

Mountain T.O.P.

Parent Packet

Youth Summer Missions 2024



Mountain T.O.P.
P.O. Box 128, Altamont, TN 37301
Phone: (931) 692-3999, Fax: (931) 692-3807
Mountain-top.org

Table of Contents

Letter from Analiese	3
Welcome to Mountain T.O.P.	4
Week at a Glance	7
Packing List	8
FAQs	9
Creating Safe Communities	11

Letter from Analiese

Dear Parents,

Your child is going to Mountain T.O.P.! I am thrilled beyond words for their journey. My life has forever been changed by my summers on the mountain, both as camper and staffer. There is joy, excitement, spiritual exploration and hard work ahead of them. If you have never been to camp before, I can understand how many questions you probably have. I hope to answer these here, but please feel free to reach out with any more you have along the way!

Thank you so much for entrusting your child into the hands of our staffers, fellow disciples, and the people of the Sequatchie Valley. The process from signing up to getting to our camp gates is wrapped in prayer, by people they may never meet. I hope upon their return, you will be able to see the impact of their time here not just in their words, but in their hearts.

Use this packet to find the answers to questions about their preparation, their journey here, and what they will be up to while they are in the Sequatchie Valley! Their contact person, the leader who is in charge of bringing their group, will also have a lot of good information about their trip. Please reach out to anyone on full time staff and we will be happy to answer anything you are curious about! I hope to see you on the mountain one day as well!

Brightest blessings,

Analiese

Recruiter and Resource Educator - AmeriCorps Member

analiese@mountain-top.org | (931) 692-3999

Welcome to Mountain T.O.P.

Mission

Through Christian community and faith-based relationships, we help meet the physical, spiritual, social, and emotional needs of all people we encounter. We see all four needs as equally important, and we meet those needs through Service Project and Day Camp. We serve in partnership with other organizations, churches, government offices, businesses, and community leaders to help develop the communities in which we work.

Mountain T.O.P. values faith, transformation, stewardship, and connection. We approach our work from a Christian faith perspective, but it is never a prerequisite for those who participate in our programs. We desire to operate in a way that aligns with the teachings of Jesus, acting in a way that centers the message of love and justice. Because we believe in the gospel, we desire to pursue the flourishing of all people in a holistic way. In all things, we take great care to wisely leverage our resources and cultivate generosity. We believe that connection is one of the greatest gifts within the Mountain T.O.P. community, and we seek to promote connection between people and God.

Mountain T.O.P. (Tennessee Outreach Project) is an interdenominational, non-profit Christian Mission affiliated with the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church, dedicated to rural life ministry in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee. Each year we welcome groups that come from Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and non-denominational backgrounds, among others. Our program and mission are ecumenical in nature.

Mountain T.O.P.'s 5 Focus Areas

- **Eliminating Substandard Housing:** to provide direct services and organizational support that addresses severe housing issues in our service area.
- **Leadership:** to foster growth among staff, participants, donors, and the community.
- **Community Development:** to engage in solutions with community partners for holistic and sustainable community growth.
- **Education:** to provide and support opportunities for lifelong learning and personal growth for all ages.
- **Health:** to promote lifestyles that support healthy choices.

Service Project

The scope of our service projects includes construction, painting, and yard work. These projects help meet physical needs expressed by families in our service area. However, doing home repair is about more than building a porch or clearing a yard. It's about the accessibility that is gained when a family now has a safe way to enter and exit their home. It's about how that entryway will serve as a much more significant entryway into a healthier, more sustainable, and more socially-connected lifestyle. Whenever we interact with a family we seek to help meet their needs holistically. The physical need opens the door to a relationship between the family and Mountain T.O.P. where participants can help meet the family's social, emotional, and spiritual needs, while addressing the project at hand. So our service project work is not just about providing youth the opportunity to learn about power tools, it's also about giving the opportunity to act as Jesus would through social and spiritual engagement with the folks in our service area.

Day Camp

Building resilience, exploring community, reading, growing in healthy lives, playing, learning about Jesus—this sums up a week of Day Camp. Five days of Day Camp broadens horizons, brightens futures, and builds hope in youth ages 6-11 from Grundy County. Participants may visit local farms, churches, state parks, a historical society, and Sewanee: University of the South. These field trips give participants the opportunity to connect with their communities and understand the plethora of good things going on around them every day. Day Camp is intentional about pairing Youth Summer Ministry participants with the Day Camp children, giving the YSM participants the opportunity to grow in their leadership and mentorship skills. For this reason, we require that YSM participants be rising 9th graders or older.

