



Camp Fire USA™

Today's kids. Tomorrow's leaders.

SIGNALS

A quarterly publication of Camp Fire USA
West Michigan Council

Our Mission

Camp Fire USA builds caring, confident youth and future leaders.

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WEST MICHIGAN COUNCIL

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Farewell to Sue Bachelder

Camp Fire's Executive Director announces her retirement.

In the fall of 1979, Sue (Farrell) Bachelder attended a Camp Fire volunteer recruitment meeting at Ada Elementary. Little did she know that night that 24 years later, she would be retiring as the local organization's executive director. "There were two recruitment nights that week, and I went to the first one, which happened to be Camp Fire's," recalls Sue. While there, she hit it off with another parent, Dee Finch, and never looked back. In fact, Sue and Dee became co-leaders for their daughters' Blue Birds, Camp Fire, and Discovery Clubs.

"The best part of volunteering was the one week of day camp each summer," says Sue. "I'd wear my navy blue chamois cloth shirt for the entire week," continues Sue, "while teaching Adventure club members about fire safety and hosting cookouts. No mosquito would come near me because of the smoke."

In addition to leading a club and working at day camp, Sue also did leader/volunteer training for the Council and soon found herself on staff as a part-time District Director. "My son was 6 years old when I joined the Camp Fire staff," says Sue. Her son, Danny, will graduate from college next May. For four years, Sue recruited and trained Club leaders for the Tawanka District (Grandville to Lowell), before becoming Camp Fire's Director of Program Services, then Assistant Executive Director, and eventually Executive Director in 1996.



Under Sue's leadership, the West Michigan Council was selected to participate in Camp Fire's Extending Our Reach (EOR) initiative, a program funded by the DeWitt Wallace Foundation and which encouraged Councils to examine their communities and find new ways of serving youth. "Oakdale Elementary was Camp Fire's only program site at the time we participated in EOR," recalls Sue. "The initiative was really a catalyst for expanding our after-school and summer programs in urban Grand Rapids."

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From our Board Chair

This past August our Executive Director, Sue Bachelder, told me she was planning to retire effective December 31, 2003. Sue's passion and enthusiasm for Camp Fire have benefited the organization here in West Michigan and at the National level.

Under Sue's leadership, the West Michigan Council was one of 10 Camp Fire councils to participate in Extending Our Reach, a program designed by the national organization to help local councils discover new ways to work with youth. In addition, Sue guided Camp Fire through the asset-mapping of two Grand Rapids' neighborhoods, a process which provided a better understanding of what parents and their communities wanted for children. Camp Fire's AmeriCorps program is another example of how Sue sought to expand Camp Fire's ability to serve area youth. Indeed, Sue truly "lit the fire within" and was a driving force behind expanding Camp Fire's reach into new programs and neighborhoods.

With such a long history with Camp Fire, Sue will be difficult to replace. And although we are sorry to see her go, we wish Sue well as she prepares to take on new challenges and opportunities. See the farewell article in this newsletter for highlights of Sue's career with Camp Fire.

Finding a replacement for Sue is not an easy task. The board of directors has formed a Search Committee that consists of four board members and three community volunteers. We are currently in the process of screening resumes and selecting candidates for interviews. Ideally, we would like to have the new executive director in place by December 15th to allow for some overlap with Sue. Things are going well and we will keep everyone informed as to our progress.

Sincerely,

Joe Tomaszewski



Camp Fire USA offers children and youth a variety of programs that foster self-esteem, healthy lifestyles, character development, leadership skills and social responsibility. Along with its long-standing club program, Camp Fire USA West Michigan Council coordinates after-school and summer programs in the Camelot Woods housing community and in the neighborhoods around Burton Elementary and Middle School, C.A. Frost, Coit, Eastern, Henry Paideia, and Jefferson elementary schools. Camp Fire USA also offers life skills courses in schools, child care centers and other settings.

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Camp Fire welcomes new AmeriCorps members

Restored federal funding gives Camp Fire 8 full-time and 4 part-time members.

Back in July, Camp Fire learned that funding for the AmeriCorps program would be drastically cut. At that time we were told we could have as few as 5 full-time members to help serve children in the after-school, summer, and Community Family Club programs. For the 2002-03 AmeriCorps funding cycle, we had 10 full-time, 5 part-time, and 6 summer members. A cut to 5 full-time members would have a serious impact on our programs. Fortunately, Congress voted to restore \$100 million of the program's funding, and although 8 full-time and 4 part-time members is less than we requested for the 2003-04 program year, it is more than we expected.

AmeriCorps members play a critical role in after-school and summer program delivery. They help maintain the adult-to-child ratio at program sites, and their daily presence at a site fosters relationship-building with children and youth. Members also work with students as part of the HOSTS program, and present Self-Reliance programs to elementary classrooms during the day.

This year's members are listed below under the after-school program site where they serve.

Burton Elementary School

Lydia Boonstra

Burton Middle School

KuLena Burton

C.A. Frost

John Dowd, Rashida McKenzie

Camelot Woods

Anictra Green

Coit Elementary School

Adam McVicker

Eastern Elementary School

Shanette Haynes, Jeremy Smith

Henry Paideia Academy

Laura Deneau

Jefferson Elementary School

Scott Horton, Katie Miller

Camp Fire's AmeriCorps program is generously funded by the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, the Michigan Community Service Commission, and by the Steelcase Foundation.



2003-04 After-school program sites

Burton Elementary School

Monday - Friday
3:13 - 5:30 p.m.

Burton Middle School

Monday - Friday
2:30 - 5:30 p.m.

C.A. Frost

Monday - Friday
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Camelot Woods Apts.

Monday - Thursday
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Coit Elementary School

Monday - Friday
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Eastern Elementary School

Monday - Friday
3:15 - 5:30 p.m.

Henry Paideia Academy

Monday - Thursday
3:45 - 6:00 p.m.

Jefferson Elementary School

Monday - Friday
3:15 - 5:30 p.m.

Ten Ways You Can Help Camp Fire USA

1.
Volunteer at the Camp Fire office
2.
Work with kids in
Camp Fire's After-School
Program
3.
Write a letter on Absolutely
Incredible Kid Day
4.
Make a financial
contribution to Camp Fire
5.
Ask a Camp Fire representative
to speak to your organization,
company, or church
6.
Become a Club Leader
7.
Sponsor a Camp Fire
member or volunteer for
Walk for Kids
8.
Donate program
supplies for
Camp Fire programs
9.
Ask your coworkers to
sponsor a class or school for
Absolutely Incredible Kid Day
10.
Serve on a Camp Fire
committee or board

Youth embrace Native American traditions

On November 1, Camp Fire partnered with the Wittenbach Center of Lowell to provide Native American Training for youth and educators alike. The all-day workshop brought together 15 educators from non-traditional settings such as nature centers, KISD classrooms, and home school groups, for an opportunity to learn about Native American culture and techniques for teaching it to students. While educators discovered ways to integrate these materials into their curriculum, 27 4th-6th graders participated in team-building exercises, developed skills in Native American story-telling and fire-building in a traditional bark house, and with the help of a local Native American family, built an elm bark basket directly from the tree. The youth, members of Camp Fire's Lowell Club program and two of our after-school program sites, also played Native American games before the formal program ended. Afterwards they gathered around for a Song Fest, where they learned traditional Camp Fire songs for the remainder of the afternoon.

"One reason for this activity was to build a better understanding of diversity between Camp Fire youth in the Club and after-school programs," according to Gayle Orange, Camp Fire's Assistant Executive Director. "We brought together kids from very different backgrounds - social, economic, racial, and cultural - and helped them build a shared experience. This shared experience then serves as a platform for relationship-building and for breaking down stereotypes." To the kids, it was just a good time.

This program was made possible with a grant from the Lowell Area Community Fund.



Top left: Watch out! Using an ax to loosen the wood rings of a log. The wood was pulled up in strips, ring layers were separated, and the thin strips used to weave baskets.

Top right: Inside a traditional Native American bark house.

Bottom left: An external view of the bark house.

Camp Fire has certainly expanded with Sue at the helm. From a single after-school and summer program site, Camp Fire now coordinates after-school programs at eight sites - 6 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 apartment complex. In addition, Camp Fire became an AmeriCorps program site two years ago, which has contributed to the Council's expansion of its after-school and summer programs, while providing positive, adult role models for children and youth on a consistent basis. In the fall of 2002, Camp Fire launched a new program, Community Family Club at Trinity United Methodist Church, giving families an opportunity to participate in youth development activities together. And in March of 2003, Camp Fire opened its first after-school program for middle school students.

As a representative of Camp Fire, Sue has also worked to involve the Council with numerous organizations, coalitions and collaborative initiatives to promote the organization and its mission. For over 10 years, Sue served on the board of directors of Programs of Religious Activities for Youth (P.R.A.Y.), the organization that publishes the God and Country curriculum, and since 2000, she has served as Agency Representative on the Heart of West Michigan United Way board of directors. She serves on the Expanded Learning Opportunities Legislative/Finance Committee and Leadership Council. Sue is part of The Delta Strategy Coalition for Reducing Poverty subcommittee, CEO Roundtable and Diversity Roundtable through the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Coalition for Children and Families, and is a member of the Downtown Rotary.

Twenty-four years is a lot of time to spend with an organization. When asked about her favorite memories of Camp Fire, Sue began listing the names of people

she worked with both as a volunteer and while on staff. "Dee Finch, Vicki English, Sue Vossen, Deb Vanderwood, Mary Thompson, Martha Ritchey, Wenda Fore, Heather Palmer - and these are just some of the people who are part of my Camp Fire memories," says Sue. "And it's the people who have made my time at Camp Fire truly memorable. From volunteers to staff and community members, they have all had an impact on my life."

In conclusion, Sue says, "I've enjoyed it, I really have. It's been fun watching Camp Fire grow and I'm proud of what I've accomplished."

As for her next steps? Sue and her husband Jon have purchased a house in North Carolina - right on the golf course - and plan to move there early next year. After that, Sue's next challenge will be getting to know her new community and getting involved with it.

Thank you, Sue, for your many contributions to the organization as a volunteer, leader and friend. We will miss you.

"It's been fun watching Camp Fire grow and I'm proud of what I've accomplished."

- Sue Bachelder

Camp Fire in Service

Camp Fire has always been service-oriented and the clubs in West Michigan are no exception! We'd like to hear from you about your successful community service projects. Call and tell us what has worked well for you - Caroling for cans? Gift baskets? Food drives? Blankets? - and we'll share your idea with everyone in the next issue of the newsletter. Send your ideas to Karen at karen.amos@campfireusawmc.org or call 616 949 2500 ext. 30.

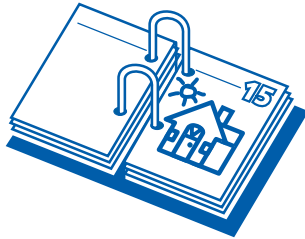


Just in time for the holidays, Camp Fire is holding a Poinsettia Sale . Beginning November 24, Camp Fire will be taking orders (and money!) for beautiful, 5 blossom, poinsettias wrapped in foil with a matching bow and placed in a box. Purchase yours from Club members or at the Camp Fire office through December 5. At \$12.00 each, they are a great way to decorate for the holidays.

For more information contact Gayle at gayle.orange@campfireusawmc.org or 616 949 2500 ext. 29.

Mark your calendar!

Poinsettia Sale begins	November 24
Poinsettia pick-up/delivery	December 15
Last day of program before winter break	December 18
Camp Fire Office closed	December 24 - January 1
Program resumes	January 5
Board meeting	January 22
Valentines for Vets	February
Absolutely Incredible Kid Day	March 18
Camp Fire Celebration	March 20



Younkers Event

Saturday, November 22

Younkers at Rivertown Crossings Mall is hosting a Community Day Event on Saturday, November 22 to benefit area nonprofits. Camp Fire is participating for a 3rd year by selling event tickets. For every \$5.00 ticket we sell, we get to keep 100% of the ticket price! We will also collect a share of all ticket sales taking place at Younkers.

On November 22, you, your friends and family can shop all day and receive \$5 off one item for every ticket purchased. Not only will you get back the \$5 ticket cost, but you'll also receive six 20% savings coupons to be used throughout the store, exclusive merchandise offers, plus the chance to win a trip to Walt Disney World. The more you buy, the more you save, and the more you can help Camp Fire USA. It's a win-win situation!

Thanks for supporting Camp Fire!



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