

## OUR MISSION

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

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## Camp Fire celebrates 94 years!



*Hanna Liu shows off her submission in the Art Competition.*

Club members and youth from our after-school programs, leaders, AmeriCorps members, board members and staff celebrated Camp Fire USA's 94th birthday on Saturday, March 27 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church. This year's celebration was an Action Bead Fair and Art Competition.

The day began with key note speaker Wenda Fore, a long-time Camp Fire

leader, who opened with an interactive history of beads and their significance in Camp Fire. Afterwards, kids "walked" Camp Fire's Five Trails by taking part in activities specifically tied to each trail, such as friendship bracelets, science experiments, birdfeeders, family trees and games for the whole group.

"It was a great day," according to Club Coordinator Ursula Williams. "The kids enjoyed the mix of activities and and it was great to see kids engaged, learning, and having fun," Ursula continues. Kids from both programs found familiar faces in the crowd because of the trip to the Wittenbach AgriCenter some of the Club members and after-school kids took earlier in the program year. In fact, at one point, some of Lowell's Discovery Club members and students from Jefferson Elementary led the group in songs that they learned at the Wittenbach Center. "I think that the shared experience and reconnecting today really helped to bring the group closer together," said Ursula.

During the day, AmeriCorps members judged submissions for Camp Fire's National Art Competition. The medium, announced in October, was paint and meant that leaders have been working with their Clubs since then to meet competition criteria, including: discussing the medium, using it, and maybe visiting an art studio. Perhaps the most important role for leaders was to help foster creativity.

"I just love the Art Competition! The creativity was fantastic," according to Club Coordinator Ursula Williams.



*Caleb Flentje shares his bird feeder.*



*Hannah Schoenborn makes a friendship bracelet.*

*(continued on Page 2)*



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

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## From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Thank you to all of you who support Camp Fire USA's mission to "build caring confident youth and future leaders." Board members, donors, club leaders or co-leaders, AmeriCorps members, after-school and summer program volunteers, and event planning committee members, we would not be able to make a difference in the lives of children and youth without you.

We are busy wrapping-up this year's After-school and Club programs and compiling survey data to determine how well our programs have helped youth accumulate developmental assets. This data serves as our report card telling us if our programs are working, if they are helping youth develop 13 specific assets, which can influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible youth. We will report the results of the surveys to you in our summer issue of Signals.

Council Fires will be held in Battle Creek, Lowell and at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Ada. At these events the Club members, leaders and Club volunteers will be recognized for their accomplishments over the past year. The members will receive emblems and beads they have earned and some will fly-up to the next Club level.

This year's Summer Day Camp planning is right on schedule. We are raising funds for the eight-week program – one week longer than last year's program – and expect to give 420 youth a safe, fun and learning environment during summer.

Again, thank you for all you do to keep Camp Fire strong. Your time, talents, and financial support are critical as we pursue our mission of "building caring, confident youth and future leaders."

Sincerely,

Gayle Orange

Interim Executive Director



# Summer Day Camp 2004

Summer is almost here and Camp Fire is busy preparing for Summer Day Camp 2004. This year 5 – 14 year olds can spend eight weeks at Camp Fire beginning Monday, June 14 and ending on August 6. The program is FREE and will operate Monday – Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at five locations in Grand Rapids (see below).

Day campers will spend their summer making friends and having fun in a safe, structured environment. Each day, boys and girls can participate in games, activities, and service learning projects with friends and caring adults. And this year, the program will feature Field Trip Fridays, with kids looking forward to spending their Fridays learning and exploring around town.

While the kids are having fun, they also learn to appreciate diversity, resolve conflicts peacefully, and to walk away from negative situations and harmful activities – crucial skills they need to grow into caring, confident youth and future leaders. For families, Summer Day Camp means they can go to work knowing that their children are safe in a structured environment where disguised learning takes place daily.

This year's Day Camp is partially funded by grants from the Sebastian Foundation and the City of Grand Rapids. Thank you for helping to give an estimated 420 children and youth the opportunity to have a fun, safe summer.