Programming Philosophy

We desire to expose our participants to a variety of worship styles because we value the beauty of connecting with the Lord in different ways, and we desire to respect the variety of faith traditions from which our participants may come. Built into our daily schedule are four times to worship individually, in a small group, or as a whole community. Each day starts with an individual devotional time with material provided, during the day a staff member will lead a small group discussion on-site with the Youth Renewal Group (YRG), and each evening ends with a time of sharing and a time of corporate worship. Churches will also have an opportunity to meet together for a time of discussion and reflection once a day during free time.

Safety: Safe Sanctuary Guidelines

Mountain T.O.P. is committed to creating a safe environment—physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually—for all involved. We will be following Safe Sanctuary guidelines during *all* camp weeks. These standards for appropriate adult behavior are outlined at length in the Creating Safe Communities information, which is included in this packet. Safe Sanctuary requires a ratio of 2 adults (21+) for every 5 youth (17 &

under). Background checks are mandatory and are to be on file either at the church or with Mountain T.O.P. for all participants 18 years old and older. Adults and youth will have separate shower times. We trust that groups will appropriately screen their adult participants for the safety of the camp community.

Communicable Illness Protocols

We request that all participants please monitor yourself for the 48 hours before you come for any communicable illness symptoms. We follow Mountain T.O.P.'s procedures for communicable disease exposure while in camp, and we have safe and comfortable spaces for care of participants experiencing any illness. Vaccinations are not required for camp participation, but our protocols will differ based on vaccination status.

Week at a Glance

This is an outline of our weekly schedule!

ARRIVE ON SUNDAY MORNING

- 1:30 Gates Open - Registration, unload, move in
- 2:30 Adult Meeting with the Director
- 3:15 Orientation: What is this week going to look like?
- 4:00 Community Game
- 4:15 Program Moment
- 4:30 Healthy Snack Break
- 4:45 Major Group Breakdown
SP/ DC Moments
YRG Breakdown and Builder
- 6:00 Dinner
Major Group Meeting
Community Moment
- ~9:45 Lights Out

- 7:15 Evening Community Program
(Recreation, sharing, worship,
MG Meeting)

FRIDAY SCHEDULE

- 7:30 am Breakfast
- 8:00 Daybreak
- 8:30 Major Group meetings,
load up
- 9:00 Go to site for the day
Work, work, work
- 12:00 pm Lunch at site
- 1:00 YRG celebration in county
- 4:00 Return to camp
- 6:00 Dinner
Campfire
Fishhook worship service

MON - THUR SCHEDULE

- 7:30 am Breakfast
- 8:00 Daybreak
- 8:30 Major Group meetings, load up
- 9:00 Go to site for the day
Work, work, work
- 4:30 Return to camp, unload
- 6:00 Dinner

SATURDAY SCHEDULE

- 7:00 am Breakfast
Camp Evaluations
- 7:30 Daybreak
- 8:00 Camp Cleanup
Closing Circle
- ~10:00 Depart

Packing List

Must Haves:

- Work clothes & shoes for one week (see *Special Notes* for specifics)
- Casual clothes for one week
- Bedding for a twin bed: sheets and blanket or sleeping bag
- Pillow
- Bath Towel
- Toiletries
- Shower Sandals
- Rain Gear (we work through the rain!)
- At least one long-sleeve shirt, jacket or sweatshirt for possible cold evenings
- Sunscreen, Bug Repellent, Hand Sanitizer
- Flashlight
- Bible, journal, pen/pencil
- Watch (so you can be on time!)
- Water bottle

Optional:

- Portable camp chair for more comfortable seating than the ground offers
- Fan (might need small extension cord for it)
- Spending money for canteen, camp store (T-shirts and other items will be sold, local dairy bars, local shops, etc.)
- Musical instrument (if you play one)
- Plastic bags for wet, soiled or filthy clothing
- Any personal tools for Service Project that you would like to use for the week

Special Notes:

