ask your campers if they have parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. who attended your camp. Be sure to capture as much data as the camper can tell you and contact parents for further info if needed
 - Save everything you can as it might give you camp history you can put in place later (registrations, health histories)
 - Be sensitive to confidential information (credit card, health histories, financial assistance) when you consider who could/should deal with historical information
 - "Return Service Requested" on everything
 - May impact budget, but worth every penny
 - Enter corrections in timely manner or you'll re-mail to wrong address
 - Alumni Finder-type program (cheap; only takes time to go searching)
 - Efficient, personal acknowledgment system for donations to camp
 - Stewardship/Integrity with donations being used for what they were intended

- If I could do more, what else could I do?
 - Ad in paper searching for alums (local paper if central service area; multiple papers if service area spread out)
 - Alumni events/ Reunions (both for all camp and for smaller sub-groups)
 - Keep it simple, piggy back on another event so it doesn't matter how many folks show up
 - Advertise event in your current communication vehicles and in local papers
 - Birthday cards
 - Anniversary cards (sent on anniversary of camp experiences)
 - Executive's Letter to donors of last three years and special friends
 - Baby t-shirts
 - Golf outings
 - Alumni travel programs (international, day trips, special interests)
 - Heritage Club program/Planned Giving program
 - Annual dinner for camp community (celebration of all things camp – separate from any corporate YMCA event)
 - History book
 - Thanksgiving cards
 - Volunteering
 - Opening/Closing Days at Camp
 - Volunteer to fill staff positions (examples: Town Run Driver, Health Officer, Social Worker or Senior Maintenance Crew member, etc.)
 - "Work Weekends" to help clean up or close up camp
 - Hospitality folks at bus departures and arrivals
 - Alumni Committee
 - Annual Fundraising Campaign
 - Interview potential staff members in their area
 - Office assistance
 - Writing birthday cards
 - Ambassadors
 - Buddies to new camper families in the area
 - Move forward into more specific development work
 - Begin cultivation of potential donors (large giving capacity)
 - Keep track of all contacts with these folks
 - Make a plan to move them towards special gift for camp
 - Use alumni network to help you connect with those who have the capacity to support camp (whether alums or not)

Frequently Asked Questions?

- Who should be considered an Alum?
 - Camper
 - Staff
 - Parent of Camper or Staff
 - Outside Group Visitor
 - Donor with no camp history
 - Neighbor
 - Anyone who considers themselves an alum
- How much will it cost?
 - Postage?
 - Printing? (donated services?)
 - Staff time? (volunteer help?)
- Who should be included?
 - Everyone in your database/on mailing list (if you can)
 - If you must limit, go with the following to start:
 - Donors
 - Close community members (board, past board)
 - Key leaders in community (both summer and winter if different)
 - May be helpful to create categories within alumni database so you can segregate communication if you want (campers, staff, donors, friends, rental groups, etc.)
- How much time each week does Alumni Development take?
 - As much time as you allow it to!
 - Should not be allowed to lapse in importance
 - Make a specific block of time each week to work on alumni development
 - Be prepared to MAKE more time as opportunities present themselves
 - Ongoing work will eliminate going into panic mode when capital (or other special development) campaign comes along
 - Use volunteers, if possible, to help you do leg work and keep things moving forward
- What is the easiest and fastest way to find alums?
 - Ask your current campers and families
 - Do you ask if parent or family member attended camp on your registration form?
 - Begin data entry of old records
 - Interview previous Directors
 - Research camp history
 - Let alums know you are looking for them and give them an easy way to get back in touch (web site, etc.)
 - Take out an ad in newspaper in area where camp has history