



## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

**2011 Camp Season**



**WELCOME TO CAMP ATWATER!** Our mission is to assist in the academic and social growth and development of youth by offering a quality residential camp experience within a safe, nurturing and Afrocentric environment. The camp's goal is to create experiences that will equip youth with the skills to become happy, healthy, successful contributing adults.

The leadership development experience is a process of combining philosophy, content and methods from the fields of Education, Recreation and Culture. Our intent is to facilitate the process of youth encountering themselves and their environment in an intensive, perceptive and experiential manner. The program utilizes natural ways to arouse sensitivity, shape values and strengthen personalities. The result is campers will expand their cognitive understandings about their responsibilities and contributions to these social, economic and ecological dimensions of our world.

We hope you find the Parent Handbook a helpful resource as you prepare to send your child to Atwater. If you have additional questions or comments, do not hesitate to contact our office.

### **PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR CAMP**

Going away to camp is a big step for the entire family, particularly if this is the first experience. You can help your child most by talking with them and expressing your confidence about their ability to succeed at the new challenges camp will offer. Homesickness may occur. Our staff members are trained to work with homesick campers, and we usually cure the homesickness in a few days. One thing to keep in mind is that homesickness is completely normal. It will take some time to adjust to the new environment and routine.

If you receive a letter that is less than positive, please don't be too worried. Homesickness usually occurs during rest hour and at nighttime when campers are less busy which is also a time when many letters are written. We know that it is difficult to receive homesick letters from your child, but please don't be too alarmed. Quite often, the homesickness has passed by the time the letter reaches home. Please notify the camp if you have concerns about the letters you receive.

We do not recommend telling your child that they can call home anytime they need to, or that you will come pick them up early. As stated earlier, campers are not allowed to use the telephone except in the case of an emergency, and suggesting an early pick up gives your child the notion that they do not have to try. Although these statements are usually made with good intentions, it makes adjusting to camp life much more difficult. Instead, you will want to encourage your child to try new activities, make new friends, and discover new things about themselves. Gaining independence from family and gaining self-

confidence are important steps in a child's development that must be faced at some point. Camp is an ideal environment to take those steps.

Other ways to help your child prepare for camp are: Let them help pack their own bags, have open discussions about concerns they may have about being away, and talk about both the ups and downs of being at camp. The American Camping Association has a terrific website full of articles that can help parents prepare both themselves and their camper for the upcoming camp experience. Find them at [www.acacamps.org/parents](http://www.acacamps.org/parents).

Phillips Exeter Academy psychologist Dr. Christopher Thurber and the American Camp Association (ACA) suggest the following tips for parents to help their child deal with homesickness at camp:

- Encourage your child's independence throughout the year. Practice separations, such as sleepovers at a friend's house, can simulate the camp environment.
- Involve your child in the process of choosing a camp. The more that the child owns the decision, the more comfortable the child will feel being at camp.
- Discuss what camp will be like before your child leaves. Consider role-playing anticipated situations, such as using a flashlight to find the bathroom.
- Reach an agreement ahead of time on calling each other. If your child's camp has a no-phone-calls policy, honor it.
- Send a note or care package ahead of time to arrive the first day of camp. Acknowledge, in a positive way, that you will miss your child. For example, you can say "I am going to miss you, but I know that you will have a good time at camp."
- Don't bribe. Linking a successful stay at camp to a material object sends the wrong message. The reward should be your child's new found confidence and independence.
- Pack a personal item from home, such as a stuffed animal.
- When a "rescue call" comes from the child, offer calm reassurance and put the time frame into perspective. Avoid the temptation to take the child home early.
- Talk candidly with the camp director to obtain his/her perspective on your child's adjustment.
- Don't feel guilty about encouraging your child to stay at camp. For many children, camp is a first step toward independence and plays an important role in their growth and development.

## **FAMILY CHANGES**

Please let us know in advance of any changes made to your home or office address, phones, or faxes. Please update us also to similar changes pertaining to emergency contacts. We further need contact phone numbers and itineraries if you will be on holiday or business during your child's stay at Atwater. This information is extremely important.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Camp Atwater's physical plant has passed all Massachusetts health standards and is annually inspected to assure that high standards are maintained. An on site nurse is on duty and a doctor is on call 24 hours a day.

We are very concerned about health and safety issues that impact your child and the overall camp experience. We have made every effort in the past to accommodate and manage children who have posed a threat to themselves, the camp and others.