- Dress Code
 - The dress code applies to all genders. Shirts are to be worn at all times. Shirts with beer, liquor or other possibly offensive subject matter should not be brought to camp. Additionally, halter or spaghetti-strap tops, bathing suit tops, sports bras, shorts with an inseam less than 4" and jeans with offensive holes are not appropriate and should not be brought to camp. Enforcing the dress code is the responsibility of the adults for their own youth as this can be a delicate situation to handle.
- **Required** during workday:
 - Service Project - Long pants (NO leggings or yoga pants), closed-toe, hard-sole shoes or work boots and shirts with at least short sleeves. Work gloves
 - Day Camp - Shorts are okay, as well as open toe shoes. Shoes should be comfortable and appropriate for all day activities such as hiking or touring the area (please no flip-flops, or other slip-ons). Appropriate shorts are fine at camp in the evening.
 - All clothes should be conservative when it comes to their content (i.e. no beer or possibly offensive designs) and how revealing they are.
 - Bring enough clothes for the entire week. Laundry facilities are not available.

*Please leave valuables at home and/or locked in the vehicle for the week. This includes expensive jewelry, electronics, and large amounts of cash. Although we do the best we can, we cannot always ensure the security of the facilities.

FAQs

My child has allergies/dietary restrictions. Can you accommodate that?

Yes we can! Our kitchen is well versed in all dietary requirements, and our staff has had years of experience. There is a section on the roster that your contact person will submit for dietary restrictions. Please make sure all allergies have been listed there. We can accommodate almost anything. If the allergy is severe enough for cross contamination to cause a reaction, please make sure that is communicated to our staff. You may bring your own food if that is more desirable for your circumstances. Any medicinal allergies will have a spot to be listed on their medical forms. Please contact Jacey as jacey@mountain-top.org for any concerns and we can walk you through our process! We will do our best to ensure your child is fed, full, and happy!

How do you split up the YRGs? Who will my child be working with for the week?

When our groups arrive on Sunday, the camp participants go through a process to create YRGs, the group they will be working with all week. Intentionally, these groups are a mix of people from all of the churches in camp. This mixing is one of the key pillars of our program here and we value the cross-cultural experiences it provides. We have groups from across the country and we hope to encourage diverse groups of people to work together and build bonds. (Church groups of the same gender will stay together in cabins and will be able to eat breakfast and dinner together.) Our goal is for the YRGs to have a balance of age, gender, MTOP experience, and geographical location. We aim for 7 people in each YRG, 2 adults and 5 youth. Each group will have one driver over the age of 25 and we aim for the other adult to be a Safe Sanctuary adult, so over 21 years of age. If they are not 21, we will assemble the group to reflect Safe Sanctuary guidelines. All people over the age of 18 must have a Background Check to participate in our programs. All of the homeowners/families we will have your child working with have been vetted by our full time and summer staff. We would never knowingly send a group to an unsafe environment and we prioritize our groups' safety above all else. If you have any questions or concerns with the process, speak to your contact person or reach out to Jacey, jacey@mountain-top.org.

What are the sleeping arrangements?

Most of our cabins are a classic summer camp set up, one big room with lots of bunk beds. They are separated by gender, and our camp Cumberland Pines has separate bath houses outside of the cabin also separated by gender. Camp Baker Mountain has bathrooms inside the cabins. While some camp weeks can be challenging to arrange,

we always strive to have youth in a cabin with at least one adult they know. The cabins are not intentionally mixed up in the same way that YRGs are.

Can my child bring their cell phone?

That is up to the discretion of your contact person! Some churches take the youths' phones, some don't. Mountain T.O.P. does not confiscate phones. We do ask that all of our campers hang up and hang out! This means no excessive use during the work day or any of our in camp programming. To learn more about our electronic use guidelines, please see our Expectations for Participation included in this guide.

Creating Safe Communities

A packet for all adult
participants 18+



What does it mean to create safe communities?

Friends,

Our goal is to provide a safe and welcoming place for all to be able to grow in their faith. We never want to be a barrier to someone knowing Christ. This packet is provided to all adults who are participating in our programs, and we are now giving it to you so you can assess our adult guidelines.

Adults in camp **play a very important role** in providing a safe, encouraging environment for the youth to stretch and grow in their confidence as persons loved by God. They all have a great responsibility in helping us to provide an encouraging and caring place for the youth.

