



North Woods & Pleasant Valley Camps Staff Orientation Handbook

A guide for staff and prospective staff

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Introduction

Welcome

We are so glad that you have taken an interest in Pleasant Valley and North Woods Camps. This Staff Orientation handbook is an overview of staff responsibilities, camp life, and other little fun particularities about what it is like to be part of the PVC & NW Staff. It is our goal that with this handbook you will have everything you need to make an informed decision about working at our camps. The first step to having a positive camp experience is understanding what type of organization you might be working for. Our goal is to answer all your questions (even the strange or taboo ones...we have heard them all) so that you can make the best decision possible, and (hopefully) be on your way to a life-changing positive camp experience. When reading, please feel free to jot down any questions that you have so that we can chat about them in your interview.

Background Information

Pleasant Valley Camp was founded in 1969 on the shores of Lake Wentworth in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. PVC provides the perfect setting for girls, ages 8–16, to have fun, develop new interests, be creative, and meet new friends from around the world. In 1989 Pleasant Valley YMCA Overnight Camp for Girls was moved to its current location on Lake Winnepesaukee. The new larger site, which is adjacent to North Woods Camp for boys, offered more girls the opportunity to enjoy an overnight camping experience with the YMCA. Pleasant Valley continues to offer an environment where campers and staff come together to create a community of respect, teamwork, and self-discovery.

North Woods Camp was founded in 1929 for boys ages 8-16 and is located on the shores of beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. Our 2-week program brings together young men to partake in traditional and fun-filled summer activities while learning about themselves, their environment, and each other. Generations of campers have enjoyed North Woods and its focus on the YMCA Core Values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

Why do people want to work at our camps?

To join a community of supportive young adults from around the country and world

- Constant feedback about performance from staff, peers & campers
- Collaborative work environment (“It takes a village to raise a child”)

To give back to youth

To have fun (i.e.: living in the woods all summer, on the lake, partaking in activities & campfires)

- To try new activities such as archery, sailing & ropes course
- Beautiful sunsets & star gazing

Unplug and be present (opportunity very few jobs offer now)

Preparation & Networking for life outside of camp

- Professional references
- Networking for jobs & schools via our current staff, board members, and alumni
- Huge resume builder for any job involving teaching, community building & dynamics, living in a dorm or similar space, risk management & safety awareness

Learn to be a more confident leader

- Communication skills
- Planning activities for groups of 10 to 150
- Adaptability

- Creativity, using the space we must make experiences one of a kind & memorable
- Public speaking practice (Silly voices & costumes highly encouraged)

Gain new certifications and training

- Certifications for specific program areas (ropes, sailing, rifle, archery)
- YMCA Lifeguard Certification
- YMCA- ASHI CPR/First Aid

Life at North Woods & Pleasant Valley

Overview & Schedule

Each session (two-week period) runs a daily program of 6-activities which creates a varied program for awesome fun and engagement. Within each session, PVC & NW offer 9 typical program days and 3 alternative days including but not limited to extra cabin activities and camp wide afternoons.

Here is a sample of a typical Daily Schedule:

- Wake up: 7:30 am
- Lineup: 7:45-8:00 am
- Breakfast: 8:00-8:50 am
- Cabin Clean Up: 8:50-9:15 am
- Activity 1: 9:30-10:20 am
- Activity 2: 10:30-11:20 am
- Activity 3: 11:30-12:20 pm
- Lineup: 12:20-12:30 pm
- Lunch: 12:30-1:00 pm
- Rest Hour: 1:00-2:00 pm
- Activity 4: 2:15-3:05 pm
- Activity 5: 3:20-4:10 pm
- Activity 6: 4:20-5:10 pm
- Cabin time/Free swim: 5:10-5:45 pm
- Lineup: 5:45-6:00 pm
- Dinner: 6:00-6:50 pm
- Evening Activity: 7:00-8:45 pm
- DIVE: 9:00 pm

Food & Housing

Food:

Meals are served around a table of about 10 people, family style. We pass around the plates one at a time and someone acts as the designated server. Our chef(s) and their teams have been working at camp for a decade. Camp food gets high reviews from our surveys. There are three meals a day and fresh fruit available all day long. We can accommodate all sorts of diets, including vegetarians, vegans, and those that are gluten free. Each dining hall has a “make-your-own” salad bar at each meal. At breakfast this spread would have yogurt, cereals, fresh fruits, oatmeal, and sometimes hard-boiled eggs. Lunch and dinner would include items like baby spinach/lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, croutons, sunflower seeds,

carrots, and items like pasta or three bean salads. We also offer hot water & coffee for staff to enjoy throughout the day.

