

The Invitation to Serve

Five young people piled into my office, excited about serving on Camp Hope staff. My office was in its usual summer mode and resembled a small warehouse jammed full of necessities ranging from fruit roll-ups to barrels of glue and tempera paint. One youth noticed the stack of Camp Hope Staff Manuals labeled clearly with each person's name on the binder.

"Why is Ryan on the staff?" he asked. "Ryan isn't a leader. He's.... well... not really one of us."

Wow! A teachable moment for sure. These youth were using the standards from their high school to inform congregational leadership. I often think that if "coolness" or some other value had been applied to being a leader in the church, I would have never been invited in. Jesus gives us an incredible lesson on who should be in the inner circle, so I directed my conversation into an "Oh-by-the-way" kind of Bible Study, helping them re-frame leadership.

Who gets invited to serve as camp staff is one of the most important decisions you will make for the summer. There is a lot to think about as you build a leadership team.

Over the last fifteen years we have organized these questions into a clear system that will help you produce the most effective servant leadership team possible. Think of these four as a movement that will take you through the whole journey of staffing, from your initial hopes to the final evaluation.

This journey grows servant leaders:

The Invitation to Serve — or as Jim Collins says in *Good to Great* "getting the right people on the bus"

Covenanting to Serve — setting clear expectations, boundaries and training for excellence in leadership

Servant leaders in action — regular rhythms for growing skills & deepening faith

Reflection after Serving — transformational learning

What are the qualities you need (I mean raw material) in the summer staff?

What is your responsibility to the parents of campers or to the stewards of the congregation in staffing?

How much does church politics play in your staffing decisions?

What are the best ways to "get" your staff?

What if you have too many youth for the positions available?

What if some people are not ready to serve on staff but you see them as an important part of the ministry?

Will the staff take this seriously?

What if you have to "fire" staff?

What can you really expect out of young people in a staffing position?

How do you protect your staff?

3 Helpful Ways to Recruit Staff:

1) INVOLVEMENT

People support what they help create, so get future staff involved in planning Camp Hope from the beginning. Including youth in the process, using the Camp Hope Mentoring Model for your Ministry Team, will work! Young leaders can recruit their friends

HINT: People are attracted to people like themselves. That means the young leaders you think will be best at serving will have friends that would make great staff members too. Staff does not have to all be members of the host congregation. Don't hesitate to actively recruit the staff that you want.

2) ASK 7-10 DIFFERENT WAYS!

The marketing methods of *McDonalds* teaches us that a person needs to receive information at least seven different ways for it to impact them. In today's over-saturated life styles, communication has to be dynamic. Yet, the power of personal invitation is always the best!

HINT: Ways to extend the invitation might be to invite them in a snail mail letter followed by an email, posting the invitation on face book, on your church website, articles in the newsletter, etc.

3) Teach the value of Camp Hope – Why would anyone want to serve at camp?

Just because the Ministry Team understands the value and impact Camp Hope can have on people's lives does not mean that the youth and young adults in the congregation have caught the vision. How will you help them see what you see?

Lets look at each part of the system for Servant Leadership Formation:

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Who invited you into leadership? Chances are whomever it was saw something in you that you didn't really see in yourself. My own invitation into serving God in the church has come as a series of opportunities without any real skill or expertise on my part. For some reason people continue to give me the chance to grow and learn with them. Searching for Camp Hope Staff is a discernment process like this.

How things start will inform the results. Often congregational leadership is driven by two main agendas: The agenda of "control and power" and the agenda of "just get someone to do it." Neither of these approaches are effective at growing servant leaders.

In John 15: 12-17 there are clues to servant leadership development. The word "servant" is seldom fully understood in our culture today, but the word "friend" makes a lot of sense! Resist the congregational inertia to be driven by "power" or, just as pervasive, the urge to "just get it done." Rather, prayerfully wonder who God is calling to serve as staff in the year ahead. Who will be part of the Camp Hope community as a group of friends growing together in faith and service? How will the Camp Hope staff be part of the congregational staff in carrying out the mission of the congregation in the neighborhood?

The first year a congregation initiates Camp Hope, no one knows what to expect. Oddly enough, I have had parents take to me lunch to explain how much their child would be an asset to the staff. Other parents have become angry because their child wants to serve on staff instead of getting a real job. Teach the congregation the value of Camp Hope as it relates to the overall congregational mission.

Use resources in this manual to help parents, youth and congregational leaders understand the commitment and impact Camp Hope will have in their lives and those who are served. If you aren't clear about this yourself, join the online discussion on our web site at www.camphopeministries.org.

Everyone on the Camp Hope staff should have a completed application on file. This is not just a nice idea. The application serves at least three purposes:

The application questions are designed to help a young person identify their own faith story. This may be the first time a young person has had to struggle with faith questions and put answers down in writing. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions so this is not a test, it is a process. The questions are simply an invitation to articulate faith thoughts.