We have developed guidelines and procedures that are included in this preparation packet that are essential to providing this safe space. We ask that everyone carefully review this information before embarking on this journey. In the following pages you will be introduced to:

- **Expectations for Participation:** These guidelines apply to all people, but we depend on adults to consent and model these expectations.
- **The Role of the Adult:** In every step of the process, adults are a meaningful and important aspect of creating a safe place for youth.
- **Adult Self-Screening form:** Remember that all adults 18 and older need to submit the Adult Self-Screening form along with a copy of their current background check at the time of final payment.

With gratitude,

Julie Keel
Program Director
julie@mountain-top.org | 931-692-3999

Expectations for Participation

The following are some of the basic expectations we hold for all youth and adults who participate at Mountain T.O.P. All participants should be aware of these expectations prior to arrival. Adults are expected to hold themselves and their youth to these standards. On Sunday, the camp director will also lead an Adult Meeting with all participants 18 or older to review more specifically the expectations of in-camp behavior for the week. This time is meant to be a review, as adults will have through this information already.

Camp Attendance and Participation

Groups commit to arriving at 1:30pm CST for the beginning of the Mountain TOP Program. Arriving late or leaving early from the camp week is **not** an option. Leaving at any time during the week and coming back to camp is also **not** an option. We design our program very carefully to ensure that all participants receive the maximum benefit from their experience. On Sunday, our staff will be breaking the community into work teams and on Saturday morning, the community will have its final closure experience. Missing either of these would hinder the experience for a person and the community. Furthermore, an adult leaving the week means a team would be left without a driver or second adult and therefore incapacitating the group. If there is an extreme situation, we are willing to address special cases.

Programming

Youth and adults are expected to attend and participate in all structured activities, recreation, programs, and worships. Please do not ask us for any exceptions to this camp participation expectation. We want everyone to gain the most they can while at camp together.

- If Contact People need to assemble their church together for a meeting, we encourage them to do so during Free Time at the end of the day. Please confer with the Camp Director when arranging that church meeting time.

Service Team Experience

Participants in the Youth Summer Ministry (YSM) will be mixed up with other churches to create Youth Renewal Groups (YRGs). YRGs are created through a spirit-led, staff-facilitated, and participant-driven process in order to create groups that have a balance of experience, age, gender, and church background.

Adult to Child Ratio

Adult to Child Ratio We require a 2:5 Adult to Child ratio in a group. Both adults must be at least 3 years older than the oldest youth in the group.

Adult Self-Screening Forms

All adults ages 18 and over need to have completed a satisfactory and current (within the last 3 years) background check before they arrive at camp. Background checks can be run by the participant's church or by Mountain T.O.P. for \$10/check. **A signed copy of the Adult Self-Screening form for each participant 18+ must be submitted to the Mountain T.O.P. office at the time of final payment.**

Dress Code

The dress code applies to all genders. Shirts are to be worn at all times. Shirts with beer, liquor or other possibly offensive subject matter should not be brought to camp. Additionally, halter or spaghetti-strap tops, bathing suit tops, sports bras, shorts with an inseam less than 4" and jeans with offensive holes are not appropriate and should not be brought to camp.

- **Service Project:** For safety reasons, the youth and adults with Service Project are to wear long pants (**no** leggings or yoga pants), closed-toe and hard-sole shoes and shirts with at least short sleeves during the workday. Scrubs are allowed. Appropriate shorts are fine at camp in the evening.
- **Day Camp:** Youth and adults participating in Day Camp can wear appropriate shorts instead of pants and do not have to wear closed toed shoes. Shoes should be comfortable and appropriate for all day activities such as hiking or touring the area (please no flip-flops or other slip-ons).
- The Mountain T.O.P. staff relies on adults from within the church to monitor the dress code of their participants. If necessary, the staff will assist in addressing the situation.

Electronic Devices & Social Media

Social media can either be a great tool or a destructive barrier. It can bring people together or drive a wedge in the spiritual practice of building community. During the camp week, we encourage minimal use of devices. Adults are definitely encouraged to have a cell phone with them in case of emergencies and to communicate with camp staff. We ask that devices are not used during meal times or programming events because we want to be present and build relationships with the people in front of us. We encourage churches to have conversations with their participants about the safe and healthy use of social media and devices while at camp. The camp staff is prepared to take action against reports of virtual bullying if needed. Mountain T.O.P. supports churches who decided to withhold participant's cell phones during the time in camp, but that is not a requirement. Adults should never interact with youth on social media without the permission of the parents. No one should ever be photographed or posted about without their permission.