Staff housing:

At NW & PVC our counselors live in the cabins with the campers. Staff have twin beds, with a storage space and an area to hang items. Camper cabins do not have electricity, but all common spaces do (such as the dining halls, the office, and bathhouses). Our staff have brought creativity to our cabins, using battery-operated lights to decorate and provide some lighting on dark summer nights. Our bathhouses are centrally located within the villages where staff are living. We have wonderful hot water in the bathhouses, and we even have incredible outdoor showers that are a must-try experience!

Our Mission

Pleasant Valley & North Woods YMCA Camps regard camping as one of the greatest influences in a child's life. YMCA camping is an experience that can enrich an entire childhood, even a lifetime. Our commitment is creating an atmosphere in which a child can live by these standards and principles: developing personality and character through living, working, and playing with campers of the same age; acquainting children with nature and cultivating an awareness of the out-of-doors; learning new skills and interests, and sharing in the leadership that will foster self-reliance, tolerance, and understanding of others. Pleasant Valley & North Woods Camps strive for every camper to grow in health of Spirit, Mind, and Body. By providing camping programs that serve all youth, regardless of ethnic background or ability to pay camp fees, we enable hundreds of children to learn new skills, meet new friends and take on new challenges under the guidance of caring adults. Our camps provide campers with the opportunity to meet others from around the world. The camping program focuses on building self-esteem and self-confidence, and this provides the foundation for good decision-making skills and building healthy relationships with peers and adults. It also offers the tools and means for campers to be responsible citizens in their camp, home, and world communities. We have recognized for a long time that our young people need positive adult role models. Young people also need developmental experiences that will enhance positive behavior and positive decision-making. At North Woods and Pleasant Valley, we are dedicated and committed to developing healthy minds and bodies and allowing campers the opportunity to discover and practice healthy behaviors. Our goal is to provide each camper with a safe, fun, and memorable experience. We also challenge campers to accept and demonstrate positive values by stressing values each camper learns that character counts!

Staff Unity

The North Woods and Pleasant Valley Camp community is composed of a diverse group of people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, gifts, and abilities. We come together for 9 weeks each year to create an experience that will have a profound impact on our lives and the lives of our campers. A staff that is united in this effort will work together to lift one another up in attitude and actions. We will be honest and direct when dealing with the inevitable conflicts of daily living. We will be cognizant and respectful of our differences. We shall strive every day to live by the core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

Leaders We Seek

- A wholesome personality appealing to youth
- Radiant health, resulting from firmly established habits and restraints, wise attention to food, and well-balanced days of work, play and rest

- Joyousness in simple daily tasks, and a sense of humor that smooths out the wrinkles in demanding situations.
- Exuberant enthusiasm which adds zest to each day and keeps the heart young.
- Unfailing kindness, integrity, fairness, and consistency in all personal relationships.
- Loyalty in words and action and trustworthiness in every detail, however unimportant the detail may seem to be.
- Unbound and untiring interest in campers.
- A working knowledge of the unique opportunities for camper guidance in a camp setting.
- Wisdom to handle responsibilities, discipline, and privileges within the scope of personal experience.
- Resourcefulness, versatility, an initiative to enliven work and play with young people.
- Creative spirit to inspire imaginative youth.
- Attentive to their words and communication with staff and campers.
- Those who lead others to healthy choices.
- Honors and is responsible for punctuality. This may appear too obvious to mention, but it often marks or makes the success of the leader.
- Personal neatness and unquestionably good taste in such features as his style, cosmetics, clothing.
- Behavior that always has in mind the best interests of children and of the camp, regardless of whether you are in camp, out of camp on a trip, or on time off.

Training

Our senior staff team gathers one week ahead of the full staff team. This week, referred to as EC week, allows for prep and final planning to commence before the full team arrives. The second Saturday of June typically starts EC week. The third Saturday the full crew arrives, and staff week training begins. This week is chalk full of getting to know everyone, learning the lay of the land, and prepping for the camper's arrival. Days are mixed with formal training as well as fun interactive games and movement. There are also multiple online training courses to be done individually through the YMCA of Greater Boston to prepare staff for the experience. Ongoing collaborations within staff groups keeps training current and allows senior staff to understand if additional training is requested. We also certify most staff as lifeguards during staff training week.

[NW & PVC EC STAFF TRAINING VIDEO](#)

[STAFF TRAINING VIDEO](#)

Where do staff come from?