If you would like more information about Summer Day Camp, please call the Council at 949 2500.

## 2004 Summer Day Camp locations

Burton Elementary

Burton Middle School

Camelot Woods Apartments Community Building

Coit Elementary\*

Jefferson Elementary\*

\*Children from CA Frost and Henry Paideia schools can still participate in Summer Day Camp. Buses will pick-up youth at the school and return them there at the end of the day. Youth from CA Frost will attend Camp Fire's Coit program site, while youth from Henry Paideia will attend the program at Jefferson. The CA Frost and Henry site coordinators will continue to work with the youth at the host site.

*(continued from Page 1)*

"The leaders and Club members outdid themselves this year." On display were paintings, painted bird houses, flower pots, floorcloths, t-shirts, and tote bags.

Thank you Wenda for sharing her knowledge of Camp Fire and thank you Club leaders for all you did to prepare for the Art Competition and for leading activities. It was also great to see board members Sally Hipp and Jill May helping celebrate Camp Fire. As for the AmeriCorps members, "I can't imagine having done it without them," says a thankful Ursula.

## Self-Reliance at a glance

So far this program year, 139 elementary students have received hands-on life-skills training using Camp Fire's Self-Reliance curriculum. The three age-appropriate curriculums are I'm Safe and Sure!, I Can Do It! and I'm Peer Proof! And they were delivered to Kindergarten through 6th grade students in late 2003. There are currently 293 K-6th graders enrolled in this year's second session.

### Pre-Kindergarten – 1st grade I'm Safe & Sure! survey results:

- 81.8% learned why it is important to let their parents know where they are playing
- 100% learned how to say, "No thanks" to their friends when asked to do something they know is wrong
- 90.9% learned that it is better to talk to someone they're mad at and settle the problem than it is to hit him/her

### 2nd – 3rd grade I Can Do It! survey results:

- 91.4% learned what foods make good snacks
- 82.9% know the difference between a weather watch and a warning
- 94.3% learned important rules that will help them be a safe bike rider

### 4th – 6th grade I'm Peer Proof! survey results:

- 91.7% learned what to say to someone who is teasing them
- 100% learned how to cool down their anger
- 100% learned how to problem-solve conflicts

## Connecting Youth:

## Lowell Club starts a penpal program

The Rising Sun Discovery Club in Lowell wanted to start a pen pal program. The five member Club wanted to write to another Discovery Club somewhere in the country and so they put out feelers last fall. In February, the Lightening Bees, Alicia Boughton's Discovery Club in Fort Worth, Texas, answered the call by writing to Club leader Kathy Gingerich and asking if these two Clubs could become pen pals.

Since then, the Clubs have exchanged letters and the Rising Sun Club has put together a short video to introduce its members to the Lightening Bees. The Bees will be filming their own video at their Spring camping trip.

Says Rising Sun's leader Kathy Gingerich, "It is so great that the kids have the opportunity to get to know Club members from a different part of the country. And really, Fort Worth is quite different in climate, word phrases, and activities." Club members in Lowell are having fun with the letters from their Southwest counterparts. "They get a kick out of seeing y'all in the letters," continues Kathy. "What do y'all do in Michigan? Of course, each group thinks the other is the one with the accent, which makes it fun to watch."

When asked what the next steps are, Kathy says she would really like for the Clubs to meet at the 2005 Congress. In the meantime, the Rising Sun and Lightening Bees will continue to exchange letters. Have fun y'all!



*Rising Sun Club Members (from left) Timmy Gingerich, Renae Reed, Heather Riemersma, Miranda Grimm and Alexis Holloway.*

## Spring Break in the Rainforest

Camp Fire held its second annual Spring Break program April 5 – 8 in the Community Room at Camelot Woods Apartments. The four-day program was open from 10:00 a.m. – 3 p.m. and gave 20 kids a much needed place to go during the break from school.