Lights Out Policy

Your camp staff will set times for "lights out" each night, and they typically set a slightly later time on Friday night. The staff will take responsibility for the initial bed check at the designated lights out. Our expectation is that all participants will stay in their cabin after this time. We do not intend for the staff (nor are they able) to stay up for hours putting people back to bed and/or chasing them around camp. We ask for your group's understanding and cooperation in this matter. *We depend on the leadership and maturity of the adults present in camp for assistance.* If campers are found out of their cabins, the staff will find the Contact Person. Repeated offenses will require the participant's parents to be called, with the possibility of being sent home at the individual's expense.

Tobacco

The use of tobacco is discouraged and prohibited in some cases due to camp regulations, sensitivity and fire hazards. Anyone under the age of 21 is prohibited from smoking, using, or possessing tobacco in any form—including vaping and electronic cigarettes. Mountain T.O.P. recognizes the need to establish a designated tobacco area for those who use tobacco. This designated area is to be in a private and discreet area of camp. This is due to our desire to discourage the use of tobacco products and the need to not promote the use of tobacco as a social activity or as a part of the community process.

Alcohol & Drugs

Do not bring any alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs to camp. Those who bring such items can be sent home at the individual's expense.

Prescription Drugs

Sharing of prescription drugs is strictly prohibited. Those who do can be sent home at the individual's expense.

Fireworks

Do not bring fireworks into camp – these are dangerous items, especially in wooded areas.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviors with Youth

Things that are appropriate:

- Side hugs initiated by the other person.
- Asking permission, including with technology.
- Using positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism to manage or change behavior.
- Respecting a person's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable.

Things that are not appropriate:

- Private situations. If, by accident, you find yourself alone with a youth, go with the youth immediately to a public place.
- Be alert to youth who continually seek you out, who stare at you and expect or request a disproportionate amount of your time.
- Never initiate a hug and always be the one to end the hug.
- Never allow another camper to sit on your lap.
- Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing inappropriate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment or sexual references shared in any sort of communication, including virtually.
- Tickling, wrestling with, or excessively teasing a youth.

Any potential adult participant identified with a known history of inappropriate behavior toward a minor will not be considered a candidate for participation in YSM, nor will they be permitted to participate in any program where minors are present in the future.

Abuse Tolerance

Abuse of any kind is antithetical to any true expression of Christian community and the values of Jesus Christ as expressed in the scriptures. Therefore, Mountain T.O.P. has a zero tolerance for abuse. It is the responsibility of every adult participant to act in the best interest of youth at all times. In the event any participant observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, grooming, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, or virtual) it is the responsibility of each such participant to immediately report their observations to the Mountain T.O.P. staff. In the state of Tennessee, everyone is a mandated reporter whether you or a state resident or not.

We will briefly go over examples of abuse and inappropriate behaviors and how to identify them. Finally we will summarize our next steps at Mountain T.O.P. on how we address these different situations should we encounter them in our contexts in camp and out of camp. A final note: though we do not expect any of these situations to occur, it is important for all adults to be on the same page that we are responsible for the well being of the children and youth in our charge and to know what to do in the case of a situation of abuse, neglect or cases of inappropriate behavior.

Identifying Abusive, Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

It is important for adults to be able to identify abusive and suspicious or inappropriate behaviors so that they may come to an end as soon as possible. The State of Tennessee defines Child abuse and Neglect in the following Categories:

Physical abuse: Non-accidental trauma or physical injury of a child, or failure to protect a child from harm.

Neglect: Failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm, or risk of harm, to the child's health or safety.

Sexual abuse: When a child is involved in intentional sexual acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator or sexual behaviors/situations in which there is a sexual component.

Psychological harm: A repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered. May include both abusive acts against a child and failure to act.

Examples of Abuse or Neglect:

- Frequently appearing injuries such as bruises, cuts, and burns
- Marks that either cannot be explained or the explanation does not fit the injury
- Destructive, aggressive or disruptive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn or emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or fear of parent(s)
- Extremely hungry
- Extremely Tired

- Very Ill, no sign of appropriate medical treatment
- Child left unsupervised
- Sexual knowledge/ actions that is inappropriate for their age
- Child tells you in any, way, shape, or form that they are being abused

Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors:

- Child is markedly afraid of adults
- Child wears lots of clothing inappropriate for weather
- Child is often late or absent
- Nightmares
- Inappropriate punishment

A Note on Poverty And Neglect:

Poverty can be summarized as a lack of choices. There are families whom we may encounter in our service area who may not have the resources to provide everything that their household needs or everything that you might be accustomed to. Some families choose between healthcare and food or paying the electric bill or rent. There may be circumstances beyond their control or challenges that Mountain T.O.P. is not equipped to help them with. If you encounter a family in the community you feel is in need of resources or may not know about resources available to them, let a Mountain T.O.P. staff person know and we may be able to point the family in the direction of a resource. Our goal should always be to give the family a dignified avenue to obtain the resources that they may need. These signs of abuse and neglect are not comprehensive and are meant to be used as a guide, but not all inclusive or exclusive. We want to believe a child if they are showing signs of abuse or neglect but must remember that the ramifications of living in poverty are not always explicit abuse or neglect.

Reporting Abuse, Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

Mountain T.O.P. is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for minors and intends to create and foster a culture of communication, reporting safety concerns, or policy violations. Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with Mountain T.O.P. policies and state law, to the Department of Children’s Services and/or other appropriate agencies.

In the event of apparent or suspected child abuse.

- 1) If necessary call 911
- 2) Tell a Mountain TOP Staff person. The staff person will notify a full time staff member and we will make a report along with all involved parties to the State of Tennessee’s Department of Children’s Services or with the appropriate law enforcement or other agency.

For more information on child abuse in the State of Tennessee, Mountain T.O.P. encourages you to visit the DCS website [here](#)

The Mountain T.O.P. Summer Staff has overall responsibility for all activities. Therefore, camp directions and expectations given by the staff are to be followed.

The Role of the Adult

During the Preparation Process

The role of the adult during the preparation process is very crucial. The preparation process is a time of learning together and preparing to be a team in ministry. The adult is often the person who sets the tone of the session by showing enthusiasm as well as seriousness about the importance of preparation. When youth see adults wanting to learn, grow, and prepare, they begin to understand the necessity of working through the material.

Because adults are full participants in the Mountain T.O.P. experience, it is important for adults to share in the preparation process with the youth. By involving adults in the preparation, they will not only feel a part of the group, but will also know what to expect when they arrive at camp. We hope that adults will help establish buy-in with the medical protocols and resultant program changes being made as a result of COVID-19.

At Camp and with the Camp Staff

The role of the adult at camp is one of support and partnership with the staff. It is important that all adults and staff work together so that the experience will be one of wholeness for everyone involved. The Mountain T.O.P. experience is designed for youth, with adults playing a supportive role. When youth feel ownership in the experience, they learn and grow more. We desire for our participants—no matter their age—to grow in their leadership skills, confidence, and spiritual depth. That doesn't happen unless the adults are invested and encouraging.

The adult is a role model for the youth. Therefore, we encourage all adults to help set a positive, uplifting, spiritual, and motivating attitude at camp so that the spiritual community concept will work! If there is a problem, the adult who demonstrates care, concern, and love for others during the situation is a powerful model for the youth. By keeping a positive outlook on the experience, adults teach youth a vital lesson in maturity.

Adults are expected to participate in 100% of the camp activities because they, just like staff and youth, are a part of the community forming process. When everyone plays, works, and worships together, people begin to see a Christian community at work in their lives. Everyone working for the same goals and objectives is the power behind a community that is working for God.

While Serving

We are intentional about calling the drivers "drivers," and not team leaders. The adult is a team member, which means that we encourage adults to let youth take responsibility and leadership within the team. An example of this might look like assigning a youth to be the safety coordinator for the day. Or, let the youth be the decision-makers for the group's worship station. This gives the youth a chance to experience leadership and taking responsibility.

The adult plays a significant role in challenging youth in this area. Letting the group make decisions together is an effective way of being a team member. Some adults have the tendency to play the role of decision maker and decide what the group should do. While letting go of the decision-making can be difficult, we encourage adults to let the leadership

formation be a group process so that this handful of individuals becomes a team, working together for the good of everyone. Adults who encourage and empower the group to make decisions and take responsibility will see a tremendous difference in the youth with whom they work.

We fully acknowledge that what we ask of our adults is not easy and it certainly requires a lot. However, we know that we are asking the right things. It can be a bit of a dance to learn when to step in and when to step back, when to empower and when to decide. Though our program may be called Youth Summer Ministry, we know that adults are learning and growing themselves, too.