Much of our staff come from Massachusetts, but we do have staff from all over the United States. We also host international staff from many countries including England, Wales, Scotland, Hungary, Spain, France, Turkey, Canada, Mexico, Australia, and the Dominican Republic.

[INTERNATIONAL STAFF VIDEO](#)

Compensation

Full Summer staff will receive their salary bi-weekly via direct-deposit. Salary is determined by type of job, experience, and qualifications. We will set aside some time in the interview process to talk about salary.

Time off

Each week staff have one day off and one night off.

Head Counselors (18+) and Senior Staff's days off are from 5:45pm-5:45 pm (24 hours). Staff are expected to be at the evening lineup.

Assistant Counselors (17 years old) days off are from 7 am-11:45 pm (17 hours).

Everyone's nights off are from 5:45 pm – 11:45 pm.

There should be at least one Head Counselor sleeping in a cabin every night (except for the PVC Senior Village, in which case there needs to be at least one Head Counselor in every sister cabin). If that cannot happen, then there should be at least two Assistant Counselors sleeping in a cabin, with a Head Counselor right next door. Assistant Counselors are not to be left alone in a cabin overnight.

Staff Roles

The Leadership/Senior Team are the main support to the counsellors and the assistant counselors throughout the summer.

Our senior team, referred to as EC (Executive Counsel), breaks down as follows:

- Executive Director
- Association Asst. Executive Director
- Operations Director
- Camp Director
- Assistant Camp Director
- Waterfront Director
- Camper Liaison
- Director of Quality
- Village Leaders/Section Heads
- CIT (Counselors-in-Training) Director
- LIT (Leaders-in-Training) Director

Our camp team continues with our biggest population of staff:

- Head Counselors (18 years or older)
- Assistant Counselors (17 years old)
- Program Heads (which often double as cabin counselors)

Our staff bring an energetic new face to various activities throughout the day. Some days they could be at six separate activities, a different one every period. Other days they might spend the entire day in one area or split the day between two locations.

Program Heads are responsible for running their activities six periods a day (or less depending on camper interest that session). For an activity like Arts & Crafts, this could mean that you run the same craft each period, all day. Perhaps you prefer more variety and set up a different craft in the morning periods than the afternoon periods. Campers should always help you set up and clean up the activity, as this contributes to their independence and growth while at camp. Additional counselors often assist the Program Heads with everything it takes to run their activity. Where Program Heads rarely spend time at other activity areas, Counselors can have a little more flexibility.

CITs assist counselors in and around camp with everything camp related. They are typically 16 years old

and very eager to learn. Where do you come in? You can role model great camp counselling behavior and assist them in helping you create fun and safe experiences for campers. There is one CIT Director (or two) for each camp who can assist you in creating great learning environments for the CITs around you. Our CITs are a key component in camp running smoothly. We depend on them for many things. They help manage check-in and check-out days, they do all the camp dishes, they sort and deliver mail, they support our environmental education program, and they give tours of camp to prospective campers.

Camper to Staff Ratio:

On average our camper to staff ratio is 3:1

All about our campers

Demographics

Our campers come from all over the world. Just like our staff we see many campers from the greater Boston area. We also serve campers coming from all over the United States. Our international campers are from: Spain, France, England, Turkey, Hungary, Puerto Rico, Canada, China, Japan, and the Dominican Republic.

Ages we serve

Our campers are divided by age into villages/sections, represented by clusters of cabins on our site. Ages listed below are typical but can fluctuate based on camper enrollment for each specific session.

- Juniors: 8-11 years old
- Middlers / Trailers: 11-13 years old
- Seniors: 13-15 years old