"This is a group of kids whose parents are working all week," said Adam McVicker, one of Camp Fire's 2003-04 AmeriCorps members and a core member of the program's planning committee. "We wanted the kids to have a chance to have fun during their Spring Break, like so many other kids do." Adam and Corps members Lydia Boonstra, Laura Deneau, John Dowd, Shanette Haynes, Katie Miller, Jeremy Smith, Scott Horton, and Anne Trelfa worked together to design the program. During Spring Break, the planning committee was joined by other members and volunteers, which increased the adult:child ratio and gave children lots of one-on-one time with caring adults.

The week's activities included baking bread, making puppets, straw painting, a nature scavenger hunt and jungle animal games. Kids also



*Kids helping decorate the Spring Break poster.*

made bookmarks and kept a daily journal, writing about topics from nature to where they will be in thirty years. "This group really likes reading," remarked Adam, "so we had reading time after lunch every day."

When asked what she would be doing if she were not at Camp Fire, Taisheena Phillips, a fourth grader at Camelot Woods remarked, "...[this week] would be so boring. I'd probably be with a babysitter." Taisheena really liked the games and especially the balloon tower contest they had. Each team had to find a way to make the highest freestanding tower of balloons. "Miss Katie's team won," she reported.

Thank you AmeriCorps members for your leadership on this project and for making a difference for kids!



*Camelot youth take a 'break' to enjoy the weather.*

## After-School Programs Help Fight Hunger

The youth attending Camp Fire USA's eight after-school programs are helping to fight hunger by participating in Youth Rally for Hunger 2004. The Youth Rally, sponsored by God's Kitchen, is designed to encourage young people to collect non-perishable food items to help restock the pantry at God's Kitchen.

At each program site, youth are being asked to set a goal for the number of cans and boxes they will collect from friends and family, neighbors, churches and even teachers and school administrators. On Friday, May 7, kids from all eight program sites will board a bus to God's Kitchen to deliver their food, tour the facility to learn how the program operates and what happens to the food once it arrives. Afterwards, boys and girls will celebrate their accomplishments with a taco dinner prepared by God's Kitchen as part of the Youth Rally's Food Drop Off Day.

"I think the kids are excited about this project," says Carolyn Guyton, Neighborhood Program Coordinator for Camp Fire. "It is so important for kids to give back to their community," continues Mrs. Guyton. "It instills in them a sense of pride and accomplishment and it is especially rewarding for kids to see that they can make a difference regardless of their personal circumstances." Over 73% of youth in Camp Fire's After-school programs live in families earning less than \$25,000 annually, and 57% of families earn less than \$15,000 annually.



Between 250-300 Camp Fire kids from Burton Elementary, Burton Middle School, CA Frost School, Coit, Eastern, Henry, and Jefferson Elementary Schools, and from Camelot Woods Apartments are expected to attend the Youth Rally's Food Drop Off Day on Friday, May 7. Buses are scheduled to arrive at God's Kitchen at 4:30 p.m., departing at 5:30 p.m.

## Thank you to...

The Sebastian Foundation for awarding Camp Fire a \$10,000 grant to help fund this year's Summer Day Camp. With your help, we will open our doors at 5 program sites and serve 420 kids for eight weeks. Thank you!

Kris Fields, our Marketing/PR intern for two months of hard work helping with Absolutely Incredible Kid Day. Kris authored website updates, press releases, and letters, distributed stationary to letter-writing volunteers, and counted out over 3,800 stickers for this event. Thanks, Kris – your help was truly invaluable!

Fuel Systems, LLC for donating 60 Rampage tickets to Camp Fire USA through the team's "Four Corners" program. Thanks to Fuel Systems, kids from our CA Frost, Coit, and Henry after-school programs enjoyed themselves at the April 17th game. For many of our kids this was a first and they had a great time!

Maranda from WOOD TV8 for serving as our Absolutely Incredible Kid Day spokesperson. The kids loved the assemblies you hosted and the television and print coverage was awesome!

The City of Grand Rapids for awarding \$53,364 for Camp Fire's 2004 Summer Day Camp and 2004-05 After-school programs at Coit, Eastern, and Jefferson elementaries. Thank you!

## Spring Flower Sale

The results of the Spring Flower Sale are in! Together, Clubs and Camp Fire staff raised \$664.00 for Camp Fire's Club program.