The application includes a permission to participate and health care information from parents. You are staffing the camp with minors. Parents must be included in this process.

The application will tell you a lot about the kind of team you will build this summer. Use the questions to help you get to know your staff. As you look at the answers to the questions you will be aware of the faith maturity of your youth, of how they think and problem solve and of what they need from you and their mentor to be successful.

The Application Process

I was shocked and impressed to see Matt waiting for his interview, at least ten minutes early. He was wearing a tie and dress slacks, nervously pacing in the hall. Matt understood this was a real job and something to take seriously. Matt's respect for Camp Hope taught me a lot about expectations when hiring staff.

The interview process: We recommend every person who turns in an application be interviewed. The best interviews are face-to-face, but in a time pinch, where staff are out of town for college or for returning staff subsequent years, a phone interview will work.

The congregational pastor or youth minister should never do the interviews alone. In fact, it is best when two people from the ministry team hold the interviews. The staffing plan should be designed in partnership between the interview team and one person from the professional staff.

There are times when the recommendation will be to NOT add a person to the staff. The pastor and/or youth minister should be positioned to work with this person (and possibly their parents) if there are hurt feelings, or more importantly, to invite them into serving in a different place in the congregation.

The interview can consist of discussion about questions on the application, additional questions that pertain to specific roles at Camp Hope and time for the interviewee to ask questions as well. The interview will do at least three things:

Set the tone for staff responsibility. Use the interview to set the bar for staff expectations. A serious, caring interview will prepare the youth for future interviews too! You will also have a chance to get to know the staff in a different way, to think with them about their mentor and pray with them about the upcoming summer.

Teach about servant leadership. The interview should include a brief introduction about servant leadership. Each staff person should leave the interview with new information about being a Christian leader. For most people this will be a new understanding.

Build your team. With each interview you will gain clarity regarding the overall staff. Remember, you have at least twelve positions to fill and want to make a few decisions about this.



Will your staff have the same position for all three weeks? Many congregations prefer this so they can gain real expertise in a given area, but it is not required. I would encourage you to provide opportunities for Small Group Leaders to serve different age groups of children. Often people who choose the younger campers are surprised how challenging this can be and look forward to one week with older campers who can discuss Bible Stories with them and have fewer physical care needs.

Will you move your staff around so that this week's Craft Director is a Small Group Leader next week? This is a great approach if you have several gifted people interested in the same position. It is also a way to manage vacation schedules or staff who want to serve for only two weeks.

Special Needs Staff

People with special needs can be included on the staff. Jonathon has autism. He has been raised in the congregation and now he is in high school. When the invitation to serve on Camp Hope Staff came in the newsletter, his parents wondered if this would be a place Jonathon could share his gifts. They knew he had some limitations, but they also knew he had a wonderful love for playing basketball with people and could easily help with the dishes in the kitchen. Is it a good idea for him to be at camp?

You might have young people like Jonathon; youth or young adults who, for different reasons, are not ready to serve on staff but want to be included. You may feel a tension between staffing the strongest leaders to execute a quality camp and including youth who just need to be at camp this summer. Most of us want to include everyone at camp. The key is to help each person succeed, including high school and young adult leaders. Consider the following:

Physically, Mentally or Emotionally-Abled Leadership:

The summer is a time where all people, including those with special needs, really benefit from an opportunity like day camp. Camp Hope can be a great place for campers to open up their misconceptions about people with differing abilities. The decision to have a staff person with particular needs at camp depends upon the scope of the need and the capacity of the rest of the staff to support this need. In some cases, no decision is necessary because the individual has been included in the congregation's ministry all along and this is a non-issue. In other cases, a person's needs could be so great that they need their own staff person to assist them through the experience. You might ask, "Is this person really 'on the staff'?"

If the person in question can contribute to the community in a small way, and if their own care can be provided for, then I would encourage you to have them on the staff. Our Christian family is a great place to love each other and serve together in ways no one would ever experience otherwise.

Persons who are struggling with an addiction serving on camp staff:

If the person is in recovery and the mentor or sponsor for this person affirms this as part of the healing process, this can work well. In many cases, creating a special camp covenant for the purpose of camper care and staff accountability will clarify expectations.

There is such an opportunity to practice living in a Christian community while serving on Camp Staff. Staff members will learn a lot about serving on a team, including the need to work through each person's strengths and weaknesses.

The real key to successfully adding special need staff to the team is:

- 1. Consider the covenant and mentor relationship. Do you need to build a more structured or clear support system around this person for success?**
- 2. Assign each person in the right position on the team. Some camps add positions to their staff to make room for special people. These positions allow people to be part of the team without giving them full responsibility for camper care.**

Some special paid positions created might include:

- Camp Store Manager
- Worship Leader
- Director's Assistant (Games, Crafts, Snacks, Expressive Arts)
- Office Assistant (for the Camp Manager)
- Camp Newsletter Editor
- Camp Photographer / Videographer

What have you learned about The Invitation to Serve?