Our Leadership Programs are application based and run for 4 weeks

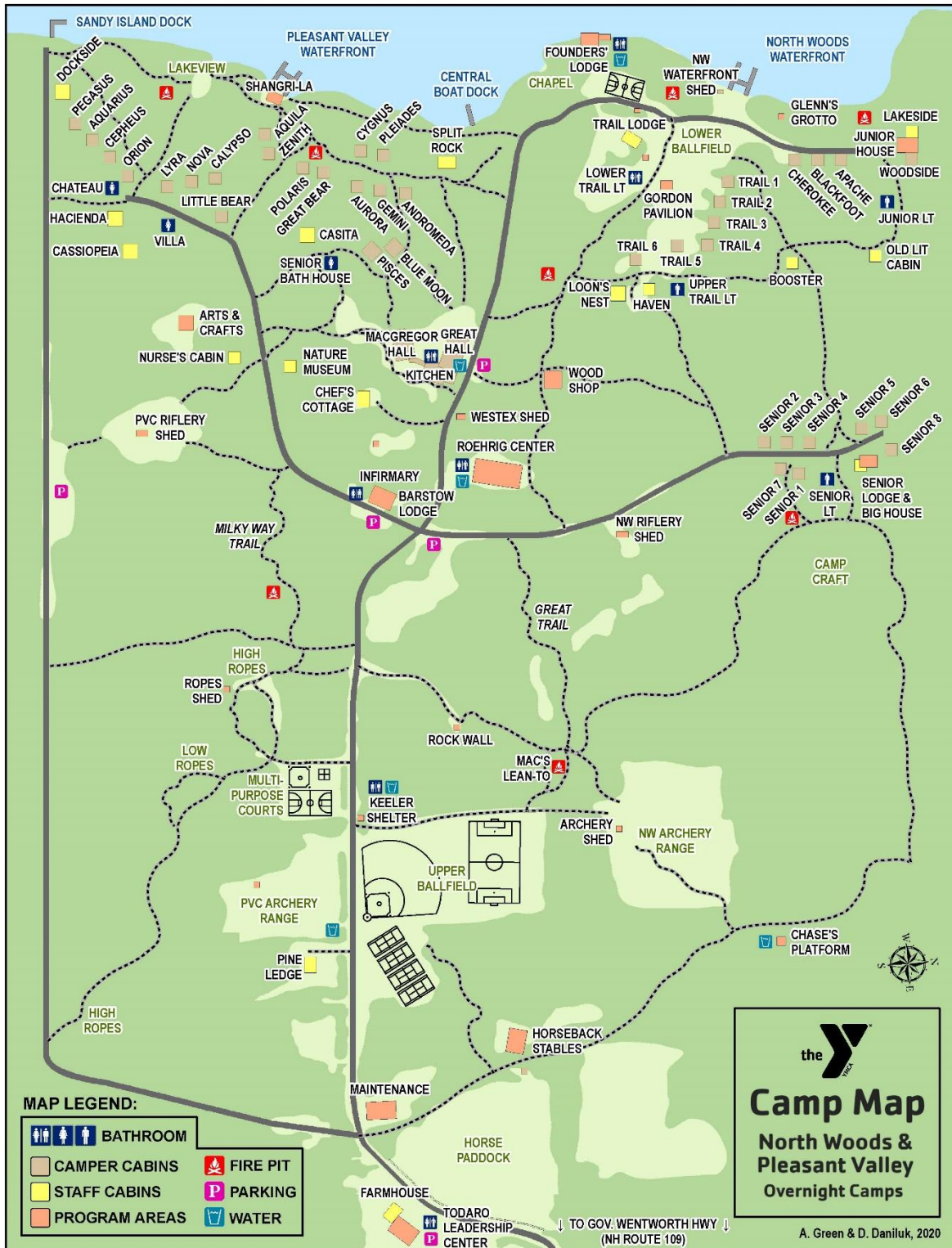
- LITs (Leaders in Training): 15 years old, by June 20th
- CITs (Counselors in Training): 16 Years old, by June 20th

Programs offered

- Swimming lessons
- Waterski
- Canoe/Kayak
- Paddle boarding
- Sailing
- Camp Craft (outdoor survival)
- Basketball
- Arts & Crafts
- Photography
- Woodshop
- Archery
- Rifle
- Slingshot
- Ropes
- Tennis
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Ball Games
- Horseback riding
- Music
- Performing Arts

[FIRST DAY OF CAMP VIDEO](#)

Camp Map



Next steps

After reading the Staff Guide an interview date will be set (if it is not already). In the interview we will talk about positions and which ones you may enjoy most. Be prepared to share with us what you learned from the information package and why you would like to work at Pleasant Valley or North Woods Camp. To learn more about North Woods and Pleasant Valley check out our YouTube Channel [HERE!](#)

The YMCA of Greater Boston Team

Executive

Executive Director:	Kate Lemay
Associate Executive Director:	Mark Straubel
Sandy Island Camp Director:	Angelo Firenze
Northwoods Camp Director:	Matt Jago
Pleasant Valley Camp Director:	Beth Dales
Director of Outside Sales & Community Development:	Jen Grande

Office

Business Manager:	Catherine Ryan
Northwoods/PVC Registrar & Office Manager:	Deb Clough
Sandy Island Registrar & Office Manager:	Leah Tinstman

Facilities Team

Facilities Director:	Nicholas Bickford
Assistant Facilities Director:	Michael McCarthy