Congratulations to our top sellers:

First Place

- Natalie Cope - 34 plants - Jane Simington's Adventure Club in Battle Creek.

Second Place

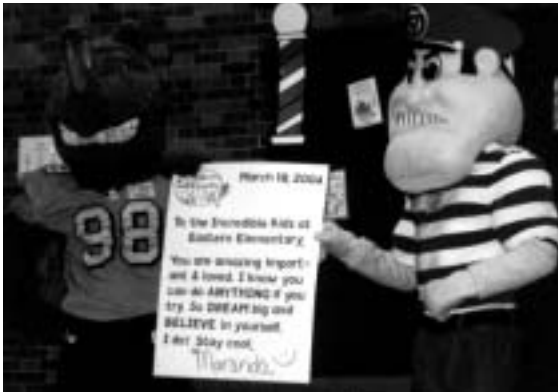
- Kierstyn Guffey – Jane Simington's Adventure Club in Battle Creek
- Brianna Venturo – Renee Kramer's Adventure Club at St. Patrick's School

Third Place

- Ashley McQueen – Robin Getz's Lowell Adventure Club
- Hannah Schoenborn – Kelli Jurek & Mary Jo Hanson's Discovery Club at St. Patrick's School
- Katie Jurek – Renee Kramer's Adventure Club at St. Patrick's School
- Gabrielle VandenBerg – Gail VandenBerg's Starflight Club in Lowell

Our top seller received a \$25.00 gift certificate to Camp Fire's on-line store. Second place sellers received a \$12.00 gift certificate to the on-line store, and third place sellers received \$6.00 gift certificates to the on-line store. Great job!

# March 18 was Absolutely Incredible!



*Blitz and Louie the Laker help Maranda read a letter to kids at Eastern Elementary.*



*AIK's at Jefferson Elementary.*



*AIKD Volunteer Barb Reinken helps read letters at Jefferson.*

Thanks to everyone who helped make this year's *Absolutely Incredible Kid Day* a success. Once again, you have helped more kids than ever understand that they are special, unique, valued and loved. With your help...

- 3,810 letters were delivered to students in Grand Rapids Public Schools (over 1,700 more than in 2003)
- Students from 12 schools received a personalized letter (up from 8 schools in 2003) an additional 2,250 sheets were distributed to individuals and groups
- Our community learned more about AIKD through 2 radio interviews, 2 television segments, and 1 newspaper column.

**Thank you to the businesses, organizations, and individuals who participated in AIKD 2004:**

**Sponsors**

- Grand Valley State University
- Huntington Bank
- Meijer
- Mercantile Bank
- Michigan Reading Association

**Spokesperson**

WOOD TV8's Maranda

**Committee members**

- Dr. Barbara J. Reinken, Ph.D.
- Jill Wendorf
- Melinda Young

**Intern**

Kris Fields

**Schools**

- Aberdeen Elementary
- Burton Elementary
- Burton Middle
- CA Frost
- Coit Elementary
- Congress Elementary
- Dickenson Elementary
- Eastern Elementary\*
- Fountain Elementary
- Harrison Park Elementary
- Henry Paideia
- Jefferson Elementary\*



**Letter-writing partners**

- Aberdeen Reformed Church
- Aquinas College
- Camp Fire USA staff and AmeriCorps members
- City of GR Office of Children Youth and Families
- City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department
- City-wide Student Council
- Clark Retirement Community
- Davenport University
- Falcon Printing
- Fountain Street Church
- Gamma Phi Beta Alumni
- GR Area Chamber of Commerce
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Grand Valley State University
- Huntington Bank
- Mercantile Bank
- Sunrise Rotary
- United Way
- YMCA

\*Thank you to Mike Meyer and Yolanda Valenzuela, the principals at Eastern and Jefferson Elementary schools, respectively, for letting us host AIKD assemblies for their kids.

A special thanks to Blitz from the Grand Rapids Rampage, Cruiser from Craig's Cruisers, and GVSU's Louie the Laker for coming to the Letter-Writing Extravaganza and the AIKD assemblies.