Therefore, we would like you to be aware of our policy formulated by the Urban League of Springfield Board of Directors and the Camp Committee:

### **POLICY**

**We are not staffed to manage children with health, medical and behavioral problems that require on-going, specialized treatment, care and management. If your child requires special care and attention, WE MUST BE NOTIFIED PRIOR TO ENCAMPMENT. In some instances, we will consult with our physician, social worker or nurse to help us determine whether we are capable of providing the level of care required to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all involved.**

**In the event we find a child in need of special attention upon arrival, or during the period of his/her encampment, he/she could be sent home immediately.**

Because we feel so strongly about this issue, we invite any parent/guardian with concerns and questions about this policy to contact us.

## **MEDICAL FORMS & MEDICATIONS**

By state law, **camper medical forms must be at camp before your child arrives.** We cannot accept any camper without his/her medical form. Only the Medical Form provided in your Parent Package is acceptable (medical form can also be found online at our website within the Forms Library). Notes from the family physician are not sufficient. Please sign the bottom of the 1<sup>st</sup> page of the form, and have both sides completed in detail by your physician so that we may better care for your child. We recommend that you keep a photocopy and send us the original. If your child's physical is scheduled in the week before camp, you may fax us a copy to (413) 732-9364 and bring the original form with you to camp. Please notify our office if you anticipate delayed paperwork. Please report any late illnesses or injuries to the office. It's much better to arrive at Camp Atwater a few days late, than bring a "bug" into camp. We will always inform the family of any health or medical problems outside of minor treatments. Campers with

medications/health conditions will be directed to the nurse upon checking in on Registration Day.

"Medication" is any substance a person takes to maintain and/or improve their health. This includes vitamins & natural remedies. *Medication is required to be in the original pharmacy containers with labels that show the camper's name and how the medication should be given. Provide enough of each medication to last the entire time the camper will be at camp.*

## **NUTRITIOUS MEALS**

Well-balanced meals, with a variety of fruits and vegetables, are amply portioned for a growing child. Fresh milk is available daily. It is suggested that candy, cake and other sweets NOT be sent to the camper. We prefer to control the consumption of sweets during meals and canteen periods. A Dietary Form is included in your Parent Package. Please fill out and return indicating if your child has any dietary concerns.

## **TRANSPORTATION TO/FROM CAMP**

Parents must arrange transportation for campers to and from camp. Camp Atwater will provide, for a fee, service from specific terminal points to the camp (see below).

**Transportation fees must be paid in advance, and we must receive all information at least 14 days prior to camp start date at the Urban League Camp Office (413) 739-7211.** Please fill out the Transportation Form completely and fax or mail it to the Camp Office. A itinerary should also accompany the form. The camp does not provide transportation services for parents/guardians to/from terminal points.

When making arrangements with your airline, Amtrak or bus line, please note the following:

*Arrivals must be made between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.*

*Departures must be made between 7 a.m. and 12 p.m.*

We cannot accommodate any arrivals or departures before or after the above times. Please plan accordingly if your child is using our camp vehicles for transportation to and from camp.

We transport campers utilizing the following airports, bus and train stations:

### ***Camper Atwater Pick Ups and Drop Offs from:***

Worcester Bus Terminal.....Worcester, Massachusetts

Worcester Regional Airport.....Worcester, Massachusetts

Worcester Railroad Station.....Worcester, Massachusetts

Springfield Railroad Station.....Springfield, Massachusetts

Bradley International Airport.....Hartford, CT/Springfield, MA

It is important that a Transportation Form be received on every camper. If you are providing transportation for your child, please mark the appropriate box, sign it and send it in with all of the required forms.

### **CAMP REGISTRATION DAY**

Hours of arrival on registration day should be between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The location of registration will be the Lodge building. Hut assignments are made in advance according to the age of the camper. Special hut assignment requests will not be accommodated unless the campers are the same age and the request is made prior to arrival.

***Upon Arrival:*** Please observe the following rules in order to help maintain a speedy camper move in:

- ◆ Park in upper parking lot on campgrounds. No automobiles are allowed to park below the tennis courts. Only camp vehicles are authorized to park in front of the Lodge.
- ◆ Walk to the Lodge (the large, central building on the waterfront) to register and to meet your child's camp counselor. Do not unload your automobile until you have registered your child.
- ◆ Once you have been shown the location of your child's cabin, you may drive your car to the place specified in order to unload. Please limit unloading time to 10 minutes, as other parents will be waiting for a spot in front of the cabins.

***Parent Orientation:*** the perfect time to get to know how your child will be spending the next few weeks at Camp Atwater. The Camp Director and Program Director will inform you about the daily camp schedule, special activities planned, camp safety, as well as camp rules and regulations. You are encouraged to ask questions. Parent Orientations are held at 11 AM and 2 PM.

***Camp Nurse Station:*** If your child has any medication(s), including pain relievers and vitamins, please leave them with the Camp Nurse, along with detailed instructions regarding times that the medications must be administered. It is extremely important that no medication is left with your child. If your child takes a particular medication as needed, please inform the Camp Nurse.

**WITHOUT EXCEPTION**, all personal medications must be labeled with the owner's name, the medicine (ingredients) and we must have the doctor's prescription for usage and dosage!

**Daily Schedules:** Upon camper arrival, a daily activity schedule will be given to your child. The daily activity schedule lists all the activities offered in a particular time slot. There are five activity periods per day, including swim instruction. The camper must fill out the form and return it to the Lodge as soon as it is completed.

### **TELEPHONE CALLS**

Since camp is intended to be a developmental and independent experience for campers, we discourage incoming and outgoing camper calls. This does not apply in cases of emergency. If we think a call to or from home will enhance the experience of a camper, we will certainly not hesitate to use this avenue. For calls concerning applications and financial matters dial: (413) 739-7211. For non-business calls while camp is in session and your child is at camp dial: (508) 867-6916

### **LETTERS & MAIL**

During July & August, all **camper mail** should be sent to:

Camp Atwater  
20 Shore Road  
North Brookfield, MA 01535

All **business mail** should be sent to:

Camp Atwater c/o Urban League of Springfield, Inc.  
One Federal Street, Bldg. 111-3  
Springfield, MA 01105

### **BAGGAGE**

Luggage should be limited as much as possible. Parents are responsible for making arrangements for luggage to and from the camp. Parents should identify specific carriers for luggage, and arrangements must be made and prepaid prior to delivery or pick up. Please address luggage to campers: c/o Camp Atwater, 20 Shore Road, North Brookfield, MA 01535; and notify the camp office.

### **VISITORS DAY**

Sundays are designated as Visitor's Day between the hours of 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. All visitors must register at the camp office upon arrival. Campers will not be permitted to leave the campgrounds with any visitor(s) without written or telephone approval from a parent/guardian. Please see "Release of Campers" form.

### **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

Electronic equipment and cell phones are not allowed at camp. **We are not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged items.**

## **SPENDING MONEY**

Campers do not need spending money while on campgrounds, as canteen is included in your "additional fees". However, spending money on trips is fine (if that is what you have agreed upon). Families often ask us "how much is good?". Frankly, it depends on your child's attendance and age. All spending money must be turned into the camp office upon arrival for safekeeping. Camper money is kept in an envelope with their name and hut on it. Envelopes are obtained by the camper's counselor prior to a field trip and distributed to campers. Spending money left over from a field trip is returned to the office for the next trip and/or the camper's departure day.

## **CLOTHING & LAUNDRY**

To assist in preparing/packing for camp, we have included a checklist of equipment and clothing. **It is important that you label each item with the camper's name to help prevent loss.** Use markers that won't come off in active camp use, or in the laundry. Camper laundry is done by an outside service, and included in your "additional fees". Laundry is bagged by individual camper, washed and folded. Two-week campers receive one washing and four-week campers receive two.

## **DEPARTURE**

On the day of departure, campers may be picked up between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. If you will be making arrangements for your child to receive transportation from the camp, please fill out the Transportation Form paying particular attention to stipulated times of departure.

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Updated invoices are mailed as payments are received. Please pay particular attention to due dates for payments when participating in Premium or Early Bird discount programs in order to maintain program eligibility. In general, admittance to camp requires one half of the total fee payable upon receipt of acceptance with the balance of tuition to be paid no later than 14 days prior to camp check-in. All camp fees are non-refundable for any reason other than illness. Payment must be by certified check or money order or credit card (Visa or MasterCard) payable to: Camp Atwater.

## **MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is the background of the camp staff?**

Our Chief Executive Officer, Henry M. Thomas, III, is an alumnus of Camp Atwater with over 30 years of camping administrative and program experience. Mr. Thomas holds a Bachelors, PhD and JD degrees, and is experienced in leadership and community development. He is a former elected trustee on the American Camping Associations Board; past appointee to the Massachusetts Board of Education, current member of the

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education and Trustee of the University of MA. Henry has been recognized nationally and locally for his work and leadership in the field of education and youth development. He is also the founder of the New Leadership Charter School, a Horace Mann charter school located in Springfield, MA.

Ms. Shadae Thomas, our Camp Director, possesses a Bachelors Degree in Elementary Education from Smith College and a Masters in Education from Harvard University. She brings a wealth of camping experience to the position as a prior camper, counselor, and Assistant Program Director. During the off season, Ms. Thomas is Principal in residence at the Gardner Pilot Academy in Boston, MA

Ms. Devonia Thomas, Quality Control Consultant, possesses a Bachelors Degree in Sociology and a Masters Degree in Urban Education. Ms. Thomas has over 20 years of teaching experience and serves as a vice principal in the public school system. She has over 25 years of camp experience and served as Camp Director for 15 years.

Mr. Leon Cosby, our Assistant Camp Director, is the Director of Youth and Education Programs at the Urban League of Springfield. He has 4 year of camp program and administrative experience. Leon is a graduate of Tuskegee University.

Ms. Alysia Cosby, Our Program Director, is a Math teacher at New Leadership Charter School. She holds an engineering degree from Tuskegee University. Ms. Cosby has 4 years of camp management experience.

Senior counselors are recruited from colleges from geographically diverse locations. We have had over 30 different states and 6 different countries represented in our staff population. Our waterfront staff is equipped with licensing consistent with state, Red Cross, and ACA requirements. Our nursing staffs are licensed registered nurses.

### **What is the ratio of counselors to campers?**

The ratio for counselors to campers is one staff for every eight campers, 8-9 years old; one staff for every ten campers 10-15 years old.

### **What is the transportation system?**

Campers are usually transported by camp vans, which are leased vehicles for the summer. They are inspected by qualified mechanics and maintained by the camp driver. Other modes of transportation for large group field trips are buses that are contracted from established commercial bus companies. Occasionally staff cars are used to transport

campers, particularly if there is an urgent need. Camp drivers are 25 years or older.

**What are the ages of the counselors?**

Among the counseling staff, 80% are 18 years of age or older. Our senior counselors are college students, and our junior counselors are at least 17 years old and usually high school seniors or graduating seniors. Any counselor under 18 years old will be at least two years older than any camper they supervise.

**What percentage of staff return each year?**

Between 40 and 60% of our staff return each year.

**What percentage of campers return each year?**

50-65% of our campers return each year.

**Are references available?**

References are available upon request. We typically ask parents from the area where the prospective camper is living to share their experience with the camp and it's program.

**What are the sleeping accommodations?**

Campers sleep in wood structure cabins equipped with electricity, bunk beds and individual rooms for two counselors. Cabin sizes accommodate anywhere from a minimum of 12 campers to a maximum of 25.

**How are the bathroom facilities?**

Bathroom facilities are located no more than 40 yards from any sleeping cabin. Bathroom facilities are bathhouses that include individual showers, toilet stalls and wash basins. Maintenance staff maintains the facilities for cleanliness and repair around the clock.

**DIRECTIONS TO CAMP ATWATER**

**By Train:** From New York and points south: Take the train to Worcester or Springfield, MA.

**By Bus:** From New York and points south: Take the bus to Worcester or Springfield, MA. From Boston, take the bus to Worcester, MA.

**By Car:**

**From Boston:** Route 90 West (Mass. Pike) to Exit 9 (Sturbridge). After toll booth, take Exit 3A, which will put you on Route 20 East. Route 20 East to Route 49 North, left turn onto Route 49 North. At the end of Route 49, left turn onto Route 9 West - travel one half mile and make a right turn onto Harrington Street. Follow the road to the end. Take a left onto Shore Road. Camp Atwater will be 1/2 mile on the left.

**From Albany:**

Route 90 East (Mass. Pike) to Exit 9 (Sturbridge). After toll booth, take Exit 3A, which will put you on Route 20 East. Route 20 East to Route 49 North, left turn onto Route 49 North. At the end of Route 49, left turn onto Route 9 West-travel one half mile and make a right turn onto Harrington Street. Follow the road to the end. Take a left onto Shore Road. Camp Atwater will be 1/2 mile on the left.

**From New York City Area:**

Route 95 North to 91 North to Route 84 East Take 84 East into Massachusetts. Once you cross, the Massachusetts line, take Exit 3A which will put you on Route 20 East. Route 20 East to Route 49 North, left turn on Route 49 North. At the end of Route 49, left turn onto Route 9 West-travel one half mile and make a right turn onto Harrington Street. Follow the road to the end. Take a left onto Shore Road. Camp Atwater will be 1/2 mile on the left.

**From Springfield:**

Route 90 East (Mass. Pike) to Exit 9 (Sturbridge). After toll booth, take Exit 3A, which will put you on Route 20 East. Route 20 East to Route 49 North, left turn on Route 49 North. At the end of Route 49, left turn onto Route 9 West - travel one-half mile and make a right turn onto Harrington Street. Follow the road to the end. Take a left onto Shore Road. Camp Atwater will be 1/2 mile on the left.

If lost, call the camp telephone number: Camp Atwater (508) 867-6916

**IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO REMEMBER:**

Urban League: (413) 739-7211 Telephone ◇ (413) 732-9364 Fax

Hours of operations: Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

For financial, business related calls and camp information

Camp Atwater: 508-867-6916 (June 26 - August 20)

For camper related calls and camp information.

**Please visit our website for additional information and forms @**

**[www.campatwater.org](http://www.campatwater.org)**