So many of our dreams  
 at first seem impossible,  
 then they seem  
 improbable,  
 and then, when we  
 summon the will,  
 they soon become  
 inevitable.

~ Christopher Reeve

## Summer Dreams - You can help!

Summertime is almost here and Camp Fire is raising funds for its annual inner-city Summer Day Camp. This year, we hope to give 420 children and youth eight weeks of friendship, learning, and fun in five neighborhoods in Grand Rapids.

The 2004 program will cost \$250 per camper and we have been working hard to raise these funds through grants and other funding sources. But with your help, we know we can do it!

Through the Detroit Free Press's Summer Dreams Campaign, Camp Fire has an opportunity to DOUBLE each gift designated to our organization and submitted to the Summer Dreams Campaign from May 1 – August 1. Matching funds come from the Skillman Foundation and must be used to support summer programs that provide safe, engaging, and positive opportunities for youth, like Camp Fire's Summer Day Camp.

If you haven't made a gift to Camp Fire this year – or would like to make an additional gift - this is a great way for your gift to go twice as far in helping us build caring, confident youth and future leaders. To participate, use the coupon printed here, fill-out your information and enclose it in an envelope with a check made payable to CHILDREN FIRST. Then mail the coupon and check to:

Children First  
 PO Box 64702  
 Detroit, MI 48264

Every two weeks, Camp Fire will receive a check from the Summer Dreams Campaign that includes donations designated to us AND matching funds from the Skillman Foundation, for as long as those funds last.

If you do send a gift, be sure to let us know! Camp Fire will not receive a list of Summer Dreams donors, but we do want to thank you. So, please tell us your name and gift amount so we can send you a well-deserved "thank you." Send a note, call us at 949-2500 x 30, or send an e-mail to [giving@campfireusawmc.org](mailto:giving@campfireusawmc.org).

*Thank you!*

<p><b>I WANT TO MAKE A CHILD'S                  SUMMER DREAM COME TRUE!</b></p> <p>Amount of gift: _____</p> <p>Make checks or money orders payable to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Children First                  P.O. Box 64702                  Detroit, MI 48264</b></p> <p>(PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH OR MERCHANDISE.)</p> <p>Program I want to help:  <b>Camp Fire USA West Michigan Council</b></p> <p>Name of donor (please print): _____</p> <p>Your address: _____</p> <p>City, state, ZIP: _____</p> <p>Daytime phone (with area code): _____</p>		 <p><small>Contributions are tax deductible to the limits allowed by law for nonprofit donations. No administrative costs are deducted from contributions for Summer Dreams by the agencies receiving Summer Dreams money. Start printing and production costs of the Summer Dreams special section are paid for by the Detroit Free Press, a Knight Ridder newspaper. Summer Dreams and Children First are part of Free Press Charities, Inc., a nonprofit corporation licensed by the State of Michigan (MCS-2757). An annual report of Free Press Charities spending is available upon request.</small></p>
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*Mark your calendar!*



Lowell Council Fire	May 13 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Board Meeting & Annual Meeting	May 20 7:30 a.m.
Battle Creek Ceremonial & Awards Night	May 27 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
After-school Program ends	May 26
Coit & Eastern	June 4
All other sites	
Summer Day Camp begins	June 14 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Day Camp ends	August 6

## 2003-04 Enrollment

Over 1,000 children and youth spend time learning new things, making friends, and having fun in Camp Fire's 8 after-school programs in Grand Rapids' low-income neighborhoods.

87 youth in West Michigan are developing leadership and team-building skills, while progressing through Camp Fire's Club program.



Learn more about Camp Fire USA  
West Michigan Council  
616 949 2500  
[info@campfiresuawmc.org](mailto:info@campfiresuawmc.org)

 <p><b>Camp Fire USA</b> Today's kids. Tomorrow's leaders.</p>	<p><b>WEST MICHIGAN COUNCIL</b></p>
	<p>Waters Circle 1257 East Beltline NE Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525 Telephone: 616 949 2500 Fax: 616 949 7081 <a href="http://www.campfireusawmc.org">www.campfireusawmc.org</a></